

Class 4 Road Policy Committee Meeting – Monday, July 23, 2012, 5:30 at the Moretown Town Hall

In attendance: Deb Sargent, Bob Sargent, Martin Cameron, Eric Howes, John Hoogenboom, Reed Korrow, Michelle Beard

Reed spoke with someone from the Northfield road crew about the possibility of sharing the maintenance of Devil's Washbowl, which connects Moretown and Northfield. Northfield's policy on class 4 roads is to replace washed out culverts. Other than that, they do not maintain class 4 roads in any way, therefore they could not commit to grading and shaping Devil's Washbowl. Reed will make contact with the Northfield Select Board with the same offer.

Everyone present had a chance to review the minutes from the previous meeting. The committee was in general agreement that the town should strive to maintain class 4 roads to the best of our ability, without putting an undo burden on the town or road crew. We do not want to see the town's class 4 roads degenerate beyond repair due to neglect.

Comments regarding specific points in the proposed policy draft:

Classification: The original justification for the removal of the sub-classifications (A,B and C) was that, as written, the classifications were extremely vague and subject to too much Select Board discretion. Treating all class 4 roads the same seemed a good way to equalize services. One problem with treating all class 4 roads as one group would be that we would either need to maintain them all equally, even those roads not currently in use, or we would need to write the policy to include a caveat that states that some class 4 roads will not be maintained at the same level as the majority of class 4 roads at the discretion of either the Select Board, Road Foreman or Road Commissioner. It is this type of ambiguity that the committee is attempting to avoid in the new policy.

The question was asked, could we still classify roads, just differently? It seems as though it would be beneficial to have at least 2 ways to classify roads....class 4 roads that are in regular use and class 4 roads that are not currently in regular use. It is also possible that we should maintain some sections of a class 4 road, but not the entire road. One example is Herring Brook Road. While it would be advisable to regularly grade and shape part of Herring Brook Road, there are sections that are not in use that would be difficult to maintain. Part of Herring Brook Road could be classified one way, while another part classified separately.

Currently there are 22 class 4 roads in Moretown. At least 15 of those should be regularly maintained. There are 7 or 8 roads that are listed, but have not yet been assessed by the Road Foreman. In addition, 7 of those 22 class 4 roads are currently plowed and sanded in the winter months.

Should we be agreeing to grade and maintain class 4 roads that have not yet been viewed by the Road Foreman? The transportation maps are not always exact. It should be a priority to assess all class 4 roads and prioritize based on number of residents and road condition before moving forward with the setting of a new policy.

Disbursement of crushed rock from the landfill: There was some concern about the proposed lottery system as a way to fairly distribute extra road materials that the town receives from outside sources.

Are there class 3 roads that are in need of materials? Should those roads be maintained before any class 4 roads? What if a road with an excess of ledge needs more material, does that take precedence over the lottery? Is it possible to have a lottery that takes into account more full time residents or other factors that would necessitate more materials? Instead of a lottery, would it make more sense to distribute extra material to roads on a rotating basis, so each road gets its turn in time?

It was brought up that the draft policy as it currently stands seems to indicate two overall goals:

1. To prevent class 4 roads from degenerating beyond repair.
2. To write a policy that ensures fairness to all residents.

Class 4 roads and trails are owned by landowners. The town's role is to manage the right of way. The primary goal should be to protect our town assets, which is what the summer maintenance policy addresses. Including a lottery system flips the priority from the roads (which should be maintained) to the residents (who should get material). It was thought that the roads should be the main focus of the policy. It was suggested that the lottery could be for people, but only after the most needed roads are maintained. This would need to be determined by the Road Foreman and Road Commissioner. The Select Board could set appropriate fair criteria for the distribution of the remainder of the material.

It was decided that the committee would bring to the next meeting possible alternative ways to distribute the material from the landfill.

As far as materials that are purchased by the town, it is the committee's position that no purchased materials should be disbursed to any resident of a class 4 road, town trail or private road while the new policy is in the process of being written.

Safety Issues: Current speed on a class 3 road is 35 mph. Current speed on class 4 road is 50 mph. The Select Board can set the speed on a class 4 road, but a traffic study would need to be done to set a speed limit that would hold up in court.

Can a bonfire be lit on someone else's property without their permission? There is some concern about the large unattended bonfires that are being lit near the Herring Brook loop. Eric will check on the legalities.

For next time:

1. Martin will group and prioritize all 22 class 4 roads.
2. The committee will be thinking about possible fair and equitable ways of distributing material from the landfill to class 4 roads, without too much emphasis placed on discretionary decisions to be made by either the Select Board or the road crew.

The next meeting will be Monday, August 27th, 2012 – 5:30 p.m. at the Moretown Town Hall