

Public Works Directors Association Meeting

Wednesday, December 10th, 2008

9:00-11:00 a.m.

GPCOG Conference Room

Present: Erik Street, (Yarmouth); Shawn Bennett (Pownal); Thomas Eldridge (Westbrook); Doug Fortier (Windham); John Foster (Brunswick); Roger Mosley (Standish); Dan Nowell (Sebago); Rob Pontau (Topsham); Ted Shane (New Gloucester); Mike Shaw (Scarborough); Nathan White (Raymond).

Staff: Rosemary Kulow (GPCOG); Carol MacKenzie (GPCOG), Sue McIntyre (GPCOG).

1. **Welcome and Introductions** – Erik Street - Chairman

Erik Street called the meeting to order at 9:07 and welcomed those present.

2. **Acceptance of Minutes from November 12th, 2008.**

Roger Mosley made a motion for approval of the November 12th, 2008 meeting minutes, seconded by Doug Fortier. Vote taken. All were in favor. Minutes approved.

Erik made reference to last month's meeting noting that it has been very productive. Carol has been working on getting all the contact information from the utility companies that attended. Once Carol has compiled the information, Sue will upload it to the GPCOG website.

3. **Roundtable Discussion-** Winter Operations

Members of the group shared information on their municipality's respective winter operations, policies and procedures. *A summary of key items are as follows:*

Yarmouth

Yarmouth has a Winter Operations Plan and Manual. Items included in the manual:

- Definitions, information on main way and secondary streets, policies pertaining to bare pavement, material and application rates, etc.
- Information for the public describing among other things, why the Public Works Department operates the way they do when it comes to plowing, street maintenance, why they work the hours they work, etc.
- Policies for length of duty for operators, individual callouts, expectations for drivers, pre-storm and post-storm activities, chain of command, etc.
- Policies regarding employee injuries, etc.

A newsletter is also produced by the town and is posted at the Yarmouth Town Hall. It can also be found on the town hall's website. Among information found in the newsletters are:

- Mailbox policies
- How to plow your driveway
- Contact numbers for questions, etc.

Erik noted that his public works crew does a winter storm report that is given to their respective supervisor. Included in the report are how many man hours an event incurred; the type of equipment and materials used; and, a log book that notes both road temperatures and wind speed. This type of information not only provides a good resource for future storms but is also important should an accident occur. It provides good documentation on the type of conditions that existed at the time of the occurrence.

Yarmouth also has an "Adopt a Fire Hydrant Program" that is very successful especially when there is a big winter storm. They advertise on their local cable network and/or do a reverse 911 asking residents to help clear all fire hydrants in their neighborhood as well as all catch basins. This service is usually provided by a town's fire department. However, Yarmouth's Fire Department does not provide this service.

Mailbox policies

Westbrook's City Council is currently considering a consistent mailbox repair policy. At the moment, they usually replace a damaged mailbox with a standard post and mailbox, (if the item is not repairable). They do not promise any specific time when it will get done. Residents must file a claim with the City for anything beyond that.

Yarmouth this year took note of all mail boxes that would be considered above a standard grade mailbox and notified residents about the mailbox replacement policy. The public is reminded that having a mailbox is a privilege and is at risk of being damaged during certain weather events. Reference was made to the U.S. Postal Service website, which provides rules for a mailbox standard height. A mailbox should be no more than 38” to 42” inches in height. Yarmouth replaces damaged boxes with a standard post and box if they are responsible for damage. They will also send the home owner a check for the cost of a standard box or post if the resident wishes to have something beyond that. Yarmouth will install a temporary box and post to get the resident through the winter.

Pownal does not have anything in writing when it comes to mailboxes. When the town receives a call about a broken mailbox Shawn goes onsite to review the damaged box. If it is the town truck’s fault, Pownal repairs the item.

Windham residents must bring their damaged mailbox to the town office. The resident is then given a standard mailbox as replacement. Windham has done a mass mailing to town residents that included information about mailboxes, standard height, etc. The mailing also included information about right-of-ways noting that if a vehicle is parked in a right-of-way, it could also be hit and damaged.

Sebago does not replace mailboxes. However, they will repair them if the item is repairable.

Topsham replaces damaged mailboxes and even tries to match the color with a standard mailbox.

