

CROSSROADS

QUARTERLY JOURNAL • **County Road Association of Michigan** • VOLUME 6, ISSUE 3

SPRING 2021

JUST KEEP SWIMMING

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Commission helps restore
Sanborn Creek bridges

Cancelled!
2021 Highway
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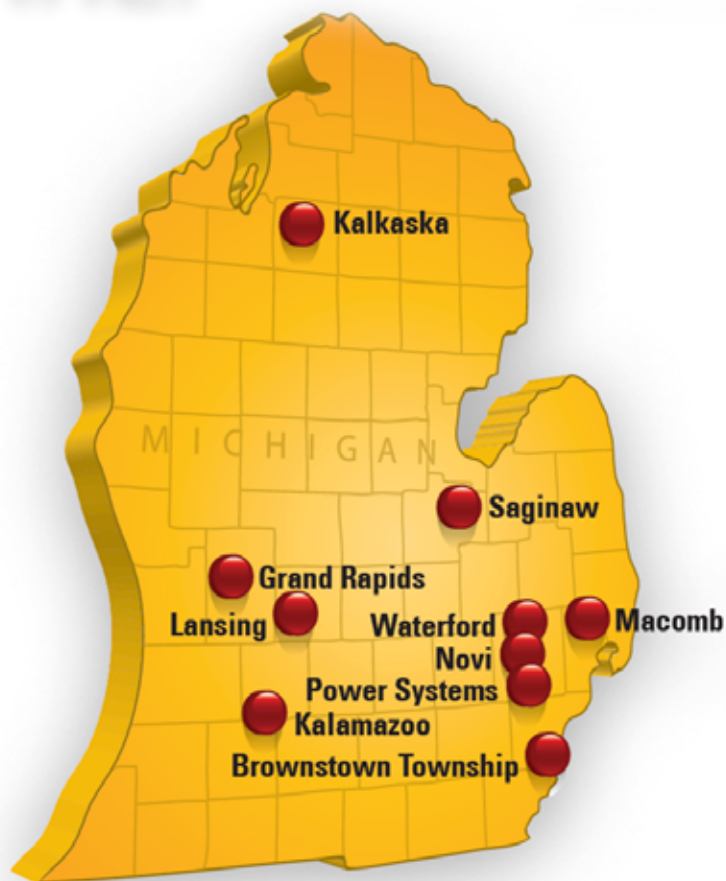
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Crossroads is a publication of the County Road Association (CRA) of Michigan. The 83 county members of CRA support a safe and efficient county road system in Michigan. The Association is dedicated to helping members promote and maintain a safe, efficient county road right-of-way in rural and urban Michigan.

ON THE COVER

Spruce Road culvert after rehabilitation, Lake County, 2020.

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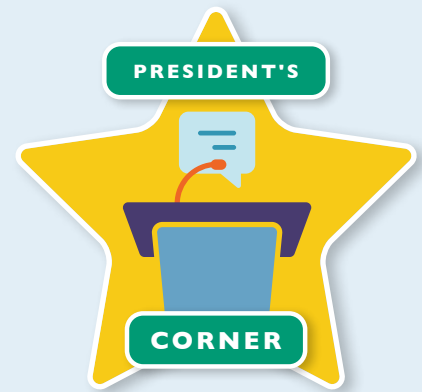


LET'S GET TO WORK

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PRESIDENT'S CORNER



Who could have imagined, when I was elected CRA board president last March, what 2020 had in store? I am humbled by the dedication and commitment I have witnessed from road agency staff, managers and commissioners, and continue to be amazed with how we've all adapted to change.

When I wrote my first President's Column, I was filled with uncertainty and hope about what the next year would bring. Now, I am filled with hopeful anticipation. One of my only regrets as president is that I did not get to meet with you all at CRA District Council meetings.

As vaccines are beginning to make their way through Michigan, we can look forward to networking with our peers in person! There's no substitute for quick chats in the conference hallway about road projects, taking a

moment to enjoy a friend's warm presence – and to share a photo of that new grandbaby or that buck we bagged last November.

We now stand looking out the other end of the pandemic, and I'm looking forward to continuing to build professional relationships and personal bonds as we do what we do best: Work together to make Michigan a better place to work, live and drive.

Once again, thanks to all our Association volunteers, to my fellow board members at both CRA and at the Chippewa County Road Commission, and to all those who kept pushing forward when things got tough. I am truly honored to have been able to call myself your president.

Richard Timmer

CRA President

Chair of the Chippewa County Road Commission



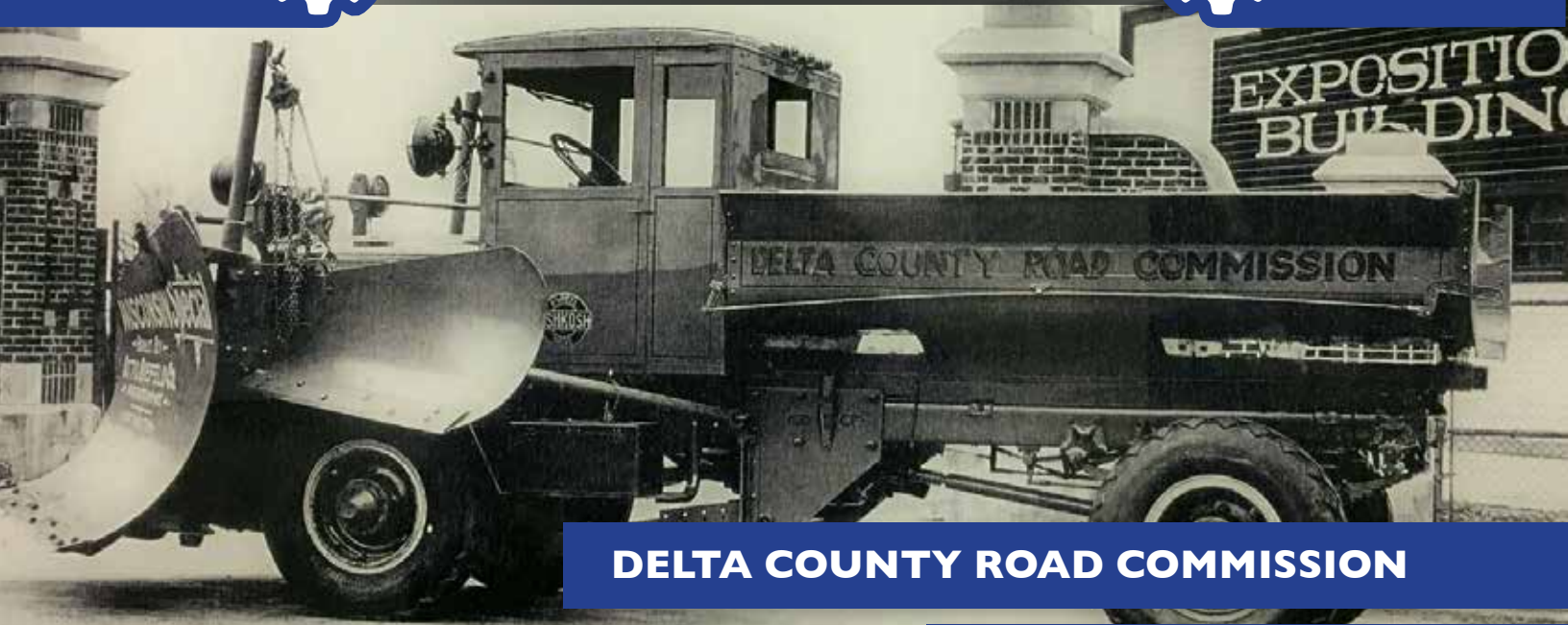
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DELTA COUNTY ROAD COMMISSION

New, early 1930s Oshkosh plow truck.

From its location in the so-called “banana belt” of the Upper Peninsula, Delta County carries a little Greek history. Its name comes from the Greek letter “delta,” referring to the triangular shape of the county as established in 1861 when it included parts of modern-day Menominee, Dickinson, Iron and Marquette counties.

Although its size is significantly diminished from that time, Delta is still the state’s fifth-largest county by area and has retained virtually all of its original Lake Michigan coastline. That makes it a popular vacation destination, including for fishing, boating and snowmobiling.

Delta has 14 townships, three cities and villages, and small sections of both the Hannahville Indian Community

and the Sault Tribe of Chippewa. It is home to one of the state’s largest timber pulp processing plants.

Talk to **Delta County Road Commission (DCRC)** manager **Jody Norman** for any period and the phrases “attention to detail” and “let’s try it” are spoken.

How many miles of roads? Not always an easy question.

When *Crossroads* goes out to report a member profile, we always ask about the number of bridges, and miles of roads, paved and unpaved. Pretty straightforward – but hold the phone.

