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Snowplowing/Sanding Chloride

by: Bob Carter

Our policy for several years has been not to plow less than a 4 inch snowfall. This is an adopted policy rather than a practical standard and doesn't consider drifting. Experts tell us that you want 3 inches of hard packed snow on a gravel road to protect the gravel surface. The price of gravel keeps going up so this becomes more important. Allowing a hard pack to stay on the road will hopefully put some moisture into the road surface and could minimize the amount of gravel lost when we do have to plow. Probably not more than 10 years ago each of our trucks would be loaded with sand/salt in the fall. Most of it would still be in the trucks come spring. It was used for weight and shoveled under the wheels when the truck got stuck. The idea of sanding gravel roads was considered bad practice. It costs about \$2,055 each time we sand our roads. Dresser sanding mix contains only 5% salt, which doesn't melt a lot of ice, but provides traction. They mix the salt in just to keep the material from freezing into a solid mass. On a warm sunny day the hard pack can turn to clear solid ice, which is about impossible to drive on. Then there is no choice but to sand. The old practice of scraping snow off to bare gravel needs to change. 2011 was an unusual year by any standard. Gary was injured and out of work for about 2 months. A very heavy wet snowfall came down just when the frost was coming out of the roads. Doug Rogers worked very hard while Gary was off to maintain the roads and to just keep several of them open to traffic. We had more frost boils than we have seen in recent years.



by: Diane Larkin

With the lack of snow this winter we are losing binder in our gravel. If all goes as planned, Fish Lake will again be putting down chloride on some heavily traveled and newly graveled roads. Individual land-owners may chloride portions of the Township road at their own expense. The Township will not be taking orders for chloride from individuals.

by: Bob Carter

Lent Township has bought a tank truck and developed their own chloride program. They feel it is working very well for them. We will explore this more and possibly find another township that we could share costs and equipment with. Lent believes they are saving some money, but to be able to apply the chloride when the weather is right and when we want to would be a huge benefit.

Gravel

by: Bob Carter

We opened our 2012 gravel bids on Feb. 13th. Last year we paid \$10.50 per cubic yard of gravel. This year we are paying \$10.96/yd. It will cost approximately \$12,800 to gravel one mile of road. We have reduced the amount of gravel bought over the last couple years in order to avoid raising the levy. Obviously, we cannot keep doing that. Last year the Board gambled and used the \$20,000 we normally spend on Chloride each year to purchase more gravel. The weather really cooperated for most of the summer. Early summer was very wet and then as summer progressed we got rain about once a week. The roads held up well with little dust. In late August it started to get dry and by freeze-up the roads were very dry with a lot of float on many of them. If we would have had to plow we would have put a lot of gravel in the ditches.

Sign Replacement

by: Diane Larkin

While traveling around the countryside have you noticed how bright and reflective some of the signs are? This is the new normal. All street, directional and warning signs are to be replaced. There is also a provision for break-away posts holding these signs. Fish Lake has taken inventory of all signs and will be replacing signs and posts. This is an expensive endeavor as one sign currently costs upwards of \$75 a piece. Each street name sign consists of 4 individual signs! We are building this expense into the annual budget and will be working on this project for several years to come.

by: Bob Carter

During the late 1990's Federal Laws were enacted requiring all road signs to meet new retro-reflectivity standards. The first of several compliance deadlines was Jan. 22, 2012. If we have a sign that doesn't meet the requirements and someone has an accident nearby, the Township could be liable for any claims they might bring. Incidentally, these laws came about because the Country's population is aging and older folks apparently don't see as well at night. These laws include changing all street name signs to a bigger size also. Those signs alone will cost the Township a great deal of money. The only signs that are required are Bridge, Weight Limit and RR crossing signs. Under certain conditions Stop Signs are not even required. In order to minimize the impact of the changes the Board will look at not replacing a lot of existing signs. Our Clerk, Andrea, has set the Township up with the proper equipment and drove the roads locating our signs with a GPS position. This inventory is the first step in compliance and by doing it in-house we saved money. There are two bills in Congress that would either repeal the law or remove the deadlines. Obviously, in this economy, no one needs that financial burden. If they decide to stop the program we will have spent minimal funds and the inventory is still valuable.

OSHA Regulations

by: Bob Carter

The Townships are hearing a lot from a company called SafeAssure. They sell a program that consists of inspecting our operation, including the office functions as OSHA would. They would tell us what needs to be done to meet OSHA's safety laws. After that they periodically hold classes on safety issues that are pertinent to our operations. This means our maintenance people including all part timers, Clerk and Treasurer need to stay current with all the safety requirements of their particular position. The County was required by OSHA to put in eye wash stations, chemical showers, etc. etc. Serious money. OSHA has never toured our shop, some say they will give warnings, others say they will tag and shut down something they don't like. SafeAssure is talking about \$2000 the first year and then about \$1200 per year thereafter. The Township would still be responsible for all the additional record keeping. OSHA workplace safety requirements are basically laws with large liabilities for non-compliance. This is one more part of what will be a bigger problem that should be given some thought.

