DPW - COMMITTEE

Monday, September 21, 2026 - 9:30 AM

Clayton Barber, Chairperson
Chris Clark, Vice-Chairperson

Chairman Barber called this DPW Meeting to order at 9:30 am with the following Supervisors in attendance: Clayton Barber, Matthew Brassard, Chris Clark, Ken Hughes, Mary Lamphear, Tracie McGill, Steve McNally, Clayton Menser, James O'Bryan, Timothy Pierce, Richard Preston, Cathleen Reusser, Matt Stanley, Ike Tyler, Joe Pete Wilson and Margaret Wood. Timothy Follos and Davina Thurston were excused.

Department Heads present: Doreen Abrahamsen, Judy Garrison, Roy Holzer, Michael Mascarenas and Jim Dougan.

Also present: Alice Halloran

BARBER: It's 9:30 I will call the DPW committee to order. Please join me in the pledge. Mr. Dougan, good morning.

DOUGAN: Good morning. How's everybody today? Should I start with resolutions?

BARBER: Sure.

DOUGAN: My first request is a budget amendment. While our sub-contractor for line striping was in a few towns and paving work for them as well so it's a budget amendment for revenue and expenditure just bringing the money in so I can pay it right back out to this sub-contractor it's in my traffic control side of the highway department it's in the amount of $19,922.52.

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING A BUDGET AMENDMENT IN THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS – TRAFFIC CONTROL INCREASING REVENUES AND APPROPRIATIONS IN THE AMOUNT OF $19,922.52, SALE OF MATERIALS TO TOWNS. Pierce, Clark

BARBER: Discussion? Concerns? All in favor, opposed – carried.

DOUGAN: Number two would be authorizing a contract amendment to Allstates Construction. This if for the Moss Road project over Boquet River Bridge in combination with the US Fish & Wildlife and BRASS. This would have Allstates installing the backwall behind the bridge and then replacing all the fill material that was left from BRASS's contractor when they removed the structures from the water as fill around the area then prepping the road to get back to the condition that it was in previously for the town of Lewis so that's in an amount not to exceed $83,050 and the funds are going to come from those US Fish & Wildlife budgeted funds.

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE COUNTY CHAIRMAN OR COUNTY MANAGER TO EXECUTE A CONTRACT AMENDMENT WITH ALLSTATES CONSTRUCTION IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED $83,050.00 FOR THE MOSS ROAD OVER THE BOQUET RIVER BRIDGE REPLACEMENT PROJECT, LOCATED IN THE TOWN OF LEWIS WITH FUNDS TO COME FROM BUDGETED/US FISH & WILDLIFE FUNDS. Pierce, Menser

BARBER: Questions, concerns? All in favor, opposed – carried.

DOUGAN: Number three I am requesting authorizing for a purchase order to Applied Energy it's in the amount of $17,698. This is to install one of those phase back units like we installed at the public safety building. We've had a number of situations where we've had brown outs. We've got three phase service for the courthouse over here and we've had quite a few shots where one phase was significantly low and we've lost a couple piece of expensive equipment so this would basically issue the so that we will stop losing that equipment. The one at the public safety building has been successful I think so far. This is just buying the equipment and our staff will be installing it. It's in the amount of $17,698.00 and it will come from budgeted funds.

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE PURCHASING AGENT TO AWARD A PURCHASE ORDER WITH APPLIED ENERGY IN THE AMOUNT OF $17,698.00, FOR A 750 KVA PHASEBACK POWER QUALITY DEVICE TO BE INSTALLED AT THE ESSEX COUNTY COURTHOUSE, WITH FUNDS TO COME FROM BUDGETED FUNDS AND FURTHER AUTHORIZING THE COUNTY CHAIRMAN OR COUNTY MANAGER TO EXECUTE SAID PURCHASE ORDER.

BARBER: Questions, concerns? All in favor, opposed – carried.

O'BRYAN: Is this a battery system?

DOUGAN: It's not a battery system.