DCRC is fine-tuning its numbers by double-checking the miles of all its roads over time to ensure the mileage they’re

maintaining matches the miles they’re certifying to the state.

“We’ve had several situations where the miles we thought were ours, weren’t – or they weren’t there,” said Norman, DCRC manager since 2014. “And more than once we have found out we were maintaining more than what we have certified.”

Explaining how some roads “aren’t there,” Norman informed *Crossroads* about the concept of “ice roads.” Ice roads are winter-only roads that run through Upper Peninsula swamps and backwoods, to provide the timber industry access to harvest timber.

Loggers freeze down a designated seasonal road to reach a timber plot during the winter deep freeze. Come warm temperatures, this road thaws and disappears back into a brushy, swampy path.



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Many “ice roads” by tradition became the responsibility of UP road commissions in the 1930s through the McNitt Act.

Sometimes, an ice road leaves an isolated stretch of unpaved road and a residence or hunt camp that the owners access via someone else’s private property. The road agency’s ability to service that stretch of road with the occasional gravel or grading isn’t possible, which can set up conflicts.

Those roads need to be identified, researched and sometimes de-certified. It’s a very tedious process but “we need to know what’s really ours,” Norman said.

At times, the current owner asks DCRC to convert the seasonal road to an all-season standard. In this situation, DCRC board policy requires one-third of the cost to come from the landowner, one-third from the township and one-third from the road agency.

Stretching a dollar

Delta’s top priority is targeting its paved roads to provide a good quality, long-lasting surface. Paved roads, of course, are expensive roads to maintain.

“It’s very difficult to keep control over rising costs and get done what you want to get done. The cost of materials keeps chipping away at the amount of road work we can do,” Norman said. “So the question is: ‘How can you get the same result by tweaking what we’re doing yet get a good result?’”

“For example, the oils we use in asphalt chip seal are similar in price to last year. But the cost of aggregate [stone] went up. And our asphalt goes up 10% a year,” he said.

DCRC owns three aggregate quarries and uses a private-sector crushing firm to prepare and size the stone. Recently, by up-sizing its gravel trailers, DCRC tripled its capacity to haul gravel to township roads.

Another dollar-stretcher that DCRC is trying is fabricating its own trucks, buying the chassis and setting up the rest of the truck in house.

“We save \$20,000 to \$30,000 on every truck we build in our garage – we build all of our own now,” Norman said. “Beyond the cost savings, building the trucks to exactly our mechanics’ specifications allows for easier maintenance in crunch time of winter. When a truck goes down, our four

guys in the garage know exactly what they’re looking for.”

DCRC is fortunate that its commissioners authorized a bold move in 1999 and constructed two new garages, one in Escanaba and one in Ensign, plus the administrative office building. The loans will be paid off in about six years. The buildings were recently retrofitted to address modern security concerns.

Another efficiency DCRC likes to capture is coordinating its projects with Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) projects in Delta.

“When we find out MDOT will be working in the area, we’ll also put our bids out for the same time-frame and area to see if we can get greater savings. It usually works; we like to keep some money in reserve to take advantage of such opportunities,” Norman said.

DCRC also achieved efficiency by participating in the Local Federal Funds Exchange Program, both selling and buying federal dollars for road projects. Recently they “purchased” federal aid from Dickinson County. DCRC benefited on the exchange and was able to add the federal dollars to a planned federal aid job.

(Editor’s Note: The expansion of this program to allow MDOT purchase of local federal aid is CRA’s highest priority for 2021.)

Thinking about the 2020s

In the 2020s, Norman believes DCRC will face two key challenges. The first is hiring quality people.

Interestingly, DCRC has had almost a complete staff turnover recently. “We expect two more retirements in the next few years, and then we’ll have an entirely new staff that has come on board since about 2015,” Norman said.

DCRC is emphasizing more cross training of new staff, particularly in the office, and incentivizing its mechanics to gain additional licenses. Still, finding good candidates is challenging.

Continued, p.11



Half pipe installation replacing twin 40-inch culverts.



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Delta County Road Commission Building.



Delta County Road 416.



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JUST THE FACTS



Office Headquarters: Escanaba



Staff: 30 full time, 0 temps/part time



No. of Commissioners: 5 (elected)



Miles of Road: Total paved: 539 Primary: 257 Local: 282
Total unpaved: 347 Primary: 95 Local: 252



MDOT Contract: Yes



No. of Bridges: 49



Annual Revenue Budget: \$6,850,000 (FY 2020)

Local Revenue: \$500,000 (FY 2020)



Annual Snowfall: 70-150 inches (south-to-north)



DCRC established: 1896



No. of Garages: 2



Office Built: 1999



FUN FACT: This year a Delta County resident visited the road commission and asked for permission to bless the salt in the salt barn and proceeded to do so. Word is the road agency believes this is a good omen for #2021 and the safety of the motoring public.

“Everyone who works here is good about doing things better, faster, cheaper,” Norman said. Yet he acknowledged efficiencies and stretching dollars only take the road agency so far toward restoring the road and bridge system.

A second challenge DCRC and all other county road agencies are running up against is the plateau of new road funding. From October 2021 on, road agencies will see only inflationary adjustments in their road funding, as the Legislature’s 2015 funding package is now fully implemented.

“Road commissions have really done a good job with utilizing the increased funds,” Norman said. “But now we need the Legislature to take the second step of new funds they talked about in 2015 when this package was signed into law.”

A word on snowmobiles

DCRC is keenly interested in a CRA legislative priority to get Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) participation in funding snowmobile crossings on the paved county road system.

“Snowmobile crossings are a very costly component of the road, and they can be damaged very quickly,” Norman said. “Last year we finished a \$3.5 million section of road and eight months later there was a groove across it from the snowmobiles.”

“It seems that with DNR’s \$40 million budget earmarked for snowmobiles, ORVs and boating, that they could help with the \$217,000 a year it costs Michigan county road agencies to maintain these crossings for snowmobiles,” Norman said.

“Snowmobiling is very important to the UP and we want to support this recreation, yet we’d like some recognition from the DNR that they have the funds to help us out.”

Norman has been working with Sen. Ed McBroom to open up dialogue on the issue.

Get on board

Norman has high praise for his five-member elected board of directors.

“They are a fantastic board focused on checks and balances only,” Norman said. “I’d like to think I earned that level of trust because we keep them very well informed of issues or complaints. I don’t want any of our commissioners to hear it first from ‘an angry Uncle Ted.’ I want them to have heard it first from me. This board very much appreciates our staff and the work we do here.” **CRA**

Charting the course:

Van Buren County Road Commission's new hire training program

It's not easy being the new kid on the block or in the road agency garage. Van Buren County Road Commission (VBCRC) knows that's the case, so it's working to make the transition as smooth as possible with its innovative new "insiders" training program.

VBCRC's training approach grew out of its competency program, which essentially pays employees modest increases based on what they decide to take on. The more specialized competencies an employee takes on (e.g. grader, operator, plow driver, etc.), the more he or she is paid.

It's a "choose your own adventure" (and pay) concept, in a way. After achieving a few basics, employees can pick and choose which competencies they pursue. People can be as ambitious as they want, obtaining all 28 competencies or sticking to just a few.

When they started the competency program, VBCRC noticed some inconsistencies in how employees were being trained on the additional types of heavy equipment. That led them to develop the new hire training program, which will prove highly useful as a large part of VBCRC's workforce has retired in the last five to 10 years; a large

portion of their workforce is new within the last five years; and many of the remaining experienced workforce will retire in the next two to five years.

Seasonal success

With the training program, new hires have a road map for the first year on the job. Each new VBCRC employee follows a 12-month plan where he or she learns every task needed for each season. It allows VBCRC to track employees' progress and make sure each new hire picks up all the skills they need to succeed.

Each new employee is assigned a mentor, who generally has 15 to 20-plus years of experience. The mentor helps the new hire adjust in the first few weeks at VBCRC and provides continual guidance throughout the first year on the job.

There are currently seven mentors in the program, who get additional compensation for mentoring duties. The program sets aside a number of hours to work with a mentor and a number of hours for new hires to work on their own in each area.

"It's easy to think, 'Oh, they've been here for a while. They know the drill,'" Linnea Rader, VBCRC finance and HR

director, said.

"But in reality, that employee may not have gone through a winter at the road commission yet. In fact, right now, due to the last few 'lighter' winters, over 50% of our staff haven't worked a hard winter yet!"

"If we don't have a bad winter anytime soon, those experienced workers aren't going to be here anymore to help the newer workers," she said. "We want to prepare our staff for what's coming."

In addition, VBCRC has developed a new training manual, complete with photos, diagrams and step-by-step instructions. It covers everything from the basics to



the more intricate details of the job – everything from how to prepare for routes to how the trucks operate and how to maintain them.

