



BOARD OF COUNTY ROAD COMMISSIONERS OF BARRY COUNTY

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April 22, 2015

Don Haneckow, President
Pine Lake Association
PO BOX 3
Plainwell, MI 49080

Dear Mr. Haneckow:

Following please find my responses to your questionnaire. Hope you find it useful. Don't hesitate to call if you have any further questions or need some clarification.

Is there a schedule for road resurfacing in our area?

We have not yet received 2015 work yet from most of our townships, including Prairievile. But they do have a chip seal as part of the Oakridge Drive Special Assessment District.

What is used to determine when a road is resurfaced?

The Barry CRC analyzes each segment of paved county road in the entire county annually and makes recommendations to the townships on what type of repair should be done and when. Sound science and engineering principles are used to make these recommendations with the goal of doing the right repair at the right time in order to minimize the "life cycle" cost of each segment of road. Doing the right repair at the right time has become harder and harder as the costs of raw materials has escalated out of control. Currently the Barry CRC has roughly \$12 million in currently unmet paved roads needs alone.

Is there a schedule to pave unpaved roads in our area?

No. Gravel roads are paved through the township by setting up special assessment districts for each project.

We pay 0.9 mil in additional taxes for "Road Maintenance". What does this get us that a township without this additional assessment gets?

Much more work, which causes additional match from the Barry CRC in the form of our equipment and labor which are typically (varies by project type) not charged to townships when they approve road projects. The townships with millages are able to spend funds from their general fund and their road millages to come closer to the needs of the road system in their township. Most townships with road millages are less "behind" than other

townships. I.e. less a part of the \$12 million mentioned above.

Is there an articulated list of improvements that we get for our additional millage above and beyond what “everyone” gets?

Not sure and definitely not at the Road Commission. When townships approve a project other than a special assessment district project, they simply approve the project without a breakdown of which funding source the revenue actually came from. Townships get funds from several different sources such as millages, property taxes, the state sales tax (revenue sharing), etc. I am unaware of any townships that further breakdown their expenditures as to which revenue source it came from. To do so would seem problematic. As an example was project A funded from revenue sharing, project B from the millage, and project C funded from a combination of the two and project D from yet some other source. Or were they all funded proportionally to the overall road expenditure budget which includes funds from several different sources? My guess is the latter as to how most, if not all, the townships actually do this, but that is a question for townships as the Road Commission does not question where their funds come from.

Which roads are private and which ones are public and therefore under the county's maintenance program? When we built our barn we got different messages from differing departments.

Enclosed please find a county road map (attachment A). Also you can call the Barry CRC and ask if a given segment of road is a “certified county road”. Attached please find Attachment “B” which is a copy of the four “certification maps” for the sections 5, 6, 7, & 8 of Prairievile township. The Barry CRC is the authority on which roads are or are not under county road jurisdiction, there are no other departments that should be relied upon for this question.

How many property owners along the road to be paved need to approve paving? Conversely what percent if approval is done by frontage?

Usually 51% for both, but you are actually questioning the standard for a special assessment district which are done by the townships. Please check with them for the actual standard as they can choose to use stricter standards and in some cases possibly lower standards. But it seems to us that in most cases 51% is the standard.

Since the county stands to benefit from increased property values and therefore more tax revenue if roads are paved, shouldn't they bear some of the cost burden?

The Barry CRC does not receive property taxes other than those that a township may pass on to for specific projects which they choose. The Barry CRC is funded through the gas tax and vehicle registration fees. Regardless, the Barry CRC currently does help some toward funding paving projects. This practice is in question though, as we are currently \$12 million behind on current unmet paved road needs. The specific question is... should we continue adding new pavement when we aren't even close to adequately maintaining what we have? The cost of preventative maintenance (chip sealing, crack sealing, patching, etc.) is so high, we can't afford to do the right repair at the right time on existing main through roads, much less on lower volume roads. This makes justification for adding new paved roads is difficult.

What are the environmental drawbacks to dirt roads by bodies of water (e.g dirt and chemical runoff)?

Gravel or dirt roads can have higher levels of erosion especially in steep areas, but paved roads don't soak up and filter any water like gravel roads can. Also the Road Commission doesn't apply salt (or very little) to gravel roads like is done on paved roads. So salt runoff into water bodies is lower around gravel roads. If dust control is applied to gravel roads, it is paid for by the townships and not done by the Barry CRC. Inevitably if it rains hard enough on steep enough areas erosion will occur on gravel roads and on the gravel shoulders of paved roads. If this runoff does not have time to slow down/get filtered through the earth or vegetation before it gets to the water body, sediment and salts will get into the water. Land adjacent to roadways can be used as a filter area/strip if landowners maintain it as such to help mitigate impacts to the water body. In some cases roads were built so steep and/or so close to the water edge that little can done about runoff from either paved or gravel roads.

How do we get the process started to get a county road paved....specifically Woodward and Lakeway?