Twp. Equipment

by: Bob Carter

It typically costs a township today at least \$34/hr to have one full time employee. Like your car our new road grader is so mechanically complex that it takes a highly trained person with a computer to do any repairs. The rims on our old JD loader are so bad it is a battle to keep air in the tires and we can't find replacements. Our tandem dump truck is adequate but has over 200,000 miles on it. This isn't a lot of miles for an over the road truck, but it is a lot for a plow truck. The Board and anyone interested, need to sit down and start thinking about how we want to operate in the next 5 years.

Monthly meetings are held on the second Monday of each month.

Meetings start at 6 p.m. with scheduled agenda appearances beginning at 8 p.m.

We're on the Web!
See us at
www.fishlaketownship.com

A note from Sup. Johnson

I would like to say thank you to everyone that supported me and voted me in. I would like to give everyone my first years update. One thing that I have been working on is trying to understand where our tax money goes when we give it to our fire departments. Now that I understand a little more about the budgeting process for us and the fire departments, I would like to help synchronize the departments and have the same formula for figuring out what we should pay. Last year I was involved in signing a 3 year contract with Cambridge Fire Department which gives us about a \$4000 per year savings. I would also like to share one more thing that can be kind of frustrating. There is this thing called an "Open Meeting Law". This law prevents us as Supervisors from meeting or calling each other and having a meeting without telling the public. This can really make things difficult when you are trying to make sound decisions. Since we normally only meet 1 time per month it could take a couple months to make a decision on something very simple. But those are the rules so we have to go by them. *Corey Johnson*

July 1st Storm

by: *Bob Carter*

On July 1st we had a bad storm with very high winds. The storm appears to have been centered on Fish Lake Twp. Nessel Twp. paid out about \$1,000 and had everything cleaned up in 8 hours. North Branch Twp. had minimal damage as well. A second storm knocked down more trees that had been weakened from the first storm. After numerous meetings with FEMA and a lot of documentation they agreed to pay our claim for \$60,000. Haaven Tree Service had the initial low quote for tree removal and we continued with them. They did a very good job with the clean-up. Thanks to all our Residents for their patience, understanding and cooperation through that whole process.

2012 Candidate Bio's

The Township invited candidates for the upcoming election to write a short Bio for residents to be included in this newsletter. Following are their submissions.

Diane Larkin — Candidate for Township Supervisor

Keeping the concerns of the residents of Fish Lake Township in mind and having a budget that reflects those concerns is my main goal. The Board is bombarded monthly with concepts which would raise property taxes. These ideas have to be looked at, while keeping the goals of the people in mind. If re-elected, I will continue to do this very thing.

Elvin J. Norling-Candidate for Township Supervisor

I have been a resident of Fish Lake Township since 1949. My wife, Wendy, and I have been married for 34 years and I have 6 children. I have farmed in this township all of my life. On March 1, 2011, I retired from the MN Department of Agriculture where I spent 25 years working as a Dairy Inspector. Now that I am retired, I feel that I have time to dedicate to serving the township. I have knowledge of roads, ditches and drainage and understand the importance of maintaining our roads and ditches to keep them in good condition and the ditches and right of way free of brush. I am running for Fish Lake Township Supervisor because I have a desire to serve the township by paying close attention to the budget and controlling costs while delivering the needed services. I feel that I relate well with people and have adequate knowledge of the workings of our local government.

Town Board

Bob Carter
bobcarter@fishlaketownship.com

Diane Larkin
dianelakin@fishlaketownship.com

Corey Johnson
coreyjohnson@fishlaketownship.com

Treasurer

Sharon McAndrew

Clerk

Andrea Nekowitsch
clerk@fishlaketownship.com

Employees

Gary Guse-Grader Operator
Doug Rogers-Part Time
Pat Devine-Hall/Grounds

Fish Lake Township
2170 Brunswick Road
Harris, MN 55032

Phone
651-674-7709

Election Notice

Notice is hereby given to the qualified voters of Fish Lake Township, County of Chisago, State of Minnesota, that the **Annual Election of Town Officers and Annual Township Meeting** will be held on Tuesday, March 13, 2012. In case of inclement weather, the meeting and election may be postponed until the third Tuesday in March. The Election poll hours will be open from 10am to 8 pm, at which time the voters will elect: One Supervisor – 3 year term. The annual meeting will commence at 8:05 pm to conduct all necessary business prescribed by law. The annual meeting and election will be held at the Fish Lake Town Hall, 2170 Brunswick Road, Harris, MN 55032. The Board of Canvass will meet directly after the annual meeting on March 13, 2012 to certify the official election results.

Andrea Nekowitsch, Clerk, Fish Lake Township

Property Taxes

By: Bob Carter

Although we did not raise the Township Levy for 2012 your township portion of your taxes may have increased. According to Dennis Freed, County Auditor, the increase is due to no more state aid. The last bit of State aid was received in 2011 and now the residents are paying the portion that the State of MN use to subsidize towards property taxes.



Township Hall Rental

Did you know that you can rent the Hall at the Township for a nominal fee? Tables and chairs are available for use during the rental day. There is also a full kitchen with appliances and basic dishware, utensils and air conditioning. The next time you are having a special occasion or family get together consider the town hall. Pictures are available at www.fishlaketownship.com Call Pat Devine at 651-248-4005 for pricing and availability

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HARRIS MN 55032

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