There's also a tree crew version with information on the knots they tie, the equipment they use, hand signals and more.

The next generation of roadworkers

There's an experience gap at VBCRC, not an uncommon occurrence at county road agencies.

Experienced employees are retiring, and road agencies are challenged to find new workers from the next generation to fill their spots. There is no "B" team waiting on the bench.

At VBCRC, 11 of its 40 employees have 15 or more years of experience. The rest have anywhere from a couple months to a few years of experience. In fact, 75% of their staff has been hired in the last six to eight years.

VBCRC's training program allows seasoned employees to pass on their knowledge to younger hires, so that knowledge isn't lost over time.

"When we started developing the training program, senior employees selected to be mentors really owned it," Rader said. "They felt good that they were being recognized for their knowledge. There's always an underlying frustration that when people retire, their knowledge goes out the door with them – no one downloads that valuable information. But this way, our senior employees can be a part of perpetuating knowledge. It's rewarding to share their expertise."

"The new hires really appreciate it, too," she said. "It makes them feel welcome when they're entering a brand-new job with a brand-new group of coworkers. They know they're part of the team, and they're more likely to feel at home. A lot of that worry about starting a new job is gone."

Training the trainers

Every new endeavor comes with challenges. VBCRC is working with public works experts to improve their program.

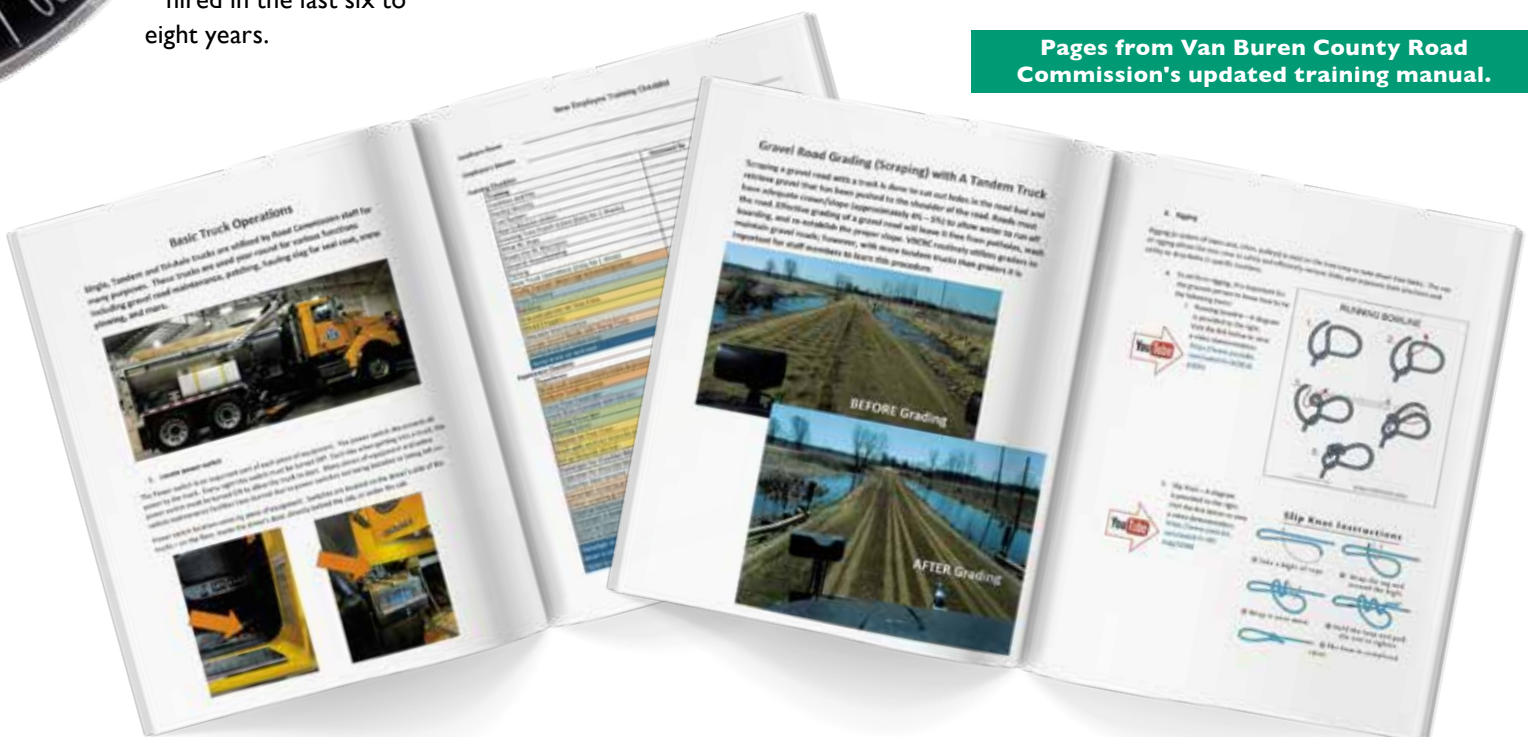
We're working on ways to do presentations and walkthroughs so training is more consistent. That way we know everyone has been through all the steps, and everyone knows all the basics that maintenance workers need to know.

– Linnea Rader,
VBCRC Finance
and HR Director

"We're training our mentors on how to train others," Rader said. "Some of these employees have worked in public works for 20, 30, 40 years, but have never trained anyone. It's out of their wheelhouse, so we're tasked with teaching them how to best utilize their skills to help others."

Currently, the road agency is using the training program for its new hires, but hopes to roll it out to all employees in time. [CRA](#)

Pages from Van Buren County Road Commission's updated training manual.





SMALL FISH, BIG POND, HUGE RESULTS:

LAKE COUNTY ROAD COMMISSION RESTORES ROADS, ENVIRONMENT

« During culvert construction at Forman Road.



Removal of the old culvert
at State Road.



During culvert rehabilitation
at State Road.

In the world of county road agencies, **Lake County Road Commission (LCRC)** might consider themselves small fish. After all, the road commission has fewer than 40 employees. But that doesn't stop them from taking on big waters – in this case, Sanborn Creek, a crucial stream within the Pere Marquette Watershed.

The Pere Marquette Watershed is centered around the Pere Marquette River, Michigan's longest undammed river, famous for its fishing and recreational opportunities. The river is home to a diverse habitat including amphibians, reptiles and fish.

But there was a problem in the watershed: Ineffective stream crossings over Sanborn Creek, which negatively impacted the surrounding wildlife. Fish migration patterns were askew and water quality was poor.

A win-win-win

The Conservation Resource Alliance in Traverse City approached LCRC about a solution. Thus began a partnership, benefiting the roads and the environment simultaneously.

LCRC worked with the Conservation Resource Alliance to reconstruct stream crossings along the creek, removing original rusting culverts and replacing them with new structures. This process restored Sanborn Creek's connectivity and improved water quality.

To restore the creek, LCRC crews start by clearing trees, then removing the old road surface and digging down to the old culvert. They add metal sheet piling on both sides of the stream. After removing the old structure, the crew brings in a new structure – pre-assembled in the road agency garage – and places it over the sheet piling. They complete the project by adding concrete, laying down the roadbed, paving it, and finally, installing guardrail and restoring the side slopes down to the stream. All this happens in a matter of weeks.

When it's all said and done, the road is wider, the lanes are more efficient, there's more guardrail protection, and it's overall a safer situation for the motoring public, said Leroy Williams Jr., LCRC manager.

LCRC completed eight stream crossing projects on Sanborn Creek, and they've partnered with townships on several similar projects. According to **Bill**

Continued, p.16



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VanDyke, LCRC engineer tech, the results are priceless.

“These projects are a win-win from every angle you look at it, from the financial value to the environmental benefit,” VanDyke said. “It’s beneficial for so many people involved – the Conservation Resource Alliance, the Pere Marquette Watershed Council, the road commission, and best of all, the motoring public. We’ve enjoyed doing these projects because you can see visible improvement. It’s something to be proud of.”

Some of these sites look dramatically different, said **Tom Smith**, LCRC road foreman.

“Several of the projects started with a 24-inch culvert where fish couldn’t even pass through, let alone amphibians and reptiles,” Smith said. “Now these culverts are up to 14-foot wide, big enough that now you could kayak through.”

The new culverts also offer some insurance against future flooding events, something county road agencies have seen a lot of in recent years.

“In future storms or high-water events, those crossings would have been more at risk for damage,” Smith said. “These new structures are designed to handle a 100-year flood. They’re more insurance against having the road closed.”

Gone fishing

The improved crossings are an obvious benefit for the fish – migration is much easier if there’s room to pass through the stream, of course, and rusting old culverts no longer taint the water quality. The Conservation Resource Alliance’s goal was to adjust the stream bed to prevent erosion and sedimentation from the unpaved roadway or shoulder above, and it helps more than just fish.

