

Chairman's Report to the Town

1. The biggest project last year was and will be the Berry Road blacktop project. This road has been an issue keeping a grade on it since I have been on the board. In talking to the highway engineer, he stated it would continue to be, even with more gravel, because of the heavy traffic that travels this road. It would be impossible to keep the fines in the gravel, which is what binds the rock together. Last year we re-ditched the stretch of road that will be blacktopped, which is a little over a half mile, set in culverts, redid the drainage along the roadway, and put down anywhere from 4"-8" of 1 ¼ " base course gravel. This year we will final grade and put down 4" of blacktop. The reason we didn't do the whole mile since just past the point of the 6M Cranberry Marsh beds, the road narrows and becomes quite wet. We were successful in getting TRIP funding for it, to the tune of just under \$25,000. We have to put up the entire amount first, then will be reimbursed. We should have enough cash on hand to get it done. The TRIP funding is a competitive grant that about 12 towns applied for and 6 received.
2. The roof on the town hall is a concern and will need to be addressed in the next year or two. The south side is really starting to curl and deteriorate, whereas the north side is doing very well. Once we see that action needs to be taken, we will price out steel and fiberglass shingles. I would hope to go with steel because it would be a permanent fix but that will be decided when the time comes.
3. We purchased an LP tank this past year from the old Abby Gas. The new company wasn't quite as liberal as Abby Gas was, i.e. they required money up front to lock in a price. Tom and I set the tank and Winch Oil hooked it up for us and pumped all the old fuel out of the old tank. We then allowed Winch to fill it for us once. This spring I checked prices and found that Harmony Coop offered the best price, so we filled it up with them. With our own tank, we can be choosy on who fills based on price.
4. Wallace Road will probably be the next road to need work. The blacktop on that stretch was laid in 1998 and is getting to the point of no return. We patched an area at the base of the hill where it started to break up. We will probably do the same with this road as we did with Cranberry and Hoffman, applying gravel and grinding the old blacktop and gravel. And will of course we will replace the culverts along that road as well. This should be able to hold for a couple more years yet, which will allow for us to build our reserves up to pay for it. If the state, depending on funding, has TRIP applications again, we can apply for that funding as well.
5. When we do Wallace Road, the board will need to take a serious look at blacktopping more of the town hall parking lot. It has become a high traffic area for the kids doing burn-outs. Even with the one strip we have, they are still able to throw gravel all the way up to the front of the hall. We have A LOT of broken vinyl siding to show for this. So far, we only have had one broken window, and that was a few years back, although it isn't from them not trying.
6. State funding continues to be of concern, both now and for future budgets. We have done the best we can to hold our levy down and took the step last year to keep our levy at a 0% increase. The board was very cognizant of the fact the

- Pittsville School District levy was going to go sky high, as it did. The county levy and VTAE levies both held pretty steady. The board will continue to look for ways to save monies where we can but there are things that are mandated onto us that we must pay for, such as recycling and elections.
7. Speaking of elections, these continue to be costly endeavors. The training that is required is increasing. I am not knocking the training, don't get me wrong. Elections of 2010 are much different than elections of 1990 or even 2000. With the Presidential Election of 2000 and its aftermath have come more and more mandates and rules on how elections must be run and what equipment must be obtained. Central count, where we take our ballots to the courthouse and have them counted the night of election, is done. It did not meet "HAVA" (Help America Vote Act). As has been discussed before, the board decided against purchasing the \$6,500.00 precinct counter and have chosen to go back to hand counting. The state has allowed for smaller towns to be able to do this. I can't say how long they will allow it, or how long the federal government will allow it. HAVA requires that if a voter makes a mistake, they must be allowed to correct it so that their ballot counts. This is especially true in the partisan primary in September, where voters are not allowed to cross party lines in their vote. There are always some ballots that get disqualified because they do cross over. The election workers tell everyone not to cross over, but it does happen. Our hand counting system does not allow for a voter to know if they have made a mistake or not. The upshot of this entire conversation is that we may end up having to spend the money to buy the precinct counter in the future depending on what is required. Personally, I believe the voter bears some responsibility to vote correctly. Until forced to do otherwise, we will go the way we are going.
 8. We elected a new clerk last year in Janice Schultz and she is doing a fantastic job. The job of the clerk, because of elections and financial reporting, is becoming more and more complex as time goes on. You will have noticed in the annual report that we incurred some expenses for training. Some of the training has travel attached to it and some of it Janice does on the internet. The board encourages Janice, if not insistent on the fact that she does go to training. The role of the clerk has also changed in the past 20 years as well. Also, in relation to training, election workers must have continuing training and the chief inspector must have up to 3 hours per year to keep up their "chief" status. This comes with a cost as well, but, again this is mandated by the state and federal government.
 9. Last year, we brought up computer usage at the annual meeting as it relates to the clerk and treasurer. The annual meeting instructed the board to come up with figures that they saw fit. I am report to the electors that after polling all the towns in Wood County, we came up with \$250.00/year for the clerk and \$150.00/year for the treasurer. Both are keeping track of what the costs are to make sure we are not over paying or underpaying. There are a lot of towns out there that have provided laptops and computers for their clerks and treasurers but we did not think this was a good idea because of how we use ours and how soon they become obsolete.
 10. This past year we started a town website, www.townofhiles.com. It is approximately \$300.00/year to keep it up, but when you figure the money we

spend in ads in the Pittsville Record, it really is a good deal. This will not replace those ads yet, as the state does not recognize websites yet as official notices. Janice puts the minutes on the website and I put agendas and other notices as well. Pictures are welcome from around the town and can be sent to me. There are links to the county, fire department, DNR and Bob Hess for burning permit questions. Check it out.

11. Wages for the town board are up for discussion this year. Any changes would not take effect until the new term of office begins in April of 2011. Currently, the board is at:
 - a. Chairman - \$500.00/year salary and \$70.00 per diem
 - b. Supervisors - \$70.00 per diem
 - c. Clerk - \$3,500.00/year salary and \$35.00/per diem for non town board meetings
 - d. Treasurer - \$2,150.00/year salary and \$35.00 per diem for non town board meetings
 - e. Assessor - \$4,500.00 salary
 - f. Election Workers and Hand Labor - \$9.00/hour
 - g. Lawn Mowing and Chainsaw Work - \$13.00/hour

Respectfully submitted,

Trent Miner
Chairman