

January 2023 Public Works Report

Roads/Dock/Ice

- The month began with some sufficient snowfall throughout 1/4 and 1/5. It was nice and fluffy, easy to plow away, and there were no equipment problems within the Roads Dept., or any reported power outages. That was a good way to start the year.
- The crew continued to clean up and push back snow piles throughout the month, and this will linger on as needed. When we run out of room to push snow back, it then takes considerably more time to move snow elsewhere, but that's what is needed in some areas for visibility, especially at intersections.
- The new passenger shelter was freed from impressive ice cover with Evan up in his Genie lift for two days, running the Town's hot water pressure washer/culvert steamer. Thanks to Ray and Evan for some long, cold, and wet days, and the designers of the shelter will be notified that their product withstood many thousands of pounds of solid ice encapsulation.
- The fluctuating temperatures and constant traffic created a less than ideal but expected snowpack on the paved roads. Pete scraped off what he could with the grader when temps allowed. The crew has kept up on sanding the intersections and curves as needed, but ultimately sunny days and higher temperatures will clear the icy roads.
- 1/17/ 1/18, and 1/19 brought a decent blizzard that will keep us busy moving back snow for the remainder of the month.
- On the last day of January, the Town crew worked in conjunction with Windsleds Inc. crew to prepare the windsled landings and hopefully ice road approaches. Evan Jr. sculpted the ice at each landing with the Town's JD 120 excavator while Pete and Ray spent a cold day using the flood pumps out on the ice. With the forecasted temps, especially at night, these efforts should be very successful.

BBTP

- With 1,034 reservations for 2023 to-date, and multiple weddings scheduled, BBTP is shaping up to be a busy season once again. As expected, the peak summer months are booking up earlier and earlier. I will be thoroughly reviewing our reservation system booking strategies and camp host job descriptions next month and plan on bringing new approaches and operations protocols to the TB before hiring this year's Park staff.

Stay warm,
Respectfully submitted,
Ben Schram, Public Works Director

February 2023 Public Works Report

Roads/Slush/Ice/Snow

- Early in the month, the Town crew continued to work with Windsleds Inc. crew preparing the windsled and ice road approaches with flood pumps. The Town crew put up the tree line on Monday, Feb. 6th.
- The Roads crew plowed and pushed a lot of slush with the warmer temps on and around 2/8. The roads and ditches were messy once again.
- 2/14-2/16 saw an even worse peak in temperature, and after a day and a half of rain, the crew spent two days clearing ditches, unclogging slush and snow bound culverts, and steaming frozen culverts as needed. Sections of the island road network that are common problem areas became hazardous frozen slush. The crew continued to combat these areas with salt sand and scraping.
- 2/22-2/23 brought some decent snowfall, and then high winds which blew apart the ice in the channel. The crew moved some of the tree line so as not to confuse any travelers, especially in the dark with a patch of open water. Posted on the Bayfield side, the “ice unsafe” sign means just that.
- 2/27-2/28 brought even more significant snowfall, but it was light and fluffy. We will be pushing, winging, or snow blowing it back as much as time allows until temps continue to rise for the spring season.
- I am glad we budgeted extra funds in 2023 for fuel use. The constant fluctuation in temperature this entire winter season has left us no choice but to clear the roads, parking lots, airport, and ditches more than usual, which requires considerable equipment drive time. However, with the ferry boats operating we don't have to think about shuttling fuel in a truck bed fuel cell over the ice road.

Parks

- The busy season is only two months away, and I will be posting all of the seasonal Parks jobs at the March 14th Town Board meeting. There will be five job openings. Each position is a great opportunity to enjoy the Parks system on the island while working in the outdoors and making money.

MRF

- The MRF is looking for an experienced over the road driver to take on the responsibilities of hauling trash and marketable recyclables off the island. You can view the job posting on the Town's website.

