

Town officials pleased with plowing

Written by MARK JAEGER

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Private contractor has been able to keep rural roads clear during this challenging winter, board says

Town of Saukville officials said their decision to go with a private contractor to plow the snow on rural roads this winter would serve as a test drive.

Based on reactions at last week's Town Board meeting, that trial has been going smoothly.

At the end of last year, town officials decided to contract with Jim's Maintenance of Grafton to clear snow from town roads, starting Jan. 1. The contract runs through May 1.

According to the contract, the company is to plow town roads whenever there is more than a two-inch snowfall. The contractor is expected to have roads passable by 5 a.m. following an overnight storm, with two lanes of traffic to be cleared by 7 a.m.

The switch was made after town officials repeatedly complained about the rising cost of having the Ozaukee County Highway Department handle plowing.

The first couple weeks of the new agreement have given the company ample opportunity to prove its worth.

In addition to several moderate snow storms, an ice storm glazed over the area on Jan. 10.

Jim Proefrock of the plowing company said drivers are getting familiar with the community and the challenges the different country roads pose.

"We are learning where the drifts form and where the shady sides of the road are that need more salt," Proefrock said.

"We have been spreading plenty of salt at the intersections and curves."

Ice rather than snow has proved the biggest challenge of the first month of the plowing contract.

Proefrock said the Jan. 10 ice storm, the worst the area has seen since 1996, required 80 tons of salt on town roads.

He said a typical salting operation in the town needs about 10 to 12 tons of salt.

"We went out salting two or three times, and did the bridges four times," Proefrock said.

Depending on conditions, he told town officials the company may blend more sand with its salt, to encourage additional traction and melting.

Proefrock said he keeps a close eye on bridges and culverts, because they are the first to ice

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up.

“If the weather is threatening, I drive the I-43 bridge and if it is icy we start salting,” he said.

The critical connection between the Ozaukee County Sheriff’s Department and Jim’s Maintenance is in place, Proefrock said, noting that the company has received calls from the department when snow-covered town roads have gotten slippery.

“I don’t think the first plowing went too bad,” he said.

Supr. Kate Smallish said the company seems to take a different approach to plowing, especially around St. Finbar Road.

“I noticed you pushed snow way back at the corners, which was never done before,” Smallish said.

“We are 21 days into this new plowing agreement, and I think it is working great,” Supr. Curt Rutkowski said at last week’s board meeting.

Town Chairman Barb Jobs said most residents seem pleased with the service, especially if they realize they are not paying for the kind of heavy-duty V-plows that keep the interstate system clear.

“All we were looking for was something that was equal to what we were getting from the county, and maybe a little better,” Jobs said.

Proefrock said he got an unsolicited review from a satisfied resident.

“One lady asked me if we could do the entire county, because your town roads were getting done before the county,” he said.