



TOWN OF COLRAIN

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Select Board
Emily Thurber, Chair
Benjamin Eastman
Catherine "Katie" Korby

Town Administrator
Diana M. Parsons

Colrain Select Board Statement regarding Winter Road Maintenance

As the Select Board of Colrain, we must inform the community that, due to ongoing constraints in both staffing and funding, we are unable to expand our winter road maintenance services at this time. Despite our best efforts to meet the growing needs of our town's infrastructure, we have reached a point where the limited resources available prevent any additional commitments.

Budgetary Comparison: FY25 vs. FY24

A close examination of our budget highlights the challenges we face:

- **Staffing and Funding Levels:** In FY25, the budget allocated for road maintenance staffing and operational costs decreased slightly from FY24. While in the past, efforts were made to secure more funds, they were hindered by a lack of willingness for significant investment in competitive wages, leading to a critical shortage in staffing levels.
- **Staffing Shortages:** In FY25, we continue to operate with a limited team, and despite appeals for more staff, we have been unable to increase personnel. The absence of additional skilled workers, particularly for such demanding winter road conditions, leaves us with no feasible way to expand our services for this winter season.

Factors Contributing to the Shortfall:

Rising Operational Costs: The costs of materials, including sand, salt, and equipment repairs, have increased significantly, further stretching our budget. Without proportional increases in revenue or state funding, we are forced to allocate only our current resources to maintain service levels.

Rural Infrastructure: ~50% of our town's roads are dirt or gravel and were never built to sustain the vehicles, speeds, or volume of traffic of today. If we add mileage to consistently care for, we must accommodate for more frequent and intensive care, which adds strain on both staffing and financial resources. While we prioritize maintaining essential routes, expanding areas of maintenance and plowing would require additional staff and funds that are currently unavailable.

Recruitment Challenges: Like many rural communities, Colrain has struggled to recruit and retain staff, particularly in public works and road maintenance positions. Competitive wages offered in nearby areas further complicate this issue, as we are unable to match them within our current budget constraints.

Long-Term Solutions

We are actively exploring long-term solutions to these challenges, including:

- Applying for additional state grants to support infrastructure improvement and maintenance.
- Collaborating with neighboring towns to share resources, where possible, to maximize efficiency.
- Working with the Rural Policy Advisory Commission (RPAC) to ensure implementation of the region's Rural Policy Plan so dirt and gravel roads are factored more heavily into Chapter 90 formula, i.e. ([Rural Roadway Funding Program](#)).

Next Steps

- Engage in discussions with the community and Town Meeting about potential funding avenues, including future tax overrides or dedicated infrastructure bonds.
- Ensure residents and taxpayers are informed of additional costs that could impact tax bills if winter and general road maintenance is expanded.

However, in the short term, we must work within our current limitations and focus on maintaining essential services. We appreciate the community's understanding and patience as we navigate these challenges and seek sustainable solutions.

We encourage residents with concerns or questions to reach out to us or to the Town Administrator as we continue to address these pressing issues.

Sincerely,

Colrain Select Board

Emily Thurber, Chair

Ben Eastman, Member

Katie Korby, Member

Voted: December 10, 2024