Have your township request an estimate for said paving from the Barry CRC. They can also guide you through the rest of the special assessment process that will likely apply.

The road commission guy told me yesterday no repaving but further patching once warms up, at least on merlau and long point..But gravel roads were going to get a fresh layer

How is the final decision made? By an individual or board vote?

The Barry CRC used to do chip sealing on paved roads and add gravel to gravel roads each summer. The townships help fund each. For the last several years to obtain further efficiencies, we now do two years worth of

chip sealing one summer and two years worth of graveling the next. By doing "twice as much while we are there" reduces down time, reduces mobilization costs for different equipment and achieves an overall larger economy of scale which allows more to be done quicker. So the Barry CRC chip seals in even years (2012, 2014, 2016, etc.) and applies gravel in odd years (2013, 2015, 2017 etc.). Any other construction type such as hot mix asphalt paving is done as approved by the townships (almost always through a special assessment district) and can be done every year. Crack sealing, dust control, center and edge line painting, roadside mowing, grading gravel roads, snow plowing, rehabilitation, reconstruction, bridge work, drainage, etc, etc. are also done each year.

The Board of County Road Commissioners of Barry County decided to alternate years as stated above. The actual selection of projects each year are chosen by the township boards and then approved by the Road Commission board prior to construction. Road Commission staff does make recommendations as to repair type, repair costs, longevity of the repair, etc.

If we get a petition how many signatures are needed to take it further?

I believe 51% of the landowners, but please check with your township as they are the entity that executes special assessment districts for your area.

Can they correct their bad grading job when they repave to correct the drainage issues affecting homes on Merlau & Long Point?

Generally there is not a lot that can be done without huge costs. The new pavement needs to match each driveway so as not to leave large drops or bumps. The crown in the road can usually be raised which may or may not help some cases. Sometimes the crown can be inverted to run water down the center of the road to catch basins but this involves huge costs of additional storm sewer. The real answer is on a case by case basis, lot by lot this can be looked at if such a project were being considered. But most of the time these roads and especially their associated drainage needs to be redesigned and built to accomplish whatever the assessed parties as a group want to accomplish. Unfortunately this usually comes at a high price.

I think my message would be that it is time to look at Merlau again. By my (crude) count there are over 230 properties that use this road to get to their place. The patch job isn't really getting it done anymore.

We agree, just have your township to ask us for an estimate. We would then like to meet with landowners so as to include any drainage improvements they feel are needed so they can be incorporated into estimate.

I wonder if we could all band together as a lake community to pave and maintain all the roads? I wonder what are roads taxes DO go for. I've been calling for weeks to get our road graded and nothing yet.

A community could possibly incorporate into a village and thus become a public entity and receive funding from the gas taxes and vehicle registration fees for the public roads under their jurisdiction. Or there is likely a way that the Pine Lake Association could request the Road Commission abandon the public roads and then have the Pine Lake community (or each road individually) assume jurisdiction as private roads without public funding. Hypothetically, if the Barry CRC abandoned the roads around Pine Lake and the Association could find a way to get those funds (doubtful without becoming a village) it would get \$1,613 per mile per year whether the road is paved or gravel. That equates to just over \$6400 per year for all 3.98 miles of county roads that are in the subdivisions around Pine Lake. The Barry CRC spends far more than that because it transfers up to 30% of our primary road funds to the local roads each year because of inadequate funding.

From that \$1613 per mile per year that the BCRC gets, the Association would have to purchase liability insurance and perform all other road related expenses such as signing, snow removal, and whatever resurfacing, drainage, etc and paving of new roads it could afford. FYI 2" of asphalt 24 feet wide would cost roughly \$140,000 with no pavement removal or drainage improvements, just overlayed onto whatever exists. Snow removal alone, much less gravel road grading would exceed these numbers.

That's awful...the road tax revenue has to include all tax payers properties one would think...

Incorrect. The Barry CRC is funded through gas taxes and vehicle registration fees, not property taxes. The only property taxes we receive are when a township funds a project that they choose to which we add some of our funds to help get the project done. The average MI motorist currently pays \$100 per year in vehicle registration fee and \$0.19 per gallon state gas tax which all goes to fund MI roads. Assuming 19 miles per gallon fuel economy, the state gas tax costs 1 cent per mile driven. This penny per mile and your vehicle registration fee are what you pay to use all Michigan roads including expressways, county roads and city and village streets. The portion that the Barry CRC receives is reflected above in the previous response.

Does anyone know why the county cut down all the trees along the side of Merlau? Speculation was that it

was due to some “road plan”..

The Barry CRC did cut down the trees per landowner request and it was not linked to any road plan that we are aware of. The landowner owns the trees and thus we placed them as requested.

Thanks for taking the time to read all of the above. I would be happy to be even more thorough in person as this is a lot to type and I am sure there are more questions.

Respectfully,

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Managing Director

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