

# Public Works Director Report

## July 2025

This July was one of the busiest I can ever remember. Businesses reported record breaking sales which means a record-breaking number of visitors to the Island.

I have received several complaints that the level of maintenance at some of the parks is not up to some people's standards, so I hope in writing this that residents and visitors may be a little more sympathetic towards the Town Crew being that we are so short staffed.

The Big Bay Town Park has been operating at max capacity for occupancy, which brings its own set of challenges. With our Parks staff being only Trevor and Ray, they are doing everything they can to keep the grounds mowed, facilities stocked and operating the best they can in addition to hauling the incredible amounts of trash being generated not only at the Town Park, but at Jonis Beach, White Fish Restrooms, Rec Center, Russel park, and Pocket Park next to Café Seiche. We also must mow and weed whip around the Airport, Airport Hangers and lounge, the Emergency Services Building, Winter Transportation Building, Library, Clinic, Town hall, and the town shop.

I am happy to report that Matt Herriott passed his CDL test on the 15<sup>th</sup> with flying colors. He has been applying dust control, watering gravel roads and hauling gravel to North Shore. Matt is a stellar employee and can now add this to the long list of skills that he brings to the Town.

Dust control was applied to North Shore Road, Benjamin Boulevard, School House Rd and Chippewa trail on July 1<sup>st</sup>, and a second application was made to School House Road on the 29<sup>th</sup>. Dust control was applied to Voyageur Ln, Herring St, Baraga, Sunny Slope, Miller Farm Raymond Road, Big Arns Rd and Brians road on the 29<sup>th</sup>.

On the topic of dust control, I have received several complaints the dust and how we try to mitigate it, so I will provide some history on how it was done when I started working here 8 years ago, and how it is done now.

In the past, the Town contracted with a trucking company that had a 4,200-gallon tanker trailer designed for hauling and spreading calcium chloride water mix. The nearest place to get this calcium chloride product was south of Chicago, and cost around \$35,000, plus

ferry costs, for six 4200-gallon loads that would cover approximately 16 of the 21 miles of gravel roads on the island.

When this company went out of business in 2018, we were lucky enough to find another company out of Milwaukee with the same tanker trailer to apply the same mix from south of Chicago for around \$37,000, again only covering about 2/3 of North Shore and School Hs Rd, in addition to Miller farm Rd and Snow Place Rd nothing else.

In 2019, we could not find anyone in our area to apply calcium chloride. We used ice melt, which is just rock salt, and the Ashland County Highway department was able to spare one of their tanker trucks to help us apply water while we spread the ice melt out of our dump truck equipped with a sand spreader. This system was untenable, and we began to explore other options.

In 2020 the dust abatement funding was cut from the budget during covid.

In 2021 we were unable to find anyone to supply calcium chloride and began looking for different options for dust control. We acquired a tank, thanks to Brian Nelson, from a decommissioned fire truck he had, and retro fitted it to a worn-out roll-off box that was headed to the scrap yard. We tried using a product on North Shore Road from VP Racing that is applied to dirt tracks in the racing world, but it was ultimately ineffective and extremely expensive.

That is when we discovered Chemical Industries, a Canadian company that manufactures magnesium chloride flake which is designed for dust control and ice melting. This product came in at \$31,000 delivered, for 40,000 lbs. which was big savings for the taxpayers, and we can apply it to all 21 miles of road as opposed to 16.

This product is designed to be used as follows; wet the road to point of nearly puddling and spread the magnesium chloride on the wet road surface. The drawback to this product is that it needs to be rehydrated regularly to keep working. Up until two years ago we were able to do this regularly when we had two hook lift trucks that were able to handle the retro fitted tanker. We now only have one truck which also serves the MRF for hauling roll-off garbage boxes, construction demolition and scrap metal containers. This truck is only available to the roads department when it is not being used for the MRF, and when the Road Crew isn't working on other projects.

We have looked at other products such as beet juice, which is an all-natural noncorrosive product, but at a cost of \$71,000 plus freight for 40,000 gallons which are needed to cover all the gravel roads.

Some people have suggested that we use fire trucks to spread water on the roads. I ran this idea by the fire department in 2021, but it was agreed that taking these trucks out of service from the Fire Department was not going to work, which led to us fabricating the water tank system we are using today.

So, in closing, we are doing the best we can with the funding, equipment and staff that we have.

## **Roads**

- Completed shoulder mowing on Town roads
- Spread 16 tons of dust control on 90% of our gravel roads.
- Replaces a signpost on the corner of Old Fort Road that was struck by a vehicle
- Graded North Shore 4 times
- Graded Benjamin Blvd
- Spread 60 yards of gravel on stretches of North Shore
- Graded and spread 30 yards of gravel on Chippewa Trail
- Graded Old Fort, Miller Farm, Sunny Slope, Voyageur, Big Arns Rd, Raymond Rd and Snow Place Rd
- Filled a small wash out on Sunny Slope on the inlet of a culvert.
- Trimmed trees and cleared street signs on North Shore and School House RD

## **Parks**

- Cleaned up two ash trees that broke in half at Joni's Beach. These trees are dying and will need to be removed this fall
- Plumbing issue at the Rec Center. Lost power to the well for one day due to a corroded wire. I will omit the details of the mess that created.....
- BBTP plumbing repairs are constant. Shower heads not working, damage to sinks and urinals, and leaky toilets are nonstop.
- Hauling trash happens at least once, sometimes twice a day at the Town Park. We will be looking at 2- or 3-yard dumpsters for the 2026 season to cut down on labor and equipment time.
- Trevor mows Joni's, Pocket Park, Russel Park and the Rec Center once a week
- Repaired broken playground equipment at the Rec Center

## **Facilities**

- Northland Fire and Safety inspected and or replaced all Town fire extinguishers at the Town Shop, Big Bay Town Park, ESB, Clinic, Library, Town Hall, Airport, Winter Transportation Bldg, Rec Center and MRF
- Looked into a new water filtration system for Town Hall

## **Dock/Harbor**

- Cleaned off the outer break water for the fireworks display, and checked break water lights

## **County H**

- Cleaned up three downed trees
- Swept corners and intersections several times, but this seems to be a losing battle.
- Filled two settling black top patches the Ashland Cty Hwy Dept repaired last year with cold mix asphalt

## **Equipment**

- Repaired 2001 1-ton GMC u-joints and center support bearing
- General maintenance to both riding lawn mowers
- General maintenance to 3 chain saws
- Replace 4 dry rotted tires on the 5-yard dump truck
- Repaired road compactor throttle linkage
- Repaired tip trailer wiring
- Oil changes and general maintenance to 04 Chevy 2500, 2016 Ram 5500, 98 GMC
- Replaced Radiator in 04 Chevy 2500
- Replace vehicle fire extinguisher mounts with DOT compliant mounts
- Repaired wiring in the 5-yard dump truck
- Trouble shoot intermittent loss of hydraulic front wheel drive in the grader

## **Airport**

- Replaced broken rear window in the airport tractor. The rear mounted mower picked up a rock and sent into the back window
- General maintenance to the airport tractor mower before each time it is used
- Oil change on the airport tractor
- Mowed and weed whipped around runway, tie-down area, and hangers 4 times

Respectfully submitted by, Pete Wiggins, Public Works Director

