

Report of the Highway Department

The Fremont Highway Department has been busy this year. We ended the year with some savings due to a very mild November and December 2023. It seems similar to 2022 in that regard, where early winter was mild and as we gear up for January and February, the forecast is for colder temperatures and we are seeing several storms a week moving across the country. We were pleased to return some money to the general fund in December 2023. In a few of the past years, winter maintenance costs have put the Highway Department budget over due to significant snow and ice in December.

Our paving projects for the year included Whittier Drive, completed after several years of phasing the reconstruction and repaving work. This included several areas of drainage that needed to be reconstructed. Some residents will remember this road being constructed 30 years ago, also done in phases. Over the years the drainage system has failed or become inadequate and we worked to improve those areas.

We also finished the balance of Sandown Road work to include reconstruction and repaving from the intersection of South/Chester to the Sandown Town Line as well as re-decking the Sandown Road Bridge near the intersection of Main Street. That bridge was rebuilt 25 years ago. The decking work included curbing and sidewalk improvements as well. We anticipate a 20+ year life of these improvements.

Our daily work includes maintenance and upkeep of signs, roadside drainage, potholes and significant roadside mowing and tree trimming. Specifically in 2023 we discovered significant old growth trees that were removed, many involving heavy equipment, cranes, and significant contracted expense. As we see increases in traffic, we have more cracksealing and repairs that are part of our daily work as well.



We were pleased to take delivery of the new highway truck in the late spring. It was ordered about 18 months prior and was fit up and delivered to our shop. We have found the new technology to be a vast improvement on the truck we replaced (2001 International that the Town bought used in 2017). We did purchase a new sander instead of repurposing one that was well over 20 years old, funding that purchase from the Highway Equipment Capital Reserve Fund.

We have worked with the Town and the engineer relative to the replacement Martin Road Bridge. The Town's planned work on the road was put off from 2023 to 2024 due to the bridge work being delayed. We expect to be

able to coordinate work in 2024, as long as the water table is down enough for bridge work to be completed during the construction season.

We would like to thank PJ Clark for the two years he worked with us in the full-time position. He left late this summer to pursue other career opportunities. We were able to recruit and hire Len Nichols in November and he has been a great addition to our staff in the FT position. We continue to receive part-time help from Frank Chase, Jared Butler and Gene Johnstone.

As you likely know, we do not have sufficient staff or equipment to perform all of the Town's snow removal and winter operations. I am very thankful for all of our contracted plow operators for their long crazy hours keeping our roads safe. No matter what time I call them, throughout the night, they are at the Highway Shed quickly. We have 43+ miles of Town roads and all of our Town and School buildings and parking lots to maintain. It takes an army of people, thank you all so much.

We look forward to 2024 road projects. Paving roads was, when you elected me Road Agent almost nine years ago, and is still, a top priority. We are gaining ground. The Town's main, high-travel roads are getting caught up. Now is the time for subdivisions to be repaved. Many were built in the 1980's and 1990's and are overdue for repaving. This year we plan to start paving these roads as budget permits, once we know where the Martin Road projects stand.

Thank you to all Fremont residents and taxpayers for your support to make everything happen for your roads. Please support the Town Budget so we can continue this important work.

In closing, I have many people to thank in addition to our staff and winter contractors for all of their hard work in keeping our road safe to travel, and to their spouses & families for their patience, support and a lot of hot meals. Thanks to Chief Jon Twiss and the Fremont Police Department, Chief Rich Butler and the members of Fremont Fire Rescue, the Budget Committee and Select Board, staff in the Select Board's Office and Superintendent Ellen Halliday. And our Town Administrator Heidi Carlson, for all the help she gives to me daily and all year long with budgeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Leon Holmes Jr
Road Agent

The Town's backhoe at the Easter Egg event at Ellis School, where the Road Agent is always happy to share knowledge about his equipment!

Photos courtesy of Michelle Gallant and Heidi Carlson