O'BRYAN: Beautiful.

DOUGAN: Nope, it's not a battery system.

BARBER: Like a surge protector?

DOUGAN: It's one of things that is does do is surge protection as well. I tried to do a little description there. It's a voltage regulator, surge protection device, harmonic filter and also eliminates arch flash. It's a miracle device. It's worked so far at the public safety building.

BARBER: Interesting. Any other questions, concerns? All in favor, opposed – carried.

DOUGAN: Number four would be authorizing the purchasing agent to award a contract to Friend Commercial Contracting Corp. it's in the amount of $724,693. This is for the County Route 18 River Road culvert replacement up in St. Armand that was damaged in 2024 from FEMA and this is replacing that with a it's actually, we have already awarded the steel sheet piling we bought that ourselves it's already here and then this company will be installing that sheet piling and the concrete behind it. It's a very, very wet area so we're trying to stay out of the water and installing once they put a culvert over the top of it and I gave you the list of the other bids we had received. Basically we are buying the remainder of the materials now and then starting work in early 2027 and that's budgeted FEMA funds.

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE PURCHASING AGENT TO ISSUE A CONTRACT WITH FRIEND COMMERCIAL CONTRACTING CORP., IN THE AMOUNT OF $724,693.00, FOR GENERAL CONSTRUCTION OF THE RIVER ROAD (CR18) OVER TRIBUTARY TO FRANKLIN FALLS FLOW CULVERT REPLACEMENT PROJECT, LOCATED IN THE TOWN OF ST. ARMAND, WITH FUNDS TO COME FROM BUDGETED FEMA FUNDS AND FURTHER

AUTHORIZING THE COUNTY CHAIRMAN OR COUNTY MANAGER TO EXECUTE SAID CONTRACT. Clark, Menser

BARBER: Questions, concerns?

MCNALLY: When you say budgeted FEMA, what's the breakdown of that, the percentages, what FEMA is paying?

DOUGAN: That project is 75% FEMA, 12 ½ % State of New York and 12 ½% us.

MCNALLY: Thank you.

BARBER: Is there any other questions? All in favor, opposed – carried.

DOUGAN: Number five - this would be authorizing the County Chairman or County Manager to execute any and all easements and right of ways for the Dock Street over Mill Brook project in the Town of Moriah. That's a Bridge NY funded project as a Bridge NY or Federal funded road project you have to follow their procedure for obtaining right of way and offering up compensation for permanent right of way so there's four properties there this is the easement and that's the agreed to amount for those four properties $9,140 and that will come from budgeted/Bridge NY funds that's 95/5 as far as funding 95% State 5% local funded.

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE COUNTY CHAIRMAN OR COUNTY MANAGER TO EXECUTE ANY AND ALL EASEMENTS AND RIGHTS OF WAY RELATED TO THE DOCK STREET OVER MILL BROOK BRIDGE REPLACEMENT PROJECT, LOCATED IN THE TOWN OF MORIAH AND ALL ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS NECESSARY TO EFFECTUATE PAYMENT TO THE PROPERTY OWNERS IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED $9,140.00, WITH FUNDS TO COME FROM BUDGETED BRIDGE NY FUNDS. Barber, Pierce

BARBER: Questions, concerns? All in favor, opposed – carried.

DOUGAN: I did want to give everybody a couple of updates. Gas and diesel as you probably know, no surprise the current rate that we're paying is for diesel is $5.10 a gallon that's up from January that was $2.63 so that's a 93% increase. Gasoline we're paying $4.16 and it was at $2.23 I budgeted, set $150,000 for gas and diesel and keep in mind, that's not just county that uses our fueling system DPW, all county departments use it, town of Lewis uses it for their highway, ACAP uses it, Boquet Valley uses it so I'm projecting that if the rates stay where they are I'm going to spend $890,000 so almost $141,000 over what we budgeted now I am picking some of that back up in revenue those other agencies Serkil solid waste is also there too we make them pay for the fuel and they reimburse us so I'm projecting to get back 60% of it back but it's still going to be about fifty to sixty thousand dollar overage is what I am projecting right now. You guys are all probably seeing the same thing I just wanted you to see that as we are all talking about budgets. Any questions on that before I go to salt?
We still don't have a state contract amount from the state back in May all of the towns gave us their numbers, their quantities and we turned them all into the state and we told the state we were going to have all the towns in the County of Essex County here we are going to have about 19,500 tons of salt and we still don't have a number for it. I do have a number for Clinton County because they went and bid it themselves. Last year they paid $89 a ton for regular salt the contractor just signed, they are going to pay $119.75 a ton that's after bidding it twice.