Storm documentation

Pownal provides a sheet for documentation, similar to what Yarmouth provides for recording road temperature, etc., in each of their Public Works trucks. Shawn has a spreadsheet and adds to it at the end of the storm. Erik noted that **Yarmouth** summarizes their sheet at the end of the year totaling each specific category. **Westbrook** procures the assistance of a local resident that comes in and inputs all the information into a database. The database is also “FEMA friendly”. Subsequently, during any big event they can just punch out all the data that is needed. This has worked very well.

All agreed that storm documentation is a good way to review what has worked and what could be improved upon.

Work shifts, overtime hours, on-call shifts

Westbrook:

- Has a single shift
- Anything during an evening is considered overtime.
- They now have four employees that have been provided pagers, paid for by the Town. Employees also rotate with the supervisors.

Topsham:

- Does not have separate shifts.
- Crews sometime go 30 hours.
- Rob has at times slept in the shop for a while during large storm events.
- They are normally first notified of icy roads thru the Police Department dispatch. A rotating list is then compiled by Rob. Each crew member carries a track phone, paid for by the Town. Dispatch will call whoever is on call at the time. This has worked well for them.
- For every week that personnel are on-call they get eight hours of personal time.
- On-call personnel have a 15-minute response time or they forfeit their bonus time. On-call personnel must at least call dispatch within 15 minutes.
- Topsham has a comp pay option vs. comp time.
- If a storm is imminent, everyone stays at the garage.

Yarmouth:

- Yarmouth Police Department dispatches calls to an on-call team when the first snow flake falls
- Once an on-call team is dispatched they are out for a minimum of at least one to two hours.
- An on-call team consists of two people mainly for safety reasons, especially for the evening and night shifts.
- The on-call personnel assess as to whether other personnel will be needed for any particular storm event and whether they should call everyone in.

- An on-call list is compiled for the summertime as well.
- Rescue, Chief of Police and Fire Chief all meet with Public Works Department regarding response procedures during winter events to get everyone on the “same page”.
- They also determine during these meetings what routes will be plowed first so rescue and public safety personnel will know this as well. Two paths are designated.
- Yarmouth public works personnel can now keep up to 80 hours of comp time. If comp time is not used by a certain date the town can buy it back.

Brunswick:

- On-call personnel get whatever work hours they work while on-call plus they receive two hours of bonus pay.
- Two people share a pager for being on-call.
- Brunswick has a comp pay policy where personnel can bank up to 50 hours into comp pay.
- Comp hours must be used by June 30th of each year or the town pays for the hours.

Westbrook:

- Westbrook Public Works on-call personnel receive a minimum of four hours for being on-call.
- Supervisors are also scheduled to be on-call all year long and are responsible for taking the initial call from dispatch.
- Two emergency routes are designated to get rescue personnel to either I-95 or to Portland.
- If a storm is imminent, Westbrook public works personnel stay with it for at least a minimum of four or five people.
- Westbrook has 20 drivers that are qualified to drive plows and have one supplemental person for parking lots.
- On-call shifts are rotated.
- A time-off bank as well as a cash bank for overtime hours is provided.

Pownal:

- Pownal’s total public works staff consists of four people.
- They generally call in two people at a time and sometimes pay them a minimum of 3 hours for coming in.
- Cots are provided in the Town’s garage during storm events and/or when a storm is imminent.
- Pownal has a comp pay option vs. taking comp time although they encourage not exceeding two weeks.

New Gloucester:

- Dispatch calls Ted and he calls everyone else.
- Ted keeps an overtime log and tries to disperse overtime equally among all personnel.
- If dispatch calls and it is only a two-hour sanding job, Ted does not go in.

The group shared what each of their respective department uses for winter road treatments. Topics included pre-wetting, brine mixes, magnesium chloride, salt priority, etc. Rob is now using the brine 70/30 mix and is considering going to salt priority and pre-wetting. Shawn does variations. He pre-wets and then experiments with magnesium chloride. He is currently looking into getting some salt brine at a 70/30 mix from the Topsham MaineDOT facility. Doug noted that all his trucks have onboard tanks and use calcium chloride. The group agreed that the amount of traffic using any particular road makes a difference in what is chosen for road treatments. Sand is good in certain conditions and on certain roads. Shawn uses a 50/50 mix of sand and salt. He pointed out that every decision you make is different from one day to the next. He normally tries the brine first to see if it works because it is only \$0.23 cents a gallon.

