

HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT

In the year 2006, the Highway Department's budget was restored to previous levels, but continued to be a challenge. Due to rising costs of construction, limited available funds for road improvements, and the continued decline of much of our infrastructure, two positions in the Highway Department have not yet been filled. The financial savings allowed for the completion of several smaller projects that otherwise would not have been accomplished. The consequence of this is that some functions were contracted out and other tasks normally accomplished with department labor were not done. The need for additional laborers will continue to be evaluated closely, and adjustments will be made as time goes on.

With local funds, some minor projects were completed. A section of drainage on Martin Farms Road was replaced and the associated drainage channel was cleaned to correct water problems in that area. Approximately 250-feet of sub-drainage was added to Main Street, eliminating water and icing problems there. A culvert was replaced on Somers Road and several catch basins that began to collapse were rebuilt.

As in past years, State-Aid received from Chapter 90 allotments to the Town was used in 2006 to fund all expenses associated with paving projects on Valley View Drive, Forest Hills Road and Chestnut Hill Road. All of these roads received structure adjustments and new catch basin tops. The curbs were repaired as needed and the roads were tack coated and paved completely. State-Aid was also used for the placement of hot mix used to re-profile about 800-feet of Bennett Road and the entire length of Ames Road. These roads will receive a final coat of asphalt and stone next year.

As you are aware, in October 2005, Hampden suffered considerable damage as a result of local flooding. In 2006 the remaining repairs were completed. A slope failure that occurred on the property of Mass Audubon near Glendale Road, along the bank of East Brook, was temporarily repaired. This failure jeopardized the stability of Glendale Road. I am pleased to report that Mass Audubon gifted this repair, which was done by the Highway Department with a local contractor, to the town. Final repairs were also made to areas of Memorial Park.

Maintenance projects such as street sweeping, patching and trimming roads of brush, along with the repair and maintenance of our equipment was again completed. Catch basin cleaning and the cleaning of ditches were also done on a limited basis due to increased rental and disposal costs.

Two roads were the focus of much conversation in 2006. Briefly, South Ridge Road will receive sectional repair work to both the drainage and the pavement surface next year as approved at the Special Town Meeting in October of 2006.

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Howlett Hill Road was the subject of a public hearing in November of 2006, which resulted in the Selectmen voting to “Discontinue the Maintenance” of this road.

There were a total of 16 winter storms in 2006. As in past years, the members of the Highway Department worked long hours to clear the roads and make them safe for traffic. Supplemental workers that come in and help us with winter storms continue to be a valuable asset, given the reduced staffing of the department. I would like to thank the members of the Highway Department; Patrick Markham, Robert Richards and John Ouellette, along with all the supplemental workers that are used on a regular basis for their service, support and cooperation.

Sincerely,

Dana S. Pixley
Highway Superintendent