PIERCE: What was that first number?

DOUGAN: Eight-nine. Last year we paid $83 a ton so if I quickly interpolate those numbers for all of us that's about a $650,000 hit for all of us if that rate stays the same so just, you're probably going to hear it from your highway superintendent's they are calling already asking me for information. Jay the Highway Superintendent for the Town of Chesterfield was actually in attendance at Clinton County Highway Superintendent's meeting and he shared that information with me. We've seen the same kind of numbers even out in Buffalo with the quantities that they buy and the mine that they buy is right in Rochester so it's not even a long haul. I don't have any answers I'm just the bearer of bad news. I don't have a solution now.

REUSSER: Is there any rationale provided for the increase in price?

DOUGAN: You all know we had delivery issues last year. I believe the state came down hard with the vendor that their board used last year I'm assuming that's why that's a hard hit. I also think that last year's hard winter they went ahead and delivered some of their reserves and I don't know if they've kept up with production enough to have enough for what we are all going to need especially if it's another hard winter.

BARBER: Is there any other questions? I'll be the devil's advocate. Any consideration on raising the contract with the towns?

DOUGAN: We have to talk about it.

MASCARENAS: Jimmy and I have had those conversations already we've had them for a number of years. What I don't know is salt is one thing right? We talked about salt, we talked about fuel oil already this morning, we talked energy crisis, we're looking at insurance increases, we're looking at $1.1 million increase to SNAP so anything in the side is easily dealt with but when you have all these items hit you at one time it's a whole other ball game so I would make the assumption that we'll look at an increase for towns that are plowing our roads absolutely I think it makes sense. We'll look at what that number is. I haven't got all the budgets back from the departments yet so I don't know where I'm sitting in terms of my gap at this time but just knowing those few things I just mentioned I can tell you it's rather significant.

BARBER: We just raised the contract was it last year or the year before?

MASCARENAS: It was a few years ago now when we went up 10% a few years ago?

BARBER: Yeah I know I brought that up when it did get raised I was the devil then.

TYLER: I'm not on this committee but have you guys ever thought about giving us news like that be like Angie and giving us a joke? (laughter)

DOUGAN: That was my joke.

MASCARENAS: We know why everybody comes in so depressed on Mondays right?

BARBER: Any other questions?

MENSER: Since the advent of the GPS systems and google maps and everything when people leave highway 87 headed to Vermont they are now being directed through some very back roads in Crown Point that are town roads that were never meant for that kind of traffic and what can we do to correct this because I've got people contacting me about tractor trailers being stuck at the corners of their properties and going over these roads that tractor trailers are not supposed to be on constant traffic 24/7 and people definitely heading for Vermont. Yesterday I literally stood on one person's property and less than five minutes counted 25 cars in five minutes this on a back country road so what can we do because the road is not built for that kind of traffic and the town doesn't have the ability to upgrade that road in fact the comment previously considered closing the road altogether but what can we do to fix this issue?

DOUGAN: I don't have an answer to fix it. I can tell you some of the technics that we've tried. We've found where we can actually submit some information to Google and I would have to have my tech people tell you what that were doing because I don't know, where we tell them that a road is under construction whether it is or not, we've told them those things to try and pull traffic off of it because at least they are getting that orange line on their screen and pushes them some other place. Other than that I think the answer is we need to talk with our attorney and see if we can start to designate some of those roads as not for thru traffic or not for truck traffic. It's a little bit harder to do with a county road because technically the definition of a county road is it's supposed to be that road that is the secondary path to get between a couple of population centers in the case the DOT road is closed.

