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Prompted by $100,000 bill, board to see if private firm will do work for less

With considerable reluctance, the Fredonia Town Board agreed to seek snow-plowing bids from private contractors.

The idea was proposed earlier this year by Supr. John Blasczyk after snow-plowing bills from the Ozaukee County Highway Department topped $100,000 last year.

The town has 51 miles of public roads.

Blasczyk said he is most concerned that the county charges the town a storage fee so equipment is available when it snows and an overtime rate for plowing town roads at night and on weekends.

Convinced there are less costly options, Blasczyk said, he began contacting private companies about bidding for the job.

“I think we owe it to our taxpayers to at least get bids. There are a lot of private companies out there that are looking for work,” he said.

“I know of at least three local firms that might be interested in the job. All I am asking is that we put the work out for bid and see what kind of response we get.”

Town Chairman Richard Mueller was skeptical that going with a private contractor is a better option.

“If we are serious about going with someone else, we better make sure they have the people and the equipment available so they can get out when we need it,” Mueller said.

“If the difference is only a few dollars, I don’t think we should change, but I have no problem with getting bids.”

Although several townships have switched to private companies for plowing, Mueller said he would have a difficult time supporting such a move.

“If we switch, I want nothing to do with it. If people end up having complaints, they can call John (Blasczyk),” Mueller said.

County Supr. Rose Hass Leider lobbied to keep the plowing with the county, a view she shared at previous town meetings.

“We have the manpower. We have the equipment and the ability to get the job done in rapid time. The plows are stored in the Waubeka shed,” Leider said.

“Our guys do a great job. I don’t know why, if someone works that hard for you, you would consider dumping them. It is what you call being penny wise and dollar foolish.”

Supr. Chris Janik questioned how the town can get meaningful bids on plowing, since costs can be so variable based on the whims of Mother Nature.

“Snow removal is such a crap shoot anyway, because you never know how much snow we will get,” Janik said.

The board agreed to seek plowing bids and an explanation of the county’s charges before finalizing the 2012 budget.