Mike Shaw referenced the State’s storm water program and noted that sodium chloride may become a big problem in run-off water. He agreed with the group that there is no “cookbook recipe” to road treatment during a storm. This is especially true at the beginning and at the end of the season. It also depends on the community. You need to consider road traffic as well as road surface. Erik said that he does not pre-wet because he does not have a place to wash the trucks and it takes its toll on equipment. He uses about 2,000 tons of salt a year and uses minimal sand. He pre-salts and loads up with sand and applies to hills and intersections and then will dust them with salt in the morning. Sub-divisions are pre-salted as well. He noted that salt causes deterioration in concrete structures and spoke of catch basins. The calcium can eat right through a wrench, he added.

Westbrook streets are salted before and after the storm at different application rates, according to Tom. Westbrook has expanded salt to the main roads and to some of the side roads. They do the main streets as well as the bus routes. A brief discussion followed on various equipment used, vehicles with control systems, and

vehicles that have GPS software. Doug pointed out that trucks that are equipped with a SIRRUS Control System allow the drivers to concentrate more on their driving and safety. Pownal has only four trucks and they are equipped with ground speed control. Yarmouth uses all COMPU-SPREADS and has one DIKYJON. New Gloucester has four trucks and they all have ground speed control and hold calcium. They do 78 miles of paved roads and 38 miles of dirt roads. Ted said they used 36,000 yards of salt last year.

A short discussion took place about State maintained roads and there was consensus that MDOT is not putting out enough salt on their roads. All agreed that scraping the roads on a regular basis is very important for good road maintenance.

Winter maintenance of sidewalks became the next topic of discussion. Rob does not do sidewalks in Topsham. At the moment, Scarborough contracts out for sidewalks on Route 1, but they are coming into many more sidewalks. He expects that this policy will most likely need to be revisited by the Town Manager. Yarmouth has twenty-two miles of sidewalks and they have two machines. They utilize one full-time person from the Parks and Recreation Department for this job. When it storms they normally concentrate on school routes and maintain streets with business establishments. They generally plow everything on sidewalks. If they have a storm that is more than two inches they go out. They have one guy go out during the storm who stays with it while businesses are open. He then returns at 4:00 a.m. to take care of the school routes. This is followed by a second part-time individual that can come in. It normally takes between two to three days to get the sidewalks cleaned up, depending on the storm.

Westbrook has about 30 miles of sidewalks and they prioritize the school routes. These need to be opened before school starts. They utilize at least two people for this endeavor and have three units. The sidewalk crew is normally out after the streets have been cleaned and can be out as much as 5 to 6 hours. Businesses are supposed to clean their own sidewalks but many don't. They do a lot of snow removal to keep sidewalks open. Sidewalk cleaning requires many resources of manpower and equipment as well as lots of maintenance. Erik agreed and said that he also runs sanders on his concrete sidewalks and puts down a mix of salt and sand. He added that Yarmouth also takes care of crosswalks and that businesses are supposed to keep their own sidewalks open. Many agreed that the "Bombardier" works the best vs. the Bobcat.

4. Announcements

An update pertaining to APWA activities was provided. Town managers as well as selectmen and other town officials will be able to communicate with other municipalities on topics such as road issues, etc, through the APWA website.

MaineDOT will be facing budget cuts in the next few months. Fred Hutchinson's position may be gone by the end of January, but nothing is definite yet. There is also a concern that budget cuts may affect URIP funding as well.

5. Other Business:

The group discussed new meeting topics. Ideas suggested were: "Fleet Maintenance" including replacement programs; cost of replacing vehicles; and, warranties; "Budget Cycles" and lack of funding and how this applies to federal mandates that some towns are committed to; Universal Waste Collection; and, Union Contracts, were also mentioned as other possible topics. There was consensus among the group that a roundtable discussion on "Fleet Maintenance" would be beneficial to all and that Directors could invited their department foreman/supervisor(s) to the meeting as well.

6. Next Meeting – January 14, 2009

7. Adjourn:

Meeting adjourned at 10:47 a.m.