“There are many environmental issues I wouldn’t even have thought of,” VanDyke said. “Not only do these projects ensure a safer road, they also

create a more natural stream bed. That can protect wildlife like snakes, turtles and invertebrates that are typically trying to cross the road. With these adjustments, they’re able to pass under the road.”

A fraction of the cost

From a financial aspect, the projects are equally as rewarding, said LCRC finance and HR manager **Jessica LaPointe**. Installing new culverts is much more reasonable than the alternative solution: building new bridges.

“A lot of the bottomless arches LCRC uses cost around \$200,000,” LaPointe said. “By partnering with the Conservation Resource Alliance, it ends up costing the road commission a fraction of that. For example, the Forman Road crossing project [at Sanborn Creek] cost \$234,000, and LCRC paid just \$30,000 of that for time and labor.”

“But beyond the financial benefits, it’s great for the morale here at LCRC,” she said. “When our crews see the completed project, it’s a big confidence booster. We’re so proud of their work. It’s incredible that our tiny little road commission can make such a big impact.” **CRA**

BEFORE



Spruce Road culvert prior to rehabilitation.



Broadway Avenue, before culvert rehabilitation.

AFTER



After Spruce Road culvert rehabilitation.



Broadway Avenue, after culvert rehabilitation.

Restoring Sanborn Creek

- 1 Clear trees in the affected area.
- 2 Remove old road surface and dig down into the old culvert.
- 3 Install metal sheet piling on both sides of the stream.
- 4 Remove old structure, bring in pre-assembled new structure and place it over sheet piling.
- 5 Add concrete, lay down the roadbed and pave it.
- 6 Install guardrail and restore the sides of the stream.



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"Don't worry about that part – It's just standard boilerplate." We've all heard this refrain when presented with contracts by salespeople.

And you may not have the time or patience to read every provision of the license agreement each time you update your cell phone's software. But when it comes to reviewing contracts for our road commissions, reviewing the entire contract is critical.

Most contracts place the "substantive" provisions – the parts that explain what each party is agreeing to do – right up front. Then come the "boilerplate" provisions, which can be highly technical and are often drafted in unnecessarily dense legalese. They are referred to as boilerplate because, all too often, parties simply copy the same provisions from another contract.

While you should always have contracts reviewed by your counsel, having a basic understanding of what these provisions mean will help you appreciate why there should be no such thing as "standard boilerplate."

Instead, the provisions of each contract should be tailored to the specific situation. Below are just a few examples of the types of boilerplate provisions included in many contracts, and how they can impact the road commission's rights under the agreement.

Forum and Venue: Many contracts include provisions that dictate where a lawsuit over the contract must be brought. Provisions that designate a particular state in which suit must be filed are referred to as "choice of forum" provisions. These are generally enforceable in Michigan, although there are exceptions.

Many vendors' standard contracts include a provision that designates their home state as the forum for any lawsuit. You don't want to be dragged into litigation on the other side of the country, so it is generally best if the contract designates Michigan as the sole forum for any disputes. Some contracts also attempt to designate a particular venue (e.g., a county) in which lawsuits must be filed, but such provisions are not enforceable under Michigan law. Instead, the appropriate venue is determined by statute.

Indemnity: One of the most important "boilerplate" provisions is an indemnity clause. At a basic level, indemnity is an agreement by one party to pay losses incurred by the other party. If you are indemnifying another party, you should therefore be careful to define the scope of the indemnification.

What types of losses or costs are you responsible to pay? Under what circumstances are you responsible for paying them? Conversely, if you are being indemnified, you will want to

make sure that the indemnification is as broad as possible.

Severability: Most contracts include a severability clause, which states that if any part of the contract is later found by a court to be unenforceable, that all other portions of the contract will remain in effect. But you may not always want that to be the case, as there may be parts of the contract that you consider essential to its performance. Be careful to consider what provisions you can live without, and which you cannot, before agreeing to a severability clause.

As you can see, what is often referred to as "standard boilerplate" can have a significant impact on your rights under the contract. While these provisions often do not come into play until something goes wrong, that is precisely when you want to be protected the most. It is therefore important to carefully review these provisions and ensure that they are correctly drafted to meet your needs.

Devin Sullivan is a shareholder with Zausmer, P.C., in Farmington Hills, whose practice focuses on representing government agencies, including road commissions and public utilities, in a wide variety of legal matters, including litigation, municipal law and real estate law. [CRA](#)

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MEMBER FEATURE

KARL HANSON

Engineer, fisherman, world-record holder

You might not find **Karl Hanson** in the *Guinness Book of World Records*, but he is a world-record holder. In the Freshwater Fishing Hall of Fame, that is. And it takes more strategy than you think!

Hanson, county highway engineer at **Wexford County Road Commission (WCRC)**, has a world record for the largest Atlantic salmon caught on a two-pound line, weighing in at nine pounds and 10 ounces.

“The biggest part of fishing is the problem solving,” Hanson said. “You have to think about everything.

Every observation you make, even the tiny ones, can result in success – or a mistake.”

“It’s figuring out where the fish will be and how you’re going to position yourself that’s the fun part,” he said. “Anyone can cast a line out wherever, and if the fish bite, that’ll work for you. But most of the time, that’s not the case. You have to put a lot more thought into it. Adding up all the little details is what leads to really increasing your success.”

It’s that same kind of strategic thinking that makes him a successful road engineer.



A taste of what’s to come

Hanson started at WCRC almost 16 years ago, after working at a consulting firm in Traverse City. He was first introduced to the world of county road agencies while collaborating on a freeway project. The project, a freeway redesign from Cadillac to north of Manton, won several state and national awards and gave him a taste of what it might be like to work at a county road agency.

“I liked the idea that at a county road agency, I’d be able to make a lot of improvements that you don’t see or have control over when you’re a consultant,” Hanson said. “When you’re doing a consulting job, you’re going from point A to point B. There’s a prescribed fix. Most of my projects were expensive fixes,

and the dollars didn’t go very far. I was excited by the prospect that at WCRC, I’d be able to do a lot of fixes that cover a lot of miles.”

A Plymouth native, Hanson grew up on a farm and enjoyed the hard work outside. He knew he wanted to keep doing it – just maybe not *all* the time. A guidance counselor pointed him in another direction: Engineering.

“I didn’t want to go into engineering at first because I thought it’d just be sitting at a desk all day,” Hanson said. “I wanted to have a job that allowed me to be hands-on and work outside some of the time. Eventually I realized civil engineering fit the bill.”

Hanson attended Michigan Technological University to earn his bachelor’s and master’s degrees in civil engineering with a specialization in transportation and transportation materials. He’d initially considered moving to the UP – or out west or Alaska – but settled on Northwest Michigan to be closer to family. It doesn’t hurt that the fishing is good.

Hanson has been married to his wife, Ashley, for 22 years and has five children. His kids join him out fishing, and that’s his favorite part. After all, it’s a family affair for him. His father, Leon Hanson, is world-renowned for building bamboo fly rods, and has received many national awards.

A source of pride

At WCRC, Hanson leads efforts to make improvements in all aspects of day-to-day processes to preserve, restore and maintain roads.

“We’re always trying to make a higher quality product or generate more efficient operations,” he said. “We’re concentrated on all aspects of road maintenance; we stretch dollars as far as possible to get the longest-lasting roads.”

Hanson enjoys working with the crews and general maintenance workers to revamp procedures annually. Each year, the team selects one or two processes to evaluate and improve upon, such as grading, drainage, mowing or gravel production/pit management. Overall, the impact adds up.

“I enjoy the fact that it allows everyone to be a part of the creative process,” Hanson

said. “We allow the crews to experiment with different things and figure out what works and what doesn’t work as well. It enables them to have a better idea of what they can and can’t do, how they treat a certain scenario, without having a superintendent tell them what to do. It empowers them to fix things and make decisions once they understand how to make those changes.”

It’s seeing results that gets Hanson out of bed in the morning.

“I can drive around the county and see the visible impact of our work on county roads,” he said. “It gives me a source of pride to improve so many miles of road and know that I had a hand in that.”

It’s those measurable results – similar to the rewards that come with a successful fishing trip – that make it all worth it. [CRA](#)

Welcome to our new member feature series!

Each issue of *Crossroads*, we’ll be featuring a different CRA member. Have a fun story to tell? Know someone who does?

Contact Rachael Cieslik at rcieslik@micountyroads.org or 517.482.1189 for a chance to be featured in our next edition.



Karl, Ashley and their children, Fall 2020, hiking to the top of Caberfae in Wexford County.

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DIAMOND IN THE ROUGH

HIRING FIRMS AND HOW THEY MAY IMPROVE TALENT RECRUITMENT



Finding the best candidate for the job isn't always easy, as most employers know. But as the work pool tightens, some road agencies are turning – not to the internet and social media – but back to professional recruiting firms.

