

Neglected town roads topic of concern

Written by MARK JAEGER
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Resident says commitment to holding the line on local taxes has taken its toll on pavement

There was an interesting twist on the great tax debate at the Town of Saukville's recent annual meeting when a resident said not enough money was being spent on local roads.

The criticism was prefaced by comments from Town Chairman Barb Jobs on how the town's tax rate has been held stable for the past three years.

That frugality has had a troublesome impact on the conditions of rural roads, said Hawthorne Drive resident Al Gosewehr.

"Our roads are going to hell in a heartbeat," Gosewehr said.

"I have an 18-inch town culvert near my property that barely has three inches of clearance, it is so clogged. Why, in three years, hasn't the town dealt with this?"

Gosewehr said the town's desire to hold spending in check has resulted in paving projects being virtually ignored.

"There are a lot of areas where the edges of the pavement are being broken off. That is something that can't be fixed by crack sealing," he said.

"The Town of Belgium has roughly the same budget and amount of roads, and they commit to repaving 1.5 miles of road every year. When was the last time we paved 1.5 miles of road?" he asked.

"We have 40 miles of roads in the town, and you can't find 5% of those roads that are in good shape."

With its current approach, Gosewehr said the town is going to have to borrow money to tackle road conditions.

He also questioned the priorities of town officials when it comes to keeping roadways in good shape, noting that he recently saw county crews clearing brush from the roadside of Blue Goose Road.

"There are 20 roads that need it more than that road," he said.

Jobs said officials face the challenge of maintaining roads while living with strict budget constraints.

Jobs said the town's tax base has stagnated, leaving little additional revenue to address ongoing maintenance issues.

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“When I came to office, the road needed help, but the roof on Town Hall was also leaking and the boiler was an antique,” she said, noting that officials have made it a priority to maintain the hall where town business is conducted.

“I will not take the town into debt. We are doing the best we can, but we are also stuck with a lot of the problems of the past.”

The town has \$35,000 budgeted this year for road construction and \$44,500 for addressing potholes and other repairs.

Following the annual meeting, the Town Board approved several minor road projects recommended by the Ozaukee County Highway Department.

They include filling potholes throughout the town, establishing a drainage swale to eliminate the washout on Hillcrest Road east of Highway I and temporarily filling holes that have developed on Highview Lane.

Town officials will get a closer look at paving problems throughout the community during the board’s annual road inspection tour, scheduled to leave Town Hall at 7:30 a.m. Monday, May 6.