MENSER: These are town roads.

DOUGAN: I know so you may have a little more flexibility there. I would tell you we should have that conversation with our attorneys to see what you can do for signage.

MENSER: There is already signs that say no tractor trailers but it doesn't stop them.

DOUGAN: Doesn't stop them. I don't know if it is something we can use specifically to send to google or any of those places to make it more permanent that it is not meant to be that kind of a road.

MASCARENAS: Yeah we'll see what we can find. It would be complicated to just remove a road from a route to other people that it exists but having it categorized properly is really the bigger question to what type of traffic whether it's google, whether it's maps, whether it's a million other different mechanisms people are using to get to a locations how do we categorize that and filter that within their systems because if you lived on a town road and you put you wanted to go home and that road wasn't included on home it would be kind of unusual right so, typically you are going through a town road to get to a location you're going to.

CLARK: In Clayton's town there's a corner that's not fit for tractor trailers by Treadway house. It's ridiculous watching those guys trying to make that corner I've been there sitting on their front steps it's not safe. I've been driving truck my whole life and they should know better. There should be some kind of difference telling these guys not to go there. I don't know how you do it obviously but that's one corner that is absolutely not safe. It's a mess.

BARBER: They are starting to work on the Arch Bridge in the Town of Chesterfield and that's going to become an issue because they are making that bridge on weight which obviously that's what they look to do my understanding every time they improve a bridge and I know I was told

that both towns because it comes from the town of Ausable to the Town of Chesterfield that both towns were going to have to pass a resolution to reroute tractor trailers from making that corner from Main Street to Front Street because that's going to be an impossible corner there's a telephone pole right on the corner and right in front of the liquor store so that's going to have to be addressed because they are starting on the Arch Bridge actually this morning they were supposed to start and that will continue right straight through 2027 that they will be working on that.

MENSER: If the town were to put I'll say barriers up what kind of problem would that cause?

DOUGAN: Not a problem for me. That's a legal question I guess.

BRASSARD: You can do what they do over in Vermont in the notch I think the fine is like ten or twelve thousand dollars if a truck gets stuck up there now. They still they have signs if you can't fit through here you are not going to fit down the road and they still do it but the fine is massive now.

MENSER: I'm planning to put signs on the roads that are marked no tractor trailers I want to increase the fine to $5,000 on those but the problem you have then is you have to have a police officer issue a ticket and there's almost never a police officer seen in Crown Point.

BARBER: So Jim I told you I was going to bring this up about Essex County designating certain roads for ATV, UTV's I think it's revenue that Essex County is definitely missing. People being able to use them without, and I know I had a couple constituents that have received tickets on side by side. I know Sheriff Reynolds is not here I wanted to ask him how the County Sheriff's would address that if we did start designating roads?

DOUGAN: Well I did some research for your request and I think the Sheriff has already done a little bit of a presentation on a UTV is in a class that it can't be registered right now so it's illegal for a UTV that's over 1000 pounds, ATV's that are under 1000 pounds if they register them properly can be on the road but UTV's they don't fit into a class right now it's still illegal. I did reach out to Franklin County after our conversation there and the superintendent has been there for a few years but was not aware of any laws that they have that passed it and if there are signs that you saw when you were up there he was unaware of them especially if they were on his road which is town roads he wasn't sure. I think the Sheriff when he was last here told us that if they can stop somebody safely they'll stop them but if they're speeding they are not going to chase them and cause an accident if I recall so I will tell you that there is a bill in the State and I can't remember if it's in the Assembly or the Senate but I will get it to you the number that is in committee right now where they are trying to create a classification for that. In my opinion, my opinion would be you'd be best to let the state lead this. It's not a registered vehicle and all of sudden you go around the process of registering and allowing them I think you're setting yourselves up for liability. You could ask the attorney to help you with it.