Chippewa County Road Commission (CCRC) uses a hiring firm called Stang Decision Systems, based in Marquette, to fill positions. They've been successful with the firm in the past; CCRC has hired a new payroll and human resources clerk, engineer, mechanic and others through the professional recruiter.

How does a hiring firm work?

Plain and simple, hiring firms recruit job candidates on behalf of employers. A road agency can contact a recruitment agency and supply them with all the critical details about the position: Responsibilities, qualifications and pay. The firm will often help write a job advertisement. They're experts on what candidates are looking for in a position, so they'll know just how to word things so it's an accurate,

appealing and, most of all, effective marketing piece.

"Whether our client is a start-up or more established company, we work hand in hand with their human resources department or hiring manager to drill down to exactly what they're looking for in a new hire," said Jody Johnson, vice president of human resources and talent acquisition at Stang Decision Systems.

"Once we have details on the position, we write a job ad and post it locally and nationally in places we know to be the most effective," she said. "We know where ads have garnered success for specific positions in the past, so we use that data to place new ads."

It's advertising done better. Most hiring firms have preference agreements with Indeed or other job search engines, so they'll make sure your ad is front and center. It'll stand out in the sea of job listings in a way you might not be able to achieve if you post an ad on your own.

Candidates go through a customized and detailed application process unique to each position. Hiring firms test for not only skills, but for personality, too.

"Anyone can read a resume and determine qualifications that way," **Rob Laitinen**, CCRC manager, said. "But it's difficult to pick up on personality traits in a short period of time. The Stang system is very beneficial in making sure personalities fit with our organization because it has that added layer of scoring based on personality type."

Once candidates finish the application process, the hiring firm does some of the work for you: It narrows down the list of applicants, only presenting you with qualified candidates in a rank-ordered fashion, which quickly identifies the best fits for the position.

Todd Surline, president of Hiring Solutions, LLC, in Okemos, said their approach to recruitment is two-pronged.



"Of course, you have the traditional job posting, but 80% of the people we hire are from us looking for them rather than them finding the job," Surline said. "We figure out innovative ways to reach out to certain individuals. That might mean contacting them via LinkedIn or using our other connections to recruit top candidates. With our expertise, we're able to help clients find quality applicants in nontraditional ways."

Is it worth the cost?

Hiring firms vary when it comes to paying for their services. Some, like Stang, charge a flat monthly fee for an unlimited number of job postings. Their \$600 per month rate includes strategic planning conversations, development and writing of the ad, direct access to their team of experts and human resources advice.

Hiring Solutions, LLC, on the other hand, charges based on the level of search work. For a full search for a position, it can take up to 100 hours of time.

According to Laitinen, working with a staffing agency makes efficient use of CCRC's time.

"We're always looking to find good quality candidates in a timely matter," he said. "A hiring firm really pares that group down for us. Since they do the initial screening of applications, it's a large time and cost saving method for me."

But perhaps the most beneficial part of using a hiring firm is its personalization. Stang, for example, offers applicants a series of highly specific questions designed to determine the candidates' strengths outside of their technical skill set.

"Based on the personality reports we receive, we're able to see how the applicant's personality traits would fit in with our group and workforce," Laitinen said.

Hiring firms can even help prepare employers for face-to-face interviews; they suggest specific interview

questions for each candidate based on the candidate's responses in the application process. It's a step that can help further whittle down the candidate pool and ensure cultural compatibility.

"There's a big benefit having some science behind it, having a better idea of what to expect going into an interview," Laitinen said. "Profiles generally hit right on the money, and the people who have come in have been great hires."

Finding the right fit for the job isn't easy. But a hiring firm could be a good fit for you. [CRA](#)

HIGHWAY CONFERENCE CANCELLED

Due to lingering limits on indoor capacity and the fast-approaching roadwork season, CRA's Board made the decision to cancel the 2021 Highway Conference and Road Show.

But there's still a lot in store for 2021!

Check out p. 34 for other upcoming events.

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Decoding an actuarial report

Your guide to understanding it all

Chris Veenstra

FCA, ASA, MAAA, EA, president of Grand Rapids-based consulting firm Watkins Ross. Chris specializes in public employer retirement (OPEB and pension) plan consulting.



Understanding the numbers in an actuarial report is more important than ever! More local units are prefunding retiree healthcare (OPEB) plans and/or reconsidering funding strategies for their pension plans.

But numbers are only one piece of the puzzle. It's just as crucial to understand how benefits and assets work together when making investment decisions for plan assets.

Of all the values in an actuarial report – whether it be for a pension plan or OPEB plan, funding or accounting – arguably the most important numbers are the ones that show the net pension or net OPEB liability.

But what does the plan's liability represent? Are all liabilities equal? And, if the liabilities and assets for two plans are the same, are the future funding needs for the two plans identical?

To answer these questions, one way of thinking about the liability is a measurement of the amount of assets a plan ought to have at a specific time in order to gauge the ability of that plan to pay benefits in the future.

For example, a liability of \$560,000 would suggest that a plan ought to have \$560,000 as of the date this value was determined. Actual assets greater than or less than this number would provide some information about the funding requirements

for the plan. Stopping there, it seems two plans that have the same liability and assets would be similarly positioned to pay benefits.

Not so fast...There are other considerations.

If two plans have the same net pension or OPEB liability, one would think the funded position and future funding needs are the same. However, let's look at the construct of a liability.

Step 1: Project benefits expected to be paid from the plan. To get that number, the actuary has to make certain assumptions – future pay increases (if the benefit is pay-related), age and service at retirement, likelihood of terminating or dying prior to retiring, and other situations that might be unique to the plan such as marital status.

Once those benefits have been estimated, a present value (PV) is determined. The way to think of a PV is an amount (lump sum) that, if one had the assets available in that amount, would eventually pay all those benefits in the future assuming all actuarial assumptions – including investment income – would be realized or occur as expected.

Before going into any further details at this point – such as the difference between the actuarial accrued liability (AAL) and the present value – based on this information alone, one can start to see how two present

values can be identical but represent two very different situations.

Consider two plans. One consists of one person with a stream of payments of \$1,000 per month expected to start in 10 years. In addition, assume a fund has been established to pay for this benefit stream and is expected to earn 7.5% per year.

The present value of this future benefit might be \$61,000. That is, if the trust had \$61,000, theoretically it would be sufficient to pay \$1,000 per month beginning in 10 years for the life of the participant.

The second plan consists of a person receiving a \$325 monthly benefit payable immediately. Assuming annual return on investment of 7.5% produces a PV of \$40,667.

Step 2: To calculate the liabilities for these two plans, the PV is spread over or allocated to the working life of each participant. The portion attributable to completed service is the AAL.

For retirees, because they have completed all of the service they will provide to the employer, their AAL is equal to their PV. However, for active employees, not all of the PV has been earned yet; most of them will be assumed to perform more service until retirement. Thus, the AAL for an active employee is less than the PV for that employee.

So, if the one participant in the first plan (with 10 years to work before retirement) has completed 20 years, the liability for that person might be two-thirds of the PV (20 years completed divided by 30 years expected at retirement), or \$40,667, while the AAL for the person in the plan who is currently in pay status is the same as that person's PV (because all service has been completed),

which is also \$40,667.

So, in both situations, if the plans each have \$40,667 as of the valuation date, they would be considered 100% funded. However, for the first plan, there are future contribution requirements to pay for the portion of the PV not yet "earned" or recognized equal to \$20,333. But, the plan has 10 years over to pay it.

In the second situation, if the trust has \$40,667, it too is considered 100% but theoretically has no future funding obligation. [CRA](#)

Want to learn more?

Mark your calendar for CRA's "Taking a deeper dive into under-funded liabilities at the county road agency" program.



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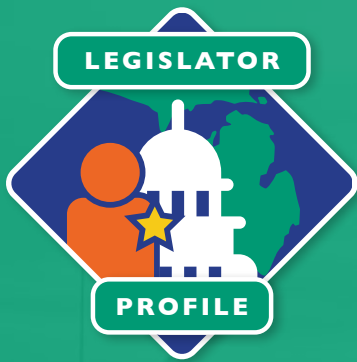
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JASON WENTWORTH
Speaker of the House | 97th district



Speaker of the House Jason Wentworth represents the 97th District, which includes Clare, Gladwin and Arenac counties, and a portion of Osceola County. He was first elected to the Michigan House of Representatives in 2016.

CRA deputy director Ed Noyola and *Crossroads* sat down with Speaker Wentworth just after he was sworn in to discuss his approach to transportation issues.

CRA: Tell us a little bit about your background and how you got into politics.