Respectfully Submitted,
Ben Schram, Public Works Director

March 2023 Public Works Report

Roads

- The theme of this month's report will become evident quickly – suffice to say it has been a messy month for road maintenance.
- March began with a blizzard on the 1st. The crew cleaned up everything the best that we could in the early hours, so that the larger plow trucks could move snow off the gravel.
- 3/10 brought another big fluffy snowfall over wet, soft gravel, followed by more snow that turned wet and heavy on 3/11-3/12. The snowpack on warm asphalt and soft gravel is a challenge to clear, especially when attempting to 'float' the larger snowplows without shoes, to avoid damage to the gravel roads. The tire chains that were previously taken off the 772 grader and 444 loader due to the clear pavement, were put back on to get the needed traction once again. The 444 loader with plow attachment was the only practical way to clear the south end gravel roads, while Pete spent many long days in the 772 grader clearing the north end gravel roads.
- In preparation for what was forecasted to be another large storm system, which included more rain, the crew pushed back intersections, cleared ditches, and moved piles as much as possible, especially in the worst known problem areas. This included steaming 12 culverts.
- 3/16, 3/17, and 3/18 didn't bring as much expected rain, but there was plenty of wet, sticky snow once again. Pete, Evan Jr., and Ray put in long hours to keep the Town buildings accessible, and the roadways and airport clear, and I commend them all.
- The end of March had dry paved roads, but the gravel roads needed some warm, sunny days to really clear off. The crew will continue to keep pushing back the snow piles in ditches and beyond, in preparation for the big melt and mud season ahead of us.

Parks

- I have received some applications for the upcoming season, and the Parks crew is shaping up to be a good team once again.
- With less snow ahead, hopefully, Ray and I plan to use the pre-spring time to overhaul some of the older plumbing at Joni's Beach bathroom next month, as well as some needed shower repairs at Big Bay.

Misc./Admin.

- On 3/29, Evan and I took down the tree line placed across the north channel, as we watched the MV Island Queen and Coast Guard cutter Spar power through the ice chunks nearby.

Respectfully submitted,
Ben Schram
Public Works Director

April 2023 Public Works Report

Roads

- April began with the crew doing as much pre-emptive snow removal and ditch clearing as possible, including Cty. H. Throughout 4/5-4/7, a storm system of wind and ice caused multiple trees to come down, a morning power outage for parts of the south end, and boat cancellations.
- On 4/10 the big melt began, and it was not gradual. While the warm sunny days felt very nice, (I believe it was nearly 70 degrees on the afternoon of 4/12) the effects of uncontrollable snowmelt were felt on the island roads. 4/11 resulted in multiple slush clogged culverts and ditches, which led to water over roadways causing washouts. 4/12 resulted in two culvert washouts leading to full road closures, one on North Shore Road and one on Schoolhouse Road.
- On 4/14 the crew replaced two culverts – one preemptively which had begun to wash away on North Shore Road, and the complete washout on Schoolhouse Road, so that no properties on the north end would be cut off.
- 4/16 - 4/17 brought a large, wet, blizzard, which made snow removal on the already messed up roads even messier. The rainy days afterwards postponed the culvert replacement which was planned on North Shore - south of the Benjamin Blvd. intersection. This double culvert was replaced on 4/24 with two 18" plastic smooth bore pipes.
- Before the final weekend of April, which was forecasted with significant rain, the crew obtained hauling permits from Ashland Cty. Hwy and patched the worst gravel road washouts, along with band-aiding future culvert replacements with filter cloth and gravel patching.

Parks

- The 2023 Parks crew will begin the week of May 15th and they will be very busy, as we do what we can do to get the downtown ready for the Marathon weekend and impending summer season.
- I hope to open public bathrooms and Big Bay Town Park's shower building as soon as possible, but the cold nights are delaying those plans.

Misc./Admin.

- Welcome Michael Haben to the MRF – Michael will be driving Woodstock, the 2004 International hook lift truck, as well as helping the road crew out with many tasks. Michael brings a career of experience in driving and operating, along with all aspects of Public Works, and we're happy to have him on the crew.
- Through this month's weather events and sustained road damage, I think it's important to note that many people in the neighboring WI counties (and the U.P.) suffered far more damage which will take much longer to repair or recover from. Mud and potholes are annoying, but fixable as soon as the weather allows, and no resident of the island was ever stranded on a dead-end road.

Happy Spring!

