



The Road Newsletter, Volume 6, Issue 1

January 2016

Meet Your 2016 Road Commission Board

The Road Commission is governed by a five (5) member Board of Road Commissioners that is appointed by the Ottawa County Board of Commissioners for a six-year term each. The Board is responsible for approval of the annual budget, acceptance of bids, authorization of expenditures, adoption of policies, approval of contracts and agreements, and other policy matters.



Tom Elhart – Chairman: Tom was appointed to the Road Commission in January 2011 with a term expiring December 31, 2016. He was born and raised in Ottawa County and currently resides in the City of Grand Haven. A Hope College graduate, Tom is an Associate Broker with Signature Real Estate and has served on several boards for non-profit organizations. He also is a Rotary past-president and Paul Harris Fellow.



Jim Miedema – Vice Chairman: Jim was appointed to the Road Commission in January of 2013 with a term expiring December 31, 2018. He is a retired body shop owner and currently resides in the Jamestown Township area. Jim has 20 years of township service as a former Jamestown Township Supervisor and Trustee.



Tom Bird – Member: Tom was first appointed to the Road Commission in January 2011 with a current term expiring December 31, 2020. He resides in the Park Township area. Tom is a retired telecommunications engineer having worked for 45 years in engineering management and as a consulting engineer.



Betty Gajewski – Member: Betty was appointed to the Road Commission in December 2014 with a term expiring December 2020. She has owned a business and worked as an environmental professional for a nonprofit organization, public university, international manufacturer, engineering firm, and development commission. Betty served as a member of several Ottawa County commissions as well as the Tallmadge Township Planning Commission.



Timothy Grifhorst – Member: Tim was first appointed to the Road Commission in January 2011 with a current term expiring December 31, 2018. He resides in the Tallmadge Township area and is self-employed. Tim was a trustee for the Grandville School Board and is currently on the Kent County ISD Board

Establishing Realistic Speed Limits

The purpose of a speed limit is to provide for the safety of all highway users. To meet this purpose, a speed limit must be acceptable to the public and be enforceable by the police. Speed limits can and should provide motorists, police, and traffic courts with information on reasonable and safe speeds that will facilitate the safe, orderly flow of traffic under normal conditions.

Currently, regulatory speed limits are set by State Statute at a maximum 55 mph on county roads or 25 mph for business and residential districts known as “prima facie” speed limits. These speed limits are generally not posted on county roads.



Regulatory speed limits can be modified based on a unanimous recommendation from a traffic survey team consisting of representatives from the Michigan State Police, Road Commission, and Local Township. While crash history and roadway characteristics are considered, the recommendation is primarily based on the results of a speed survey indicating the 85th percentile speed. This is the speed at, or below, which 85% of the traffic moves. Experience shows that 85% of the drivers adhere to properly established limits which they feel comfortable and safe for the conditions at the time.

The Lansing office of the State Police must accept the recommendation of the survey team in order to establish a modified speed limit. More information about establishing speed limits can be found on the Michigan State Police website at www.michigan.gov/msp.

Frigid Bridges

Why do bridges and overpasses freeze before the surface of the road?



Even when air and road surface temperatures drop below freezing, the heat from the ground underneath the road keeps it warm enough to delay icing. Bridges have no way to trap heat and are exposed to cold air on all sides, so they more easily lose heat and freeze shortly after air temperatures hit the freezing point. A bridge will follow the air temperature very closely. If the air temperature falls below freezing, a bridge’s surface will fall below freezing very quickly, causing rain or snow to freeze and stick to the road surface.

The Road Commission will place liquid anti-icing materials on bridge surfaces when the temperatures are expected to be between 15°F and 35°F. If the surface is wet, then a 60/40 salt to sand mixture is treated with the liquid material (called pre-wetting) and then placed on the bridge surface. Once applied, both treatments can last up to 72 hours.

Public Utilities Department Update

The Road Commission is unique as it has a Public Utilities Department that serves as the Public Works Agent for water and wastewater in Ottawa County, and provides public works services to the County's governmental units. These services include financial assistance, administrative assistance, and operational assistance.

The financial assistance is primarily provided through the sale of County bonds. Ottawa County has a Moody's rating of Aaa, resulting in lower interest rates for local municipalities and lower utility rates for County residents. Over \$300 million in bonds have been sold to construct water and wastewater systems throughout the County. As part of the bonding process, a community's utility rates and charges are reviewed. In addition, the Department has been involved with many of the state and federal financial assistance programs (CDBG grants, FHA grants and loans, and SRF loans), and can assist a community through these funding options.

The administrative assistance includes utility contract administration, construction contract administration, and utility planning. The department is involved with many wholesale water and wastewater contracts, water and wastewater treatment plant construction contracts, water distribution and wastewater collection construction contracts, and feasibility and reliability studies.



The operational assistance is provided by licensed water and wastewater operators. These services include operation and maintenance of five water distribution systems, five wastewater collection systems, three wastewater treatment plants, and one groundwater treatment facility.

Over the years, the Public Utilities Department has routinely conducted a rate survey of water and wastewater systems located in Ottawa County. The most recent survey was completed on October 19, 2015, and can be found on our website under Quick Links at <http://www.ottawacorc.com/>.

Heidelberg Joins Road Commission



Victoria Heidelberg has joined the Road Commission as the Engineering Assistant. She was formerly a project engineer for Nordlund & Associates out of Ludington. Vikki graduated from the Milwaukee School of Engineering with a bachelor's degree in architectural engineering, and brings over 18 years of experience in MDOT, road commission, municipal, and private development work.

Vikki was selected to fill the newly created position and will assist the road, permit, public utility, and traffic departments with AutoCAD and engineering functions. Please welcome Vikki to the Road Commission team.

Important Dates

Thursday – January 7, 2016 | 9AM | Board Meeting

Thursday – January 21, 2016 | 9AM | Board Meeting



14110 Lakeshore Drive
PO Box 739
Grand Haven, Michigan 49417
616-842-5400
Office Hours: Monday-Friday; 7:30AM-4PM



STAY CONNECTED. SUBSCRIBE:

The Ottawa County Road Commissioners: Tom Bird | Tom Elhart | Betty Gajewski | Tim Grifhorst | Jim Miedema
Managing Director: Brett Laughlin

Who manages the roads and how are they funded? The Ottawa County Road Commission manages the roads--not the Ottawa County Board of Commissioners or County staff. The Ottawa County Road Commission is primarily funded by fuel taxes and vehicle registrations. Concerns about roads should be directed to the Ottawa County Road Commission. Questions? [Contact Us](#)

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