MCNALLY: People do register them in the State of Vermont and when they go to register them they buy all their ammunition there too.

BARBER: I know that is happening and they are also registering them in the State of Maine, side by sides are being registered in Maine.

MCNALLY: You could go out to the Tug Hill area that's an industry in itself out there.

BARBER: Like I said I went to Loon Lake about two months ago and there were six, seven couples we all had side by sides, we crossed state highway, state troopers went by didn't – we were all just waiting to go across the state highway they didn't stop, didn't bother us. I went to St. Regis Falls I know there was some signs there for ATV, UTV –

MCNALLY: This is all being triggered by the Green Groups don't kid yourself.

BARBER: I'm sorry can you say that again?

MCNALLY: The Green Groups, on registering them.

CLARK: We go to Lewis County quite often and one of the legislators out Rick Lucas out there is working on getting the state to have some kind of registration form. Most law enforcement unless you're doing something stupid don't care but I have a problem right in my town because there's a brewery and there's a little section of state road they have to run it's only a quarter of a mile but it still could be a problem. They look the other way unless you're doing something dumb.

BARBER: Right and I will say that I know one of them was right downtown main street goes by my office quite a bit but he doesn't have a license so he's actually using his side by side as transportation and he plows driveways in the winter, got the lights on, got the whole nine yards but again he got stopped.

MENSER: They drive them all over Crown Point. I know there are several individuals that have side by sides and they drive from Crown Point all the way to Paradox Brewery on a regular basis.

BARBER: I have some that are actually going through Chesterfield but I'm surprised they haven't been stopped.

MENSER: One of these is a state trooper.

BARBER: Okay is there anything else for Jim? Okay thank you Jim. Alice – Soil & Water. Good morning.

HALLORAN: Just some highlights I did hand out the winter maintenance workshop event that we are holding on Wednesday morning for the highway departments and that's kind of tied to our WQRP grant for road salt reduction so that's on Wednesday.
We have a tire drive, our final tire drive will be next Tuesday, September 29th at 4 p.m. at the fairgrounds. Another new thing that we did was hold a director's meeting for our region. We have different provisions of soil and water conservation districts throughout the state and our bureau director just held a meeting to get our directors together with other ones and build some connections and communication there. So that was totally successful we are going to try and do that once a year or as needed or requested by the Directors. Other than that we're getting our hydro seeder back today so hopefully that works really well and we can get all of the places that weren't able to get to since it's been down so give us a call and we'll put you on the list and hopefully we can do everything we can before it gets too cold.

MENSER: The landfill project that we've got going out for bid the county is helping us with that and your department said we can use the hydro seeder come down and work with us and reseed that area that will probably happen in late spring next year is that going to be any kind of an issue?

HALLORAN: Hopefully not. We can talk about it. I know that some area we might not be able to reach so I think we should just maybe take a closer look and see what we can make sure what we can do.

BARBER: Is there anything else for Alice? Thank you, have a great day. Doreen, Transportation.

ABRAHAMSEN: Good morning everyone. No bad news but I have nothing extra to report but my statistics for the month. Still looking for bus drivers, lost another full time recently last week so any help, any ideas I've asked for help from a couple of agencies that I work with and the state to spread the word anyway they can and that's about it. Gearing up for the winter.

REUSSER: Have we approached looking at other resources like the school bus drivers in the different schools and putting information out to them where maybe we will accept a per diem position that kind of thing?

ABRAHAMSEN: Yes I have a couple of 19a CD's that I contract with and one is situated in Ticonderoga, and one is up there and they put the word out plus I've made calls to each school district to find that out. I put an email out to all the town supervisors in case there was anybody on their road crew or anybody that wanted to pick up a weekend, a Saturday or a Sunday, after hour we have the ski seven days a week so, anybody that is interested. There's an occasional, we have one or two from DPW although he's looking, he's going to be hard for his plowing this year but we do have occasionally a couple from there. If they have their CDL we can train them to get their passenger endorsement and we'll pay them to get trained so we have that. I've kind of stretched it. We've got new flyers online, our website our Facebook page, posted on the buses, BOCES all those places.