Respectfully submitted, Ben Schram, Public Works Director

May 2023 Public Works Report

Roads

- After a rough spring with little or no transition, the gravel roads were in poor shape. It wasn't a gradual shift to warmer temps, and we must have patience to properly do our best to maintain and preserve the gravel road network. The first week of May saw Pete out in the grader with the new scarifying bits. These bits are essentially teeth that help cut out the potholes and spread the binder around the existing gravel. I'm sure gravel road residents were very happy after this was done.
- The second week of May saw multiple road repairs and spot grading take place as load limit restrictions were lifted, and many residents returned for the season.
- On 5/10 the crew replaced another failing culvert on North Shore Road, just south of Stockton Rd.
- 5/17 and 5/18 saw the entire crew working on downtown curb and sidewalk clean-up.
- The 2008 Ford pick-up continues to have fuel issues, and the 1989 2WD Chevy Parks pick-up continues to have transmission issues. I will be asking the Town Board for a replacement Roads Dept. pick-up sooner than later. Time to upgrade the 34-year-old Parks truck.
- Related to the above note, the Town will be putting together a large collection of vehicles and other misc. equipment for the Wisconsin Surplus Auction site once again, likely in July – stay tuned.

Parks

- The Rec Center was officially opened for the year on 5/2. It was satisfying to finally have the building fully operational, and there are many rentals scheduled for the season.
- The week of 5/8 was a big week of opening the downtown Parks, purging water systems, and cleaning public restrooms. The urinal at Joni's Beach was replaced, and new sink faucets installed.
- Big Bay Town Park was fully opened for the season on 5/19. In one month, the 'Town of Big Bay' returns for what is shaping up to be another great year.
- The Marathon organizers did a great job taking care of Joni's Beach and the facilities, and it appears that the Marathon was a success once again.

Misc.

- Zielies Tree Service will be working on the side of many island roads clearing tree limbs for Xcel Energy's overhead lines, please watch for their trucks and workers, and slow down.
- It's almost busy summer once again, drive safe out there.

Respectfully submitted,
Ben Schram
Public Works Director

June 2023 Public Works Report

Roads

- The month began with two rotted culverts replaced at the end of Capser Road on 6/1. We have many more culvert replacements scheduled but will hold off unless completely necessary until this fall.
- The second week of June began to show signs of hot and dry weather. With no rain in sight, the crew replaced two culverts on Craig's Way, and ditched the north side of the road as needed.
- The week of 6/5 saw the Ashland County Hwy. Dept. crew re-milling and patching the heaving culvert bumps on Middle Road, Black Shanty, and the southern section of Big Bay Road prior to the inline skate marathon.
- On 6/9 the crew painted the Town Dock and crosswalks. I hope to get more downtown high traffic areas repainted next month, as the County contracted line striping crew will not be on the island this year until Sept.
- On 6/20 the crew completely rehabbed Anderson Lane.
- On 6/21 the crew completely rehabbed Amundsen Lane.
- Between 6/22 and 6/23, Pete put in some long days and had all the main road shoulders mowed with the airport's TV145 tractor and disc cutter.
- After an extremely dry and dusty month that made grading difficult, Pete was able to get out on the roads after some much needed rain. Between 6/26-6/28, Evan Jr. and I spread 17 tons of magnesium chloride on the gravel road network. Thank you to gravel road residents for their patience and understanding regarding the crucial timing of this application, for maximum efficiency both in product performance and the town crew labor budget.

Parks

- The Parks crew is doing a great job keeping up on the never-ending tasks involving the downtown Parks.
- The LeSeur St. porta-potties were removed and the new Rec Center bathrooms (with A/C and air blown hand dryers) are accepting a high volume of users.
- Big Bay Town Park is completely booked, and the crew is holding it all together as we approach the busiest time of year.

Drive safely and be nice,
Respectfully submitted,
Ben Schram, Public Works Director

July 2023 Public Works Report

Roads/Dock/Airport

- Gravel roads continue to be graded as needed due to the increase in traffic, and the magnesium chloride dust control is holding up well. We plan to apply four additional tons to the dustiest stretches prior to Labor Day weekend.
- You may see traffic counter equipment and a rubber tube placed at various town road intersections next month, this is for data collection purposes as we seek funding options for additional future paving and/or road repairs.
- High traffic areas of downtown, including curbs, were painted early in July.
- The passenger shelter in between the sawtooth landings was power washed and cleaned by Evan and Ray. It looks great, and I hope the buggiest days are behind us as we approach the warmest temps of the season.
- Major Gilbert Field, aka the Madeline Island Airport, continues to be a large project for the crew as we pursue BOA and FAA compliance regarding mowing and clearing specific perimeters of the runways and AWOS station. Pete and Evan spent some long days clearing brush and field mowing. There will be more to come, including tree removal, as dry weather allows us to access areas that are wet or underwater most of the calendar year. Pete did a thorough service on the New Holland TV145 tractor, and the new disc cutter is performing very well. The airport generator was serviced by an off-island tech after it was deduced that a lightning strike fried the motherboard.