Rep. Wentworth: I was born and raised in Farwell – my district – and after high school, I joined the Army. After five years of active duty, I came back to Michigan to start a family and began working for the Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency as an entry-level technician. I went from answering phones to becoming a manager and then the regional coordinator.

I saw issues in the system, so I met with our state Representative to discuss the challenges. His term was expiring soon, and I decided – literally within 24 hours – that I was just going to run. I would come to Lansing, fix those veterans issues and then return home. Four years later, I'm the next Speaker of the House.

I had no intention of running for leadership, but once I saw all the issues and potential solutions, I realized that as a part of the state government, I had the opportunity to help fix things. Once I got here, I became interested in the auto no-fault insurance debate. I knew my district was upset about the amount of insurance they were paying for their vehicles in a rural area, so I requested to sit on the committee. In my second term, I chaired the Select Committee on Reducing Car Insurance Rates and continued progressing into this leadership role.

CRA: As Michigan transitions back from the COVID crisis, what are your priorities in the coming 101st Legislative Session?

Rep. Wentworth: We're living in a tumultuous time, and it's now more important than ever to build and restore the trust and confidence of the public in our government. The best way to do that is to involve people in creating solutions to the challenges they face.

You'll see a lot of ethics-type legislation changing the way we govern in Michigan. Ultimately, legislators are not here to serve ourselves; we're here to serve the people. By listening to their concerns and getting them involved in the process, we're able to help create change in a more tangible way.

What's missing in Lansing right now is the people part of politics. There are so many aspects of how we do our jobs that we forget that there are people involved. When you draw on real-world experience from the people – not just elected officials, but directly from our districts – it changes your perspective as a legislator.

CRA: CRA worked hard to get legislation to require MDOT to buy out our federal aid, which could release many road agencies from stifling federal red tape. The bill died in December. Is this a priority you can embrace for 2021?

Rep. Wentworth: As a caucus, we're generally supportive. We hope to work directly with the Whitmer Administration to address this issue. Through effective collaboration, I think we'll be able to solve some of these problems, including the language supporting unions. Ultimately, we don't just want to send a message; we want a bill signed into law.

CRA: Another priority for road agencies is the efficiency bill that allows road agencies to do more of their own work – up to \$400,000. This bill also died in December, due to the "ceiling" on the amount of work allowed, which ended up limiting urban road agencies. Assuming the private sector and road agencies can agree on the proper balance, is this a priority you can embrace for 2021?

Rep. Wentworth: Absolutely. Local control over county road agency operations is key. Efficiencies and increased local options are an effective way of achieving that balance.

CRA: With several efficiency bills passed in the 100th Legislature, do you see additional revenue – or step #2 as the Snyder Administration and Legislature described it – being part of the discussion in the year ahead?

Rep. Wentworth: I do think it's going to be part of the discussion.

Continued, p.16

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This has been out on the table for decades, and it's going to continue to be an obstacle until we come up with effective solutions. Adequate funding is crucial to maintaining our roads and infrastructure, so there will be a lot of conversations on this issue as we weigh all our options.

CRA: Studies have shown that transportation, prior to COVID-19 relief, was number one and now the public's number-two priority. How will you help prioritize transportation in the Legislature and what role do you see yourself playing in ongoing conversation about infrastructure improvements, future increased transportation revenue and/or codifying general fund allocations?

Rep. Wentworth: There are a lot of concerns about finding sustainable and adequate funding for the roads problem, especially since the Governor's bonding program only benefits state roads. A stable, reliable source of funding is important in Michigan – a source that doesn't fluctuate through the ebbs and flows.

CRA: You recently played a part in facilitating a key county road project in Gladwin County, funded by the Transportation Economic Development Fund (TEDF) grant and also disaster relief appropriation after the May rain event and dam burst. Thank you. How has your relationship with Arenac, Clare and Gladwin County Road Commissions grown and what plans do you have to continue working with those county road agencies to improve infrastructure?

Rep. Wentworth: I've been impressed time and time again at the determination and dedication of county road agencies. These people live and work in our communities; they're our neighbors. The Gladwin [TEDF] project is a good example of how we were able to build a relationship and utilize that partnership to think outside the box. I give credit to the local roads professionals for coming to the state legislators with solutions to their challenges. It's that bottom-up approach – having that ability to reach out to us, see a solution and work toward it.

CRA: How has your view of county road agencies changed over the years and/or what have you learned about county road agencies since the beginning of your legislative career?



Rep. Wentworth: Most of our roads in Michigan are county roads, and as our roads and bridges age, the role of the agencies that oversee them becomes more critical by the year. Additionally, Michigan faces some unique issues: We have more local roads than most other states and therefore more to maintain, and our roads freeze and thaw many times each year. That creates many challenges for construction, materials, maintenance – and budgets!

As legislators, we rely on road agencies to keep us informed about the issues they are facing and to help us find the best ways to create solutions. You are the experts who know roads and the systems we have to maintain and build them, and we rely on you for that information and to help us create smart, useful legislation.

Because our infrastructure is aging and because we live in a state with term limits, county road agencies have become more and more important to

educating members and to helping us get the right things done.

CRA: What can county road agencies do to keep you and their own legislators informed on recent and upcoming transportation issues? Do you have any specific thoughts on the work done by Michigan's county road agencies?

Rep. Wentworth: County road agencies can keep critical issues in front of us by providing information, by testifying at committee hearings, and by **getting legislators out in their districts to see what is working and what is not. That last strategy is an important one because it allows lawmakers to see exactly what is happening and to see it where it matters to them.**

Providing members with best practices and innovative solutions implemented elsewhere also is quite valuable. We appreciate the role county road agencies play in the learning and legislative processes. **CRA**



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COUNTY ROAD AGENCIES IN THE COMMUNITY

ROAD AGENCIES HOST COVID TESTING, FLU VACCINATION SITES

During this tumultuous time, Michigan county road agencies are finding unexpected community partnerships. Several agencies have volunteered as COVID testing sites in the last few months.

Here, a few agencies share why that's important.



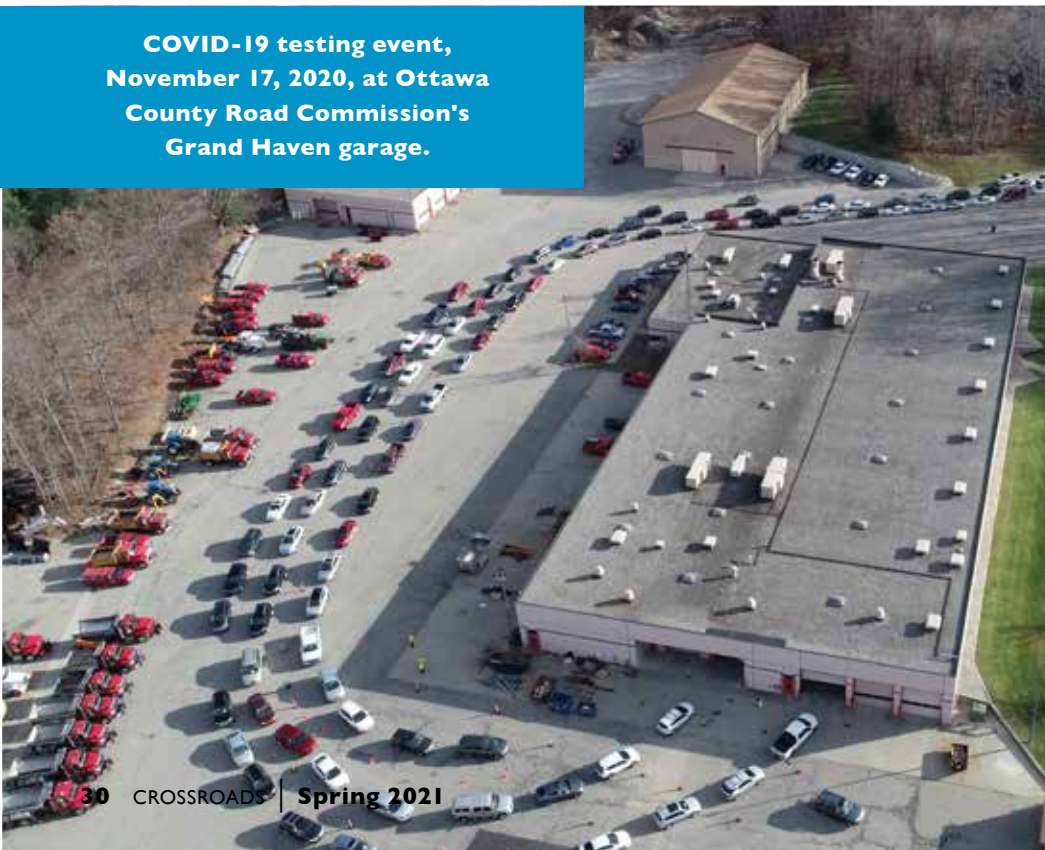
“When the pandemic first started, we didn’t have a lot of testing sites in the UP. We were happy to help meet that need. It was a great collaboration with the Department of Health and Human Services, the National Guard, the Michigan State Police and other local officials. These partnerships allowed the two testing events to come together seamlessly.”

