

Our Taxpayers deserve better.

As Town Supervisor and a member of the Malone Town Board, I can attest to the myriad of complaints, conversations and concerns we have received from our residents and taxpayers – some of these individual complaints are of several years' duration. Whether we are confronted in person, in the community, at social gatherings, or on line, it is our responsibility to acknowledge – and act – on these matters, when we can.

Our fiscal responsibilities, when dealing with our taxpayers' monies, are to ensure that these funds are not negligently, arbitrarily, or wastefully expended.

The Town has a duty to maintain the roads and highways in a reasonably safe condition. The Highway Superintendent is responsible for the maintenance, care, repair of, plus snow removal from, all town highways. There are rules and regulations detailing all duties and responsibilities of all parties, however, this is the long and short of it.

Once a Town Board adopts the budget taking the Highway Superintendent's recommendations and request in consideration during the process, and once the Board and Highway Superintendent sign the yearly written agreement showing how tax money and state highway aid are to be spent on town roads, the Highway Superintendent can buy materials and other items without further Board approval.

In 2018 we received many complaints about the Teboville Road, Brick Church Road, Bull Run Road, Riley Road, and Webster Street Road. We heard the frustrations and mocking from Whitten Road residents pertaining to the three plus years' duration of that project. Clearly, in some of these instances, it would appear we are throwing good money after bad. We have heard from people who were given dates for culvert replacements – and find that the installation has yet to occur!

The Teboville/Brick Church Road complaints came to the forefront again at the November 14, 2018 meeting of the Town Board. After listening to these residents, Board member discussions centered around the need to extensively gravel these roads, rather than the stop gap measures being used. The Town Board asked the Highway Superintendent for calculations for materials needed in order to properly gravel and provide drainage for Teboville, Brick Church Road, Bull Run Road and Riley Road – rather than the projects proposed and budgeted for within the 2019 Budget. As a Board we wanted to see what could be addressed with the funds we have. To-date we have not received anything official on this. Other roads – like Studley Hill or Lovers Lane – have their own problems, as do other roads.

In years past, the highway department burned wood as a supplemental heat source and cost saving measure. From 2012-2016, on average, 4,200 gallons of oil were used each year; in 2017 5,248.9 gallons \$10,895.46 was spent; in 2018 10,588.9 gallons \$25,041.96 was spent. Obviously the wood furnace is not being used.

Chips funding in 2017 was \$275,142.24, in 2018 was \$340,569.67, and in 2019 we should receive \$284,059.52.

Budget expenses for roads in 2017 totaled \$187,670.84, and in 2018 totaled \$237,399.23. These figures do not include manpower or machinery.

Timonyear, The \$284,059.52 from Chips plus the \$300,000.00 within the 2019 Budget should make an impact.

So Far - Our taxpayers are not seeing improvements or results from their hard-earned and begrudgingly spent tax dollars.

I firmly believe that our highway department employees perform admirably, under the circumstances as well as the financial and management constraints under which they operate.

I would like to have a Management plan that clearly outlines specific project objectives and schedules; sets priorities; determines seasonal tasks to be performed; gets back to basics: ditching, properly graveling our roads, repairing what is needed, cutting trees, brush and mowing road sides, and generally working toward yearly improvements to our infra-structure. We should never pave in November. Period.

I would like our residents to be given realistic expectations for scheduling repairs, culvert installation, or other work. Let's not make promises that cannot be kept.

For more than a year now, I have had these conversations and many discussions with the Highway Superintendent about these matters and the many complaints I have personally received at the office and elsewhere. I believe other Town Board members have had similar discussions.

The bottom line is this: as Town Supervisor, I can request or suggest that the Highway Superintendent provide information, plan differently, or change management styles. The Town Board can do so as well. The Highway Superintendent, as a separately elected official, is directly responsible for the management decisions of the Highway Department. The Highway Superintendent – as a separately elected official – is directly responsible to, and accountable to, the residents, taxpayers, and voters of the Town of Malone.

The Taxpayers deserve better.