Parks

- The crew completed a paver walkway perimeter around the sculpture at Russell Park, at the directive of the Public Arts Committee.
- The July 4th holiday week was very busy as expected, with tons of trash and heavy use of facilities. There are many shelter rentals scheduled at BBTP, Rec Center, and Joni's Beach, but overall, the Parks infrastructure is holding up.
- The Rec Center ballfield infield was regraded a few times, then dragged thoroughly as softball is coming back. It's nice to see the field being used.
- BBTP continues to be extremely busy, and for a week there was a bear roaming around, but it fortunately seems to have found other sources of food and entertainment. It has been many years since a bear returning to the campground repeatedly had to be transported off the island. If it came down to that, the USDA contractor is just a phone call away.

Misc./Admin

- The crew continues to keep up on misc. odds and ends, sign repair/replacement, shop clean-up, and damage control as we go through the busiest time of year.

Be nice and drive safe,
Respectfully submitted,
Ben Schram, Public Works Director

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August 2023 Public Works Report

Roads

- August was a very busy month as expected, but overall, the island's roads fared well. Schoolhouse Road had some shoulder repairs done after some minor washouts along the western stretch, which was ditched last fall, and flooded this past April.
- One of the worst holes within the failing pavement of Mondamin Trail was patched with cold mix. I spent half a day with the estimator from Northwoods Paving going over the options for long term repairs, and other areas to be paved or repaired, but any option is extremely expensive. The crew plans to patch other failed spots on Mondamin this fall.
- On 8/10 the crew attended a wheel loader training seminar sponsored by McCoy in the City of Montreal, WI., for some helpful information on loader operation and use of special features. The Town's JD444K wheel loader is equipped with JDLink, which is a program that syncs to the cloud and can track every movement the loader makes, along with monitoring engine analytics.
- On 8/22 Evan spread an additional four tons of magnesium chloride on Schoolhouse Road, Benjamin Blvd., and the busiest stretches of North Shore Road.
- Snowplace Lane had new 20 m.p.h. signs and 'no parking' signage installed per a newly adopted ordinance.

Airport

- Major Gilbert Field isn't usually noted in this report, but it should be noted that the crew made some unprecedented steps in clearing and brushing this month, both on the runway and the AWOS weather station perimeter, due to favorable conditions. The BOA inspector was here the week of the 21st and performed a drone survey, so we will wait to hear the results of that before continuing. In the meantime, the clean-up of downed trees and brush removal will carry on as time allows.

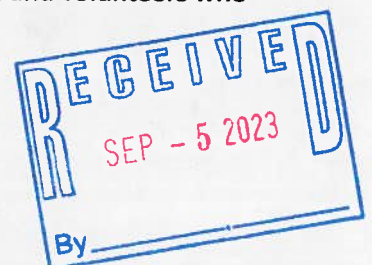
Parks

- BBTP and the downtown Park system will quiet down as we get into September, but it has been a good summer season and the crew did a fantastic job.
- The new playground area at BBTP began construction the last week of August, and the slide, paid for by last year's donations, was installed. It was an instant success, and the crew will install a small two-person swing set and one other small item tbd in early Sept.

Misc.

- Thanks once again to Evan Jr. for administering another very successful Town equipment auction.
- Thanks to Marty and all the committee members, service members, and volunteers who made the EMS Ball on 8/26 a huge success.

Respectfully submitted,
Ben Schram,
Public Work Director



September 2023 Public Works Report

Roads

- The Town received just under \$8,000 from WISDOT for Disaster Aid, which we applied for after the culvert washouts on Schoolhouse Road and North Shore Road, during the snowmelt event of this past April.
- The Washburn County paint crew striped County H, Main Street, and the center of South Shore Road on 9/13. The painting of Town roads was a planned to piggyback on Ashland County's schedule.
- The Town crew patched two additional failing sections of Mondamin Trail with cold mix on 9/20-9/21. This practice will likely be ongoing until we can secure the funding to rebuild and repave the road.
- On 9/22, the Grant's Point public lake access received a pit run base and gravel lift. I hope by next summer it will be better for beachgoers who don't want to park in the puddles. It will be much easier for snow removal equipment to keep the access open this upcoming winter.
- Pete was able to grade nearly every gravel road the week of the 25th following 2½ days of steady rainfall.
- It has taken five years, but I believe over 90% of the Town road signs (speed limit, directional, regulatory) now meet reflectivity standards. There are a few more left to replace this fall. I hope Ashland County Hwy. Dept. will do the same on H.