– Jean Frankovich, managing director,
Schoolcraft County Road Commission

“The health department approached us because they had done COVID testing events at **Schoolcraft County Road Commission**. Our garage is similar in structure, so the department thought it’d be an ideal site for further testing. It’s nice to be able to partner with another local government entity to make these services more readily available to the public. We’re grateful to do something for our community above and beyond our normal functions.”

– Mike McTiver, PE, engineer-manager,
Luce County Road Commission

COVID-19 testing event,
November 17, 2020, at Ottawa
County Road Commission's
Grand Haven garage.



“Hosting COVID testing shows that in a time of need and a situation as unprecedented as this, two different organizations with two completely different missions can work toward a common goal. We enjoy working hand-in-hand with the health department to make these testing events happen.”

– Alex Doty,
communications
administrator, Ottawa
County Road Commission

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On November 23, 2020, the District 10 Health Department staff hosted a drive-through flu shot clinic at the Oceana County Road Commission Hart Garage. This was done at no cost to the public. District 10 utilized our truck garage and participants would drive in at one end, remain in their vehicles while receiving their vaccinations and exit at the opposite end. As many as five vehicles were in the garage at any one time. The Health Department staff administered 143 vaccinations in six hours!

– **Mark Timmer, managing director of the Oceana County Road Commission**



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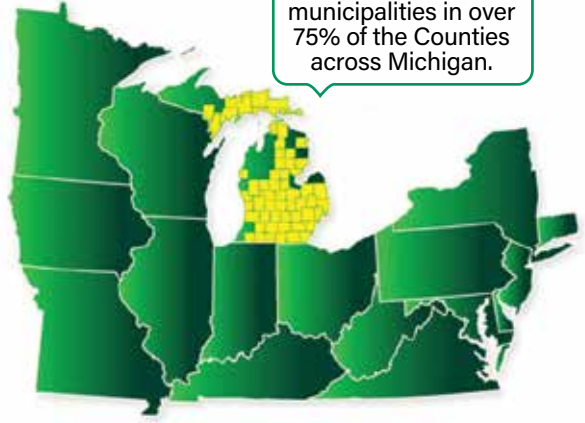


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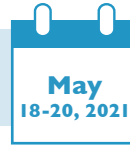
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GOING WITH THE FLOW

JIM CRAWFORD, FORMERLY OF KAROUB ASSOCIATES, TALKS POLITICS



Jim Crawford recalls a genuine interest in politics beginning at age eight. Growing up in an Irish Catholic, Democrat Union household in Boston, he rooted for the guy no one in his world supported: Richard Nixon. (Crawford thinks his dad wanted to take him for psychological counseling!)

His intrigue with the world of politics never subsided. From a young age, he would watch national conventions “gavel to gavel” in the days when the three networks covered every minute of them. The process and drama of politics fascinated him.

This year, Crawford is wrapping up his political career as partner at Karoub Associates, which is the outside lobbying partner for the County Road Association (CRA) of Michigan. After 26 years at Karoub and 10 years working with CRA, Crawford is retiring. How he got to where he is now, however, is an interesting story.

Recently, Crawford sat down with CRA deputy director Ed Noyola and talked politics, loyalty and going with the flow.

Ed Noyola (EN): Jim, you’ve built up a lot of experience on your way to becoming a partner at Karoub, including time as Mayor of Lansing. How did you get involved in politics?

Jim Crawford (JC): It really all began in 1974. I was a senior at Michigan State University and a college friend, Spencer Abraham, asked me to volunteer in Cliff Taylor’s Congressional campaign.

When Taylor lost the election, I decided to stay in the Lansing area to be involved in his 1976 rematch. In the interim, I started a career in real estate. Cliff Taylor lost the race in ’76 but went on to a great judicial career and served as Chief Justice of the Michigan Supreme Court. Spencer Abraham, of course, eventually served as our US Senator.

In 1980, I ran for county commission and – unexpectedly – won. As a candidate with limited funds, door-to-door campaigning is all my campaign team (my wife and I) could do, and we did it tenaciously. While serving for two years on the commission, I continued my involvement volunteering and serving on various boards and eventually became Chair of the Lansing Police Commission. In 1985, I joined the Staff of Senator Alan Cropsey. Two years later I was elected to the Lansing City Council.

I was thrown into the role of Lansing Mayor when the current mayor made a very controversial decision to leave under a new early retirement program that benefited them. One day I was the council president, and the next I was in the center of chaos!

The day I became mayor, 145 of the most experienced city employees left under the early retirement plan. We spent the year reorganizing, streamlining city government and dealing with the controversy of early retirement. When the term ended and I lost the election, the opportunity to join Karoub presented itself.

EN: Can you talk a little about your philosophy at Karoub and how you’ve helped CRA over the years?

JC: What I have always taken pride in at Karoub is the teamwork. As individuals, we are diverse in many ways, including in our political perspectives. This diversity allows us, as a team, to develop and maintain relationships with each lawmaker. The teamwork allows us to use our individual relationships with lawmakers to serve each of our clients.

This philosophy has proven its effectiveness in our work on behalf of CRA. The relationships have allowed us success with both offense and defense. Both are critical in the legislative process and, often, the importance of defense (stopping bad policy) is overlooked.

Defensive wins, naturally, fade from memory and it’s the proactive achievements that move the Association forward. Fortunately, Karoub Associates, working with CRA leadership, and powered by the involvement of road commissioners throughout the state, has been very effective.

EN: How has Karoub adjusted to changes in the Michigan Legislature, such as term limits?

Continued, p.38

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JC: The imposition of term limits has required adjustments by lobbyists. More importantly, it has not been good, in my opinion, for governance. When the time a lawmaker serves is so severely limited, the ability for members to develop expertise is also severely limited. This results in the institutional memory shifting from elected lawmakers to staff and lobbyists.

For Karoub Associates, the teamwork and relationship building we have always relied on is even more critical in the era of term limits. The massive turnover that occurs every two years requires a great effort to build those relationships with new members. For us, the work begins long before a new session begins. Throughout the election year, we interact with candidates, discuss our client interests and begin the relationship and trust building. As the new Legislature begins, we intensify the work of connecting new lawmakers with clients.

EN: Now that the dust has settled – sorta – on the 2020 election, what's your take on the results? Can you talk about the election of Speaker of the House Jason Wentworth and the other leadership positions? And, what happened to the "blue wave"?

JC: Hindsight seems to show us that the "blue wave" rhetoric was rooted in very bad polling. Bad polling was rooted in a fear of voters sharing their opinions with pollsters. The rear view mirror shows that polling in 2016 and 2020 was inaccurate. The problem is not that polling is wrong; it is that we fear sharing our opinions. Demonizing those with a legitimate, but different, worldview should be troubling to everyone in a democracy.

Speaker Wentworth has been seen as a rising star in his caucus for quite a while. His appointment to chair a special Committee on Auto Insurance Reform and his success in that role solidified his leadership skills to his caucus.

EN: What's the most valuable lesson you've learned in politics, and what advice do you have for someone entering politics?

JC: Of course, honesty and integrity are foundational. However, I would add this: Do not underestimate the importance and power of loyalty in politics. Whether you are a campaign volunteer, a staffer or anyone involved in the political process, loyalty is powerful. Politics can be brutal. Loyalty in the battle is priceless. **CRA**

As I reflect back on my career, the unexpected payback of loyalty over the years has had a monumental impact on my life.

– Jim Crawford

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PUBLISHER'S COLUMN

Shots of Good News!



President Timmer's column in this edition of *Crossroads* speaks of finally seeing the retreating edge of this pandemic.

This is due in no small part to the extraordinary expertise and dedication of the pharmaceutical companies who delivered vaccines a mere nine months from Michigan's first confirmed cases.

To get those early doses into the arms of road workers, CRA has communicated with Governor Whitmer's office, the Michigan Department of Health & Human Services and MDOT on road agencies' need for early vaccination. You are critical infrastructure workers – a fact sometimes overlooked until the infrastructure is somehow perceived as less safe (e.g., slippery or snow-covered).

While the Governor has reportedly supported early vaccination so that front-line road crews will be healthy when called upon this winter, the local health departments sometimes have a different priority list.

As I write this column, front-line staff at about two dozen road agencies have been vaccinated. Others are waiting for more doses locally.

A heartfelt THANK YOU to the front-line staff who've continued working on the roads every day of this pandemic – braving streets alternately deserted and then filled with speeding cars. You embrace risk on the roads every day, including during a pandemic.

