

**Public Works Directors Association Meeting**  
**Wednesday, April 9, 2008**  
9:00-11:00 a.m.  
GPCOG Conference Room

**Present:** Erik Street, Chair, (Yarmouth); Shawn Bennett, Vice-chair, (Pownal); Bob Burns (Gorham); Tom Eldridge (Westbrook); Doug Fortier (Windham); John Foster (Brunswick); Bob Malley, (Cape Elizabeth); Roger Mosley (Standish); Kevin Noyes (Portland); Adam Ogden (Cumberland); Jim Plummer (Freeport); Mike Shaw (Scarborough); Robert Wood (Freeport).

**Staff and Guests:** Neal Allen (GPCOG); Arthur Bush (International Salt Co.), Robert Jones (International Salt Co.), Carol MacKenzie (GPCOG), Sue McIntyre (GPCOG).

1. **Welcome and Introductions** – Erik Street - Chairman  
Bob Malley called the meeting to order at 9:07 a.m. and welcomed those present.
2. **Acceptance of Minutes from March 12<sup>th</sup>, 2008 Meeting**  
*Roger Mosley made a motion for approval of the March 12<sup>th</sup>, 2008 meeting minutes, seconded by Bob Malley. All were in favor. Minutes were unanimously approved.*
3. **Salt Review** – Arthur Bush, International Salt Co.  
Arthur Bush from International Salt Company provided an update on items such as availability of road salt for next year, potential price increases, etc. He also provided a summary of road salt service for this past winter. He said that they are looking at a potential \$10.00 average in increase. The bid price for next winter should hold for the entire season.

A question was asked as to whether there is a contingency plan in place to prevent the unavailability of road salt when it is needed by a municipality. Mr. Bush explained that because the road salt has to be stored in an enclosed building, they are limited as to how much can be stored in comparison to other buildings such as those located in New Hampshire, for instance, that allow the road salt to be stored outside. If COG's specs allowed for more flexibility with storage it would make it easier. If it were stored outside here in this area it most likely would be stored on something similar to a "pad".

Mr. Bush continued to explain how various conditions affect the shipments of road salt. Ships do not come on a regular schedule. Things that could affect a ship's arrival could be anything from storms on the ocean to being stuck in the Panama Canal because of a "ship traffic jam". Typically, when a ship comes up north here it comes from the Panama Canal. These ships have a 38-foot draft. Portland harbor can only accommodate ships with a 35-foot draft. Subsequently, a ship must first go up to Searsport and unload there before coming into Portland. Other factors affecting the price of road salt include fuel costs for ocean freight. With current fuel increases it costs more for shipping cost which in turn drives up the price of freight items.

With respect to the availability of the salt itself, it was noted that salt is available all over the world. International Salt Company gets its salt from Chili. That is their only source. There is no bartering. They may have three, four, or five ships that are chartered for the east coast. They do not report where the cargo is going to until the ship gets to the Panama Canal.

A discussion began about the amount of water content in some of the road salt deliveries. A concern was expressed by one of the municipalities that had received a delivery of road salt that had arrived with about 20% water content, and with the price of road salt, the town felt it had not really gotten what it had paid for. Mr. Bush replied that road salt that is stored outside is normally well-covered. The majority of the pile is dry but it does absorb some moisture.

Discussion then focused on the idea of a regional salt storage facility. Carol pointed out that Portland and Westbrook currently team up to store their salt capacity. It is most of their winter supply of salt. She wondered that if other towns could do that, if it would decrease the cost of shipment. Mr. Bush replied that the only way it could affect the cost would be if it went directly from the ship to the storage unit. He is not involved in the pricing aspect of his company but he thought that it could probably give the group a price break if other towns could share regional storage facilities.

A question was asked if State owned facilities had received priority over the municipalities in the delivery of road salt during this past winter. Mr. Bush answered that it had been a very trying winter for them as well as the State of Maine. He deals with six terminal facilities and all of those issues were compounded this past season. But the people in Maine were the most understanding people that he dealt with. Things went a lot better than they could have gone. They had received a call from the Maine DOT early on in the winter to supply salt for the southern region of the state because they couldn't get it from their competitor in town. But, International Salt could not help them. At no time did they cater to them.

