

Jay Road project will cost much more than estimated

Written by MARK JAEGER

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Engineer tells town miscalculating asphalt need resulted in \$200,000 error

An apologetic engineer told the Fredonia Town Board last week that estimates for the repaving of Jay Road were off by about \$200,000.

The news sent officials scrambling for ways to cut corners on a project that is now expected to cost as much as \$490,000.

The mood was markedly different earlier this spring when town officials learned that the project had been accepted for a \$140,000 matching grant from the state's Town Road Discretionary Improvement Program.

At that time, the grant was expected to cover about half of the paving work from Highway 57 to Random Lake Road.

The engineering firm Bonestroo was hired last fall to prepare the grant request. The Town of Fredonia was the only community in Ozaukee County to receive a portion of the \$11 million road improvement fund.

Consulting engineer Allan Schmidt said the grant money is still available, but a miscalculation on the amount of asphalt needed for the job resulted in the errant numbers.

"As we were going over everything, we noticed we dropped a zero somewhere on the estimate tonnage of asphalt needed," Schmidt said.

Now that the work has been included in the state grant program, the town cannot change the area that will be pulverized and repaved. The work zone covers 7,800 feet, about 1-1/2 miles.

However, Schmidt said, modifications can be made on such specifications as the thickness of the new pavement, as well as the width of the roadway shoulders, to reduce the cost.

The town would have to get exemptions from the state to make substantial changes in the proposed road design, he said.

Because the state funding is a reimbursement for construction expenses, the town must pay for the work before receiving the funding from the Department of Transportation.

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Schmidt said the town could pay for the entire project next year, avoiding inevitable price increases, or stretch payments over as many as five years by doing the work in phases.

One of the most costly components of the proposed road project is cutting back the hill immediately west of the Cedar Valley Cheese factory property by as much as four feet.

Town officials said they would mull their options on the road project, but couldn't help but voice disappointment with the underestimated expense.

"Missing an estimate by \$200,000 is not a small amount. A 40% error is a big number," Supr. Jim Stemper said.

"The cost overrun is tied to our asphalt estimate. It is a fairly large asphalt project," Schmidt said.

"It is not easy to sit in front of you and admit that we didn't notice the error."

Despite the higher cost, Town Chairman Richard Mueller said the town should proceed with the work, especially with \$140,000 in state money being offered.

"I am sure we are going to go ahead with the project. We'll get back to you on how we want to do it," Mueller told the engineer.

"Perhaps if we had put a higher estimate in the grant proposal, we might not have gotten it."