Parks

- Use of the downtown parks has slowed down post-Labor Day as expected, and we hope to accomplish some minor maintenance projects at the Rec Center and Joni's Beach with decreased daily traffic.
- Big Bay Town Park should have its new playground nearly complete by the time this report is public. THANK YOU to all the unknown donors within the last few years that made that dream a reality.
- BBTP is scheduled for fall shutdown on Monday Oct. 23rd. After that date, we will be clearing and dropping many dead standing trees around both campsite loops, by order of the County Health Dept.

Misc./Admin.

- I spent a considerable amount of time this month on the Public Works budget(s) for 2024, and I look forward to discussing future maintenance needs and projects with the Town Board in October.

Respectfully submitted,
Ben Schram
Public Works Director

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October 2023 Public Works Report

Roads/Equipment

- With weather in our favor, the first week of the month saw some substantial road improvement work accomplished. The crew replaced three culverts on North Shore Road, and one culvert on Benjamin Blvd. In addition, just south of the Benjamin Blvd. culvert, the crew ditched down the slope to Cty H. and around the corner heading west towards the next cross culvert. This was a large washout area last April, and we hope these efforts will mitigate any potential spring washouts well into the future.
- One culvert on Chippewa Trail was replaced on 10/18.
- The Town's seven building generators were serviced by Total Energy Systems, with some additional repairs to be made next month. Ray built some great covers for the Town Hall and Clinic generators – also the new Town Hall mini-split. Snow and ice slid off the Clinic roof last spring, kinking the propane line serving the generator.
- Winter preparations continued at the shop, including putting away attachments for the year such as the disc cutter and loader broom, and servicing snow removal equipment. Evan overhauled the 2-ton sander with new hoses and fittings, new gear oil, and a new conveyer.
- The original boiler in the SRE building failed internally, which operates the in-floor heat system, and is scheduled to be replaced next month.
- The wing was mounted on the grader, and the Westernstar (220) was outfitted for the season with plow, wing, and sander.
- The first official plow day was the morning of Halloween, as the crew was out on the paved roads and parking lots to clean up slush.

Parks

- Big Bay Town Park was drained down and blown out on October 23rd. Camping and pit toilets continue to remain available year-round. 2024 camping reservations are being consistently booked for peak weekends.
- The downtown public bathrooms and remaining porta potties were closed for the season following a rainy Fall Fest weekend. I hope to keep the Rec Center bathrooms open well into November, temperature dependent, or until significant snowfall impedes parking options.
- The Town's solar arrays were adjusted to winter season position.

Misc./Admin.

- Thanks very much to Michael K. for taking the time this month to put together the State's LRIP (Local Roads Improvement Program) application for rehabilitation of Mondamin Trail. Hopefully we will hear some good news.
- I hope that the Halloween snow was a good reminder to get ready for winter season driving, prep your vehicle, and slow down when appropriate. Drive safe out there,