Discussion continued on the feasibility of a regional storage facility but location of the facility and its proximity to individual towns was a concern. Towns would have to travel to the facility to pick up its road salt. Subsequently, other options should be considered. Towns were encouraged to pay attention and ration their road salt when they are getting low. Mr. Bush said that he tries to keep Carol up-to-date on road salt amounts but noted that customer service is not allowed to discuss that with customers. When Carol is notified of low salt amounts she gets an email (or fax to those without e-mail) out to bid participants in the bid and tries to keep everyone on the same page as to what is going on. It was additionally pointed out that state statutes mandate that salt must be stored inside on the town's property.

Mr. Bush also pointed out that if the building specs were not included he thought the moisture content would have to change somewhat. It is impossible to keep it that dry. He pointed out that many saw salt delivered from their Portsmouth facility that had come from an outdoor stockpile.

Currently we permit bids for road salt stored in an enclosed facility, and another for salt stored in an outside storage area. It was pointed out that our specs as well as the Maine Turnpike Authority specs are the most stringent. But, if the group allowed for storage in an outside covered pile it might provide for more pricing options. However, International Salt Company has a long-term agreement with Sprague Energy for storage of road salt and that might have to be factored in somewhere.

When asked how much road salt had been shipped this past winter, Mr. Bush replied they had shipped well over 250,000 tons with over 140,000 tons thru Portland alone. Once an order has been placed, it takes about 14 days for the ship to get up to the New York area. They usually know about a month ahead of time that a particular ship will be in Chili around a particular date. But, not all ships carry just salt. So that ship could get delayed for two or three days due to other factors. They have had very little delays or issues with Custom and Immigration. With regards to where salt can be found, other companies have salt in some of the states. When asked about having a contingency to have salt delivered by rail, Mr. Bush replied that International Salt Company's infrastructure is built around that mine in Chili.

The group redirected their discussions on the specs. Mr. Bush offered to get some examples from different bids from some other contracts for the group's reference. Carol pointed out that COG's specs are good except for storage and moisture content and she didn't foresee being able to change that gradation. Mr. Bush said he didn't see that as an issue. Roger Mosley noted that all drivers had been very courteous and that McCabe had been very accommodating.

Erik thanked Arthur Bush and Robert Jones for coming in to speak to the group. It was agreed to have further discussion about road salt specs at the next meeting.

#### **4. Select meeting topics for May – Sept.**

The group reviewed a list of meeting topics that had been compiled from a survey that had been done last year among the group. Topics that generated interest during the discussion included:

- Dig Safe
- Storm water regulations
- New products and alternative products
- An update on the REACT meetings and shared services/equipment.
- Some sort of self audit process/internal self evaluation form and/or process.
- Public education/outreach/media/county fair exhibits, etc.
- Sharing about each department's organizational structure.
- Legal issues on items such as right of ways, etc.

Erik requested that the group submit six topics of interest to him via email or to bring the topics with them at the next Public Works Directors' meeting.

**5. Cumberland County Snow Plow Roadeo**

Kevin Noyes provided an update on the upcoming Cumberland County Snow Plow Roadeo scheduled to be held toward the end of May. Items of interest included:

- The goal of the “Roadeo” is to change the venue every two years. Portland has hosted the event for the last three years.
- More volunteers are needed from other communities.
- 16 teams took part in the Roadeo last year. They usually average about 20 teams per year.
- A fee was instituted last year. An option to consider would be to use the fee for providing lunch.

The group discussed promotional ideas and potential new locations for future events. There was consensus among the group that holding the event at one neutral location every year could be beneficial. Anyone who wishes to volunteer may contact Kevin. A list of to do items will be provided. It was also noted that Public Works Week is being honored that same week.

**6. GPCOG – Report / Update**

Carol updated the group on bid openings. There is a bid opening on May 28<sup>th</sup> for paving and a gasoline/diesel fuel bid opening on May 23<sup>rd</sup>. The road striping bid will be opening in early May.

**7. Announcements**

- The Maine Asphalt Paving Association recently put on a two-day program about techniques, temperatures, etc.
- MDOT is trying to work with contractors and specs. It was noted that MDOT has to have a certified engineer on site doing core tests, etc.

**8. Next meeting May 14<sup>th</sup>**

The next Public Works Directors’ Association meeting is scheduled for next Wednesday, May 14<sup>th</sup>, 2008.

**9. Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 10:55 a.m.