You inspire your staff at the County Road Association in downtown Lansing!

While we can't drive plows, we are pressing ahead to plan interesting conferences, provide virtual options, and to host and engage with the current and new legislators coming to town. The public's focus will soon return to Michigan's crumbling road system, and we're ready to help legislators understand the situation.

Very soon things will return to normal. I won't call it a "new normal" because human nature will again embrace those activities and people that fulfill us. And we'll need good roads to get there. [CRA](#)

Denise Donohue

Denise Donohue, CAE, APR
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5 Tips for Looking Good on Zoom!

While the pandemic has begun to ebb, video platforms such as Zoom or Teams won't go away anytime soon.

Now that remote connection platforms have been used by most of the US workforce, they're likely to remain part of the office culture even when in-person meetings resume.

And as Billy Crystal always said: "You [need to] look mah-ve-lous, baby."



Whether it's better to look good than feel good, we cannot say. But we do know that visual impressions are critically important. *Crossroads* has assembled five tips to be more strategic about re-establishing the professional dynamic of at-home in an online meeting.

1 Dress the same as if you were at the office. It might feel odd running around your home in dress clothes, but work-at-home begins with "work." Rolling out of bed, pulling on a hoodie and a baseball cap (*Crossroads note: Seen it*) and immediately hopping on a Zoom meeting is not a positive career move. It can cause everyone on the video call to act less professionally.

Dress as if you're in person and present your best self. This helps win acceptance of your ideas, just like it does in "real life."

2 Turn your camera on. More than half of all communication is nonverbal, including smiling or frowning, an arch of the eyebrow, silent head-nodding, sitting up straighter and so many more "tells" about what people are thinking which, in turn, influences what we say.

Turning the camera off (*seen it plenty*) sends the message – whether you mean to or not – that you aren't "all in." Turn the camera on to be a full participant in the conversation.

When talking, spend most of your time looking into the camera opening on your computer. It's your only hope of appearing to make eye contact in this format.

3 Have a nice background. Arrange a mini-studio at home so you aren't embarrassed with camera-on. Have one nicely-painted wall or bookcase that's well arranged.

Look at reporters-from-home on TV news. Take a critical look at yourself in the setting and see if it is flattering or bringing you down. Help at least one wall in your home be its best self.

A word on virtual backgrounds: If you use one, sit still. They often fade in and out as you move, appearing to swallow your head (*seen it*). This is distracting;

watch yourself and learn how best to remain in the picture.

4 Good lighting. This is a big deal in looking your best! Overhead light will usually cause your eyes to look dark and sunken. Bright light behind you can turn you into a dark profile (*seen it*). Search for the best natural light in a room that also has a good background and bandwidth connectivity.

A \$25 ring light (or lamp) placed in front of you and beside or behind your computer will cast more light onto your face. Turning on the room's overhead lights (unless the fixture is directly behind your head) is a good idea.

5 Camera placement. Ideally, the camera opening will be at eye-level. Below eye-level, you're looking down and your neck can look wrinkly, eyes dark (*done it*). There're several ways to get your camera at eye-level such as stacking books to raise the computer. If using a cell phone, hook the cell grip on a vase or coffee cup at the optimal height.

Never balance the camera on your stomach (*seen it*). This shows more of your body than necessary, rises and falls as you breathe, and gives that neck-angle we're trying to avoid.

We know you look mah-ve-lous! But like everything else online, it just takes a little more planning. [CRA](#)

– Denise Donohue, APR
CRA Director



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Road Commissions and Departments →

Kurt Bisballe was elected commissioner at **Missaukee County Road Commission**.

Susan Boyd has been hired as finance manager and secretary to the board at **Leelanau County Road Commission**.

Sue Buckner was appointed commissioner at **Muskegon County Road Commission**.

Bruce Clark was appointed commissioner at **Midland County Road Commission**.

Dave Coker was elected commissioner at **Clare County Road Commission**.

Jack Coleman was appointed commissioner at **St. Joseph County Road Commission**.

Jeffrey Conklin was appointed commissioner at **Mason County Road Commission**.

Keshia Dickason was appointed commissioner at **Road Commission of Kalamazoo County**.

Key transitions at...

Kevin Giar was appointed commissioner at **Antrim County Road Commission**.

Luke Gordon was appointed commissioner at **Otsego County Road Commission**.

David Greaves was elected commissioner at **Gladwin County Road Commission**.

Garth Greenan, PE, was elected commissioner at **Leelanau County Road Commission**.

Dory Hawkins-Freelain has been hired as managing director at **Monroe County Road Commission**.

Bill Jordan was elected commissioner at **Bay County Road Commission**.

Terry Jostock was elected commissioner at **Lapeer County Road Commission**.

John Karvonen was elected commissioner at **Keweenaw County Road Commission**.

William Kipf was appointed commissioner at **Midland County Road Commission**.

Ronald Larson was elected commissioner at **Crawford County Road Commission**.

Gary Leininger was elected commissioner at **Hillsdale County Road Commission**.

Alan Leman was appointed commissioner at **Grand Traverse County Road Commission**.

Michael LePage was appointed commissioner at **Huron County Road Commission**.

Dave Livermore was elected commissioner at **Isabella County Road Commission**.

Gerald MacArthur was appointed commissioner at **Alpena County Road Commission**.

Sherry Powell has been hired as deputy clerk at **Oceana County Road Commission**.

Norman Quaine was appointed commissioner at **Presque Isle County Road Commission**.

Nancy Quarles was appointed commissioner at **Road Commission for Oakland County**.

Max Schunk was elected commissioner at **Clare County Road Commission**.

Kevin Spicher was appointed commissioner at **Livingston County Road Commission**.

Clint Stauffer was elected commissioner at **Roscommon County Road Commission**.

Dustin Stempki was elected commissioner at **Delta County Road Commission**.

Marci Taskey was elected commissioner at **Alger County Road Commission**.

Randy Travelbee was appointed commissioner at **Branch County Road Commission**.

Joe Underwood was appointed commissioner at **Grand Traverse County Road Commission**.

Thomas Wagner was appointed commissioner at **Otsego County Road Commission**.

Scott Wanagat, PE, has been hired as county highway engineer at **Macomb County Department of Roads**.

Terry Wansteadt was elected commissioner at **Osceola County Road Commission**.

Bruno Wojcik was elected commissioner at **Montmorency County Road Commission**.

Mile Markers →

Kenneth Baslock, heavy equipment operator at **Huron County Road Commission**, has retired after 24 years.

Marcia Bowers, administrative assistant at **Huron County Road Commission**, has retired after 15 years.

Ronald Bowers, shop superintendent at **Huron County Road Commission**, has retired after 35 years.

Danny Brown, heavy truck operator at **Huron County Road Commission**, has retired after 36 years.

Timothy Ertl, heavy equipment operator at **Huron County Road Commission**, has retired after 22 years.

Gary Osminski, engineer at **Huron County Road Commission**, has retired after 21 years.

Randy Pierce, managing director at **Monroe County Road Commission**, has retired after 23 years.

Mark Piotter, engineer at **Huron County Road Commission**, has retired after 37 years.

Michael Power, commissioner at **Huron County Road Commission**, has retired after 18 years.

Douglas Robidoux, commissioner at **Mason County Road Commission**, has retired after 18 years.

Walter Schell, PE, county highway engineer at **Macomb County Department of Roads**, has retired after 15 years.

Debra Taylor, payroll/accounts payable clerk at **Charlevoix County Road Commission**, has retired after 10 years.

William Watkins, commissioner at **Hillsdale County Road Commission**, has retired after 24 years.

Alan Wichert, heavy equipment operator at **Huron County Road Commission**, has retired after 27 years.



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¹Williams, B.A., A. Copeland, & T.C. Ross (2018). Asphalt Pavement Industry Survey on Recycled Materials and Warm-Mix Asphalt Usage: 2017 (IS 138). National Asphalt Pavement Association, Lanham, Maryland. doi:10.13140/RG.2.2.30240.69129

²Sime, M., S.C. Ashmore, & S. Alavi (2000). TechBrief: WestTrack Track Roughness, Fuel Consumption, and Maintenance Costs (FHWA-RD-00-052). Federal Highway Administration, McLean, Virginia.

³Assuming \$2.85 per gallon.

⁴McGhee, K.K. & J.S. Gillespie (2009). Impact of a Smoothness Incentive/Disincentive on Hot-Mix Asphalt Maintenance Resurfacing Costs (FHWA/VTRC 06-R28). Virginia Transportation Research Council, Charlottesville, Virginia.

⁵Fox, A.R. (2013). Working to Improve Transportation Efficiency, Performance. Fast Lane: The Official Blog of the U.S. Department of Transportation. U.S. Department of Transportation, Washington, D.C.