MASCARENAS: I had spoke to a school superintendent not that long ago and they're struggling to get bus drivers as well and to the point where extra curriculars are even difficult for them in terms of getting to games after school, making the afterschool bus runs those types of things some of those things even have been canceled or had to change nights because they would have one bus driver and they can't bring two so I think it's an issue that's plaguing everyone that does transportation not just us.

MCNALLY: A full-time bus driver, how many hours do they work a week?

ABRAHAMSEN: Forty if you're full-time.

MCNALLY: Full-time forty. What's the starting pay?

ABRAHAMSEN: $22.88 and hopefully it will go up something after the first year.

MCNALLY: That's where the rubber hits the road, $22.88 is not enough.

ABRAHAMSEN: We are about in line with area school bus drivers. You're right.

MCNALLY: But they are also short drivers see what's happening here?

ABRAHAMSEN: Exactly I think everything should go up a little bit, yes.

MCNALLY: Don't we get reimbursed for our expenses?

MASCARENAS: Yes.

MCNALLY: 100% reimbursement?

MASCARENAS: Yes if foster care was reimbursed at the rate transportation was we would all be good.

MCNALLY: So why done' we offer more money so we can fill these positions?

MASCARENAS: It doesn't mean your rate is going to necessarily increase it may I don't know how the funding works exactly but typically funding allocations are typically more flat and anything you spend above you get money to do everything where if you can get your labor cheap enough you can almost run anything at zero but typically that's not the way it works.

ABRAHAMSEN: We get 50% of what we don't cover in expenses. We're lucky in the fact that I have a lot of other than STOA contracts that makes up in STOA the state operated helps to towards that 50% so I'm in a good position knock on wood but you know with the price of parts and oil and everything, gas going up you know that's going to make it harder for us to meet in the middle. There could be a time when there –

MASCARENAS: Yeah many counties do we manage to operate some of it is our mileage where we have added mileage where other counties don't but most counties don't operate transportation as cheaply and it's like anything else you do if you get to the point where it's one of those items mandated verses unmandated, who is utilizing the service, how vital is it to our public all those fun things that's what you're really going to look at instead of just saying well, we should just raise the rate across the board. There's a number of things that you're going to look at you've got 24 other departments that you're running and 85% of your budget are required items so like I said, looking at everything in a silo sometimes is difficult.

REUSSER: I would just like to remind us that the benefit side of what Essex County does has a tremendous value in the moment and in a career the retirement is immense, the access to health care, disability, the accrual benefits are very generous so you're not going to get that at other places even at the Town of Elizabethtown same scenario we do pay more per hour but we don't have the benefits that Essex County has.

BARBER: School bus drivers if they have a contract, my brother drives school bus and they are more up to $28/$30 dollars an hour with a contract when they are driving.

TYLER: I can understand how tough it is driving school bus. I can tell you back when I was doing it seventeen years it was crappy pay and it's crappy pay now with the responsibilities that you have now more of the majority of your time you're just a bus driver with all these kids on the bus not like in school with the teachers you have back up and stuff and as far as I'm concerned the bus driver will never make enough money to drive the school buses.

BARBER: Before we go, Jim, can you send or Mike the county contract the Town of Chesterfield just hired someone for the highway department and we're debating on whether or not to send him to the two-week training and supposedly when they come back they have their license or we have called One Work Source and talked to them about the training that they have too.

DOUGAN: You are looking for our reimbursement?

BARBER: Yeah the contract that you have over the course of the year or whatever it is? Is there anything else to be brought up before this board? We're adjourned.

As there was no further discussion to come before this DPW committee it was adjourned at 10:05 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Judith Garrison, Clerk
Board of Supervisors