Respectfully submitted,
Ben Schram,
Public Works Director

November 2023 Public Works Report

Roads/Equipment

- On 11/2 Michael Haben backhauled 10 yards of salt from the County shop with the MRF Roll-off. Evan hauled 200 yards of sand over to the SRE building to make our annual 5% salt/sand mixture per the County Road Winter Maintenance Policy.
- The gaps along the steel cap on the north side of the dock were sealed with marine grade silicone, and the crew will continue to monitor any waves splashing through.
- On 11/9 two Ashland County Hwy. Dept. crew came over and accomplished some much-needed guardrail repairs, along with a few signpost and sign replacements.
- With warmer temps during the week of 11/13, the wing was taken off the grader and Pete spent multiple days out on the gravel roads, getting everything shaped up before the first real freeze. The crew patched a sandy sinkhole at the corner of North Shore Road/Cty H, and hauled gravel to Capser Road for repairs and grading.
- On 11/15 I attended the County's Town Road Improvement Committee meeting in Highbridge to lobby for the Town's LRIP TRIS (Town Road Improvement Supplemental) application. This application is available every two years, and was put together with groundwork from Pete and myself, assembled by Michael Kutcha, and reviewed by current County Highway Commissioner Matt Erickson and former CHC Emmer Shields. The proposed project focused solely on the rehabilitation of Mondamin Trail from the Penny Lane intersection to the South Shore Road intersection. This included culvert replacement, ditching, and repaving, with a projected cost at just over 1 million dollars. Overall, LaPointe was ranked 4th out of seven, which means our odds of receiving 50/50 State funding are low, but at least La Pointe is in the running. It is now in the hands of someone at the State level to decide. For the foreseeable future, the Roads crew will continue to patch the worst deteriorating areas and remove the insufficient subbase as needed. In addition, we hope to accomplish serious ditching and culvert replacement in the next few years regardless of the awarded outcome.

Parks

- The Rec Center had an ADA sidewalk connection installed from the parking spots alongside the road, to the bathrooms, and heading up to the pavilion.
- 11/20 was a nice calm day, so the crew hung lights on the gazebo and put up a holiday tree, as this is not a fun task when there are strong winds on the island dock.
- Dead tree removal will continue as needed at BBTP, as there are no snow plowing days in the future as this report is being typed.

Misc./Admin

- With the annual budget approval meeting scheduled for December 5th, I would like the written record to show that I asked the Town Board to consider setting aside \$100k for future gravel purchasing. This hasn't been done since 2008, and will likely include barging, trucking, and all associated costs. Gravel will be needed for future paving projects, not just the gravel road network. However, it was not feasible for 2024, and I hope 2025 will be different, as all costs will almost certainly be higher.

Respectfully submitted,
Ben Schram
Public Works Director

December 2023 Public Works Report

Roads

- The mild weather throughout the entire month resulted in zero snowplowing days for December 2023. However, despite the lack of snow to be removed from the roads, the unseasonably warm conditions enabled the crew to stay very busy with outdoor projects.
- Beginning on Dec. 6th, the crew ditched approximately 1.2 miles of the southwest section of North Shore Road, in separate areas. The project would have continued if not for some mid-month frost, but two of the flatter problematic drainage areas (proven last April), were dealt with accordingly and a few hundred yards of material were hauled away.
- The Xmas holiday weekend presented three days of rainy, windy weather, which resulted in multiple downed trees and debris to be cleaned up. Thankfully no power outages or anything too serious occurred.
- The beaver activity has increased dramatically along Black Shanty Road, and a particular culvert north of Umbrage Road, where poplar trees were dropped into the northbound lane. The county crew is aware, and we are monitoring the activity. Dams that could result in culvert blockage will continue to be removed as temps drop at night, and trapping will take place if the county deems it necessary.

Parks

- Two additional memorial benches were installed in Russell Park, and supplementary topsoil was spread around the new and existing benches, as well as the Gateway sculpture.
- Ray and I met with the Library Director, and together we have a great plan in place for ice rink maintenance at the Rec Center this winter season, temperature dependent of course. On 12/14, 30 yards of coarse sand was hauled to the rink and leveled out with the Town's skid steer. If a rink can be built, the main Rec room ONLY will be available and heated for skaters. On that note, the Rec Center public bathrooms are still open as this report is being written, which must be a record.
- I successfully won a bid through Wisconsin Surplus online auction for a mid-sized used playground put up by the City of Chippewa Falls. The final price was \$2,446.89, which was taken from the Joni's Beach designated fund. What began as a joke resulted in the crew driving down to Irvine Park of Chippewa Falls on 12/12 and trailering back a disassembled playground. The crew spent 12/19 – 12/23 assembling the playground at Joni's, which replaces the plastic playground unit which we estimate to have been at least 35 years old. The old unit will be auctioned next summer. Extra thanks to Ray and Evan Jr. for an early cold morning disassembly. Thanks very much to donors of the past who wanted to see Joni's Beach improvements years ago. Playground edging, bench swing, and new fence to be installed next spring, or as weather allows.

Drive safe in 2024,
Respectfully submitted,
Ben Schram, Public Works Director