

GLA ROAD COMMITTEE 11-19-2015

GLFPC Summary/Interpretation of the GLA Road Committee Meeting November 19, 2015

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GLA currently owns and depends on one snow plow/sander unit to remove snow from all GLA roads. Should GLA own a second unit? Acting snowplow coordinator, Charlene Murphy, chaired a GLA Road Committee meeting Thursday November 19, 2015 to consider this question. Four committee members and 10 landowners attended.

Consensus, after a round-robin circle discussion, showed that those present felt a second plow was a reasonable expense and investment for GLA. However one landowner said that without a solid plan in place for driver training, insurance and wages plus truck maintenance and operation cost estimates, no purchase decision should be made.

Committee member Walter Wunsch reported that he had found a used snowplow with a wing attachment and sander unit (5 times larger than our current sander) that was reduced in price from \$14,000 to \$10,000. The unit, which looks like a small highway plow, would cut the plowing time by half, said Wunsch but it would be more of a machine than we would need most of the time. The 5-ton vehicle has air brakes, hydraulics, and plows a strip wider than most county plows. Drivers for this truck would need a CDL license. Wunsch also speculated that another \$3000 would be needed to make the truck road-ready for Glastonbury, and suggested that community donations could be solicited to help pay for a new snow plow.

Realizing that this was not a four-wheel drive vehicle, some questioned whether this plow truck would lack control on GLA's mountain roads. Others were concerned about high maintenance costs, noting that one new tire alone would cost about \$1200, and fearful that it could do serious damage or generate heavy liability unless the drivers had a real feel for conditions.

Committee member Ed Dobrowski said he thought a smaller pickup with "dualies" and a V-plow would operate more efficiently and have the power needed for the high SG roads. He speculated that such a unit could be purchased for about the same cost and that it would be much easier to find drivers, given that it is hard to find truck drivers with CDL licenses, and that insurance, maintenance and operating costs would be less as well.

Murphy reported that GLA has about \$8,000 left over from the 2015 budget which could be allocated for a new snow plow. Another \$5,000 is expected income from a recent billing to a landowner who has agreed to pay for the additional review and study costs of their variance request. One landowner said he thought he could raise some donations

from his High South neighbors to off-set the cost of a second truck and asked if GLA would consider a matching funds option.

Others, who advocated for a second truck, called the current one-truck plan unfair because NG roads are typically plowed first leaving SG members who also need to get to work or take children to the school bus to use roads that are not plowed until later in the day. They also saw wisdom in having a second truck for backup given that the present truck dates to 2006. And further, they reasoned the current truck would wear out more slowly if a second heavier duty truck were in use. Murphy explained that in the first snow of this year, which averaged at least 12 inches and some places as much as 18 inches, the current one-ton truck was worked to the maximum for 12 hours. She said the long heavy use was hard on the truck's battery (used to lift and move the blade), the power steering and the brakes.

In other discussion, a landowner said that even though private contractors can operate cheaper, GLA still needs a second truck for safety and backup. He cautioned however that without better road maintenance, the potential damage to any snowplow is high. He noted that some roads have no gravel and others have boulders in the roadbed that can wreak havoc to a snow blade. Others questioned if private contractors really are cheaper because most of them use mag chloride to manage ice instead of sand.

He urged GLA to install more "edge of the road markers" so that snow plow drivers have a better sense of where the roadbed is when the road is covered with snowdrifts. After others remembered times when snowplows went off the road, Murphy reported that GLA has already purchased some poles to mark the road edges where there is a lot of drifting and that snow plow employee Fred Counts plans to install them soon.

Referencing the fact that the board established separate road funds for NG and SG, one landowner asked who would own the second truck and how could it be a win-win for all? Murphy explained that while the road maintenance budgets have been separated, the snow budget remains as one and that a new snowplow truck would be owned by all landowners with something like a Tenant-in-Common ownership arrangement. Financial Consultant Regina Wunsch explained that while there is more plowing to do in South than North and more sanding is needed in North than South, it turns out that snow removal costs run about the same for each area.

To address the question of why not just rely on friendly volunteer snow plowers to open the roads in a timely way, such as happened during the first snowfall of this season, Murphy said GLA cannot ask anyone to voluntarily plow snow on GLA roads given liability concerns. Others said GLA should consult with the insurance company to learn if volunteer snow plow truck owners could sign a waiver that would release GLA from all liability concerns.

As the meeting ended, it was generally agreed that while a long-term road plan is needed, there is an immediate need to install road edge marking poles, and now is the time to start looking for a second snow plow truck.

The ideal unit would be a 1½ – 2½ ton truck with an 8-foot bed (for a sander – GLA has an old sander that needs about \$4000 in repairs), with a 3/8s high carbon steel V-snow blade, with a cost from \$8 to \$10,000 and from 8 to 10 years old. When it was understood that the truck prices are often better out of state, several said they would be able to go and get the truck.

With the holiday season ahead, the group felt the next meeting on snowplows should happen in January of 2016.