

# TOWN OF HOLLAND BOARD MEETING

June 12, 2023

Special Meeting

<b>MEMBERS PRESENT</b>	Chair Bob Stupi, Nikole Hauser, Jeff Herlitzke, Mike Hoffman and David Weber
<b>STAFF PRESENT</b>	Clerk Marilyn Pedretti

## CALL TO ORDER

Chair Stupi called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. Notices were posted.

## CASBERG BRIDGE

Stupi introduced Chris Blum, Sr. Project Manager, Short Elliott Hendrickson Inc. (SEH), and Joe Langeberg, La Crosse County Highway Commissioner, and explained the Town does not have engineers on staff and rely on experts to help make decisions. He gave a summary to bring everyone up-to-speed beginning with the erosion issues starting this spring culminating in closing the bridge on April 24<sup>th</sup>. Stupi noted the voids in the structure and metal collapse have created unsafe conditions and a video was provided. He reported on his meeting with Craig Thompson, Secretary of Wisconsin Department of Transportation, and Senator Brad Pfaff that led to the Town's application being accepted after the deadline and that our application was awarded on May 11<sup>th</sup> for 100% funding. Stupi noted the County has issued a Request for Proposal for the design work with a June 30<sup>th</sup> deadline which allows the Town to move forward. He did point out the Federal fiscal year is 2024-2026 and that every effort is being made to perform the work as soon as possible.

Chris Blum gave his background of 32 years as a design professional. He outlined the process for getting Federal funding and noted he was surprised the Town got in after the deadline and further surprised at the 100% funding as it is very competitive. Blum explained the construction window starts with the design which would be ready August 2024, then the "letting out for bid" in January/February 2025 with the construction fall of 2025. He noted that whether the Town uses this funding or goes out on their own, there is red tape such as structural approval from the DOT, hydraulics study, hydrology study, DNR environmental documents, Corps of Engineers, Fish & Wildlife, Native Americans notified, etc. Blum noted that the typical process takes 2 or 2 ½ years to complete. He discussed the saturated soil causing the erosion and undermining over the years and it would be difficult to add bracing because it is unknown if it would increase the amount of stress in the area of the structure or if additional loads would cause failure.

Joe Langeberg reiterated that even if the Town builds this locally, rules still need to be followed by the DNR, Bureau of Structures, right-of-way acquisition obtained and could jeopardize future funding.

Paul Olson, W6602 Casberg Coulee Road, asked why it has to be a bridge since it is currently a culvert, which would be easier and faster to replace. Blum explained that when replacing any structure, an economic analysis is done and alternative options are given. He reported on two structures in Vernon County: one involved two plate arches costing \$900,000 and one had a concrete slab \$600,000. Olson questioned which side is failing. Langeberg reported the south side separated this year and that they have been monitoring this structure over the years. Olson suggested the Town should have been saving for this replacement and that the road budget is not enough. Stupi explained that with tax levy limits enforced since 2010, the Town cannot increase taxes and the only raise was this past year with the fire department referendum.

Mary Atkinson, N7282 Casberg Coulee Road, was concerned about the detour they have to drive every day and she asked if there would be a stop sign installed at Moe Coulee and Casberg Coulee. Len Atkinson, N7282 Casberg Coulee Road, noted it is hard to see around the corner. Stupi said the Town will look at traffic control.

Kevin Olson, W6688 Casberg Coulee Road, asked about Blum's qualifications and Langeberg's role with the Town and asked about the difference between a bridge versus what we have as DOT guidelines. Blum explained the Federal guidelines for a 20' span as the length inside to inside and the pipes with ½ diameter between them measuring 19' is not technically a bridge. He noted there is no funding for culvert replacement. Olson reported he contacted Holmen Concrete and a 2 rung, pre-case 12' wide, 10' tall concrete box costs \$88,000 and noted an expert at the DOT suggested culverts are superior and have the best life cycle. Blum agreed but pointed out that a box culvert would most likely not work in this application using the 100 year flood requirement and hydrology analysis. Stupi asked if we could use such a structure. Langeberg stated no matter what structure it has to go through the approval process as described previously.

Rachel Olson, W6688 Casberg Coulee Road, stated there is a cost to this detour and expressed concern safety vehicles cannot get through and there could be a lawsuit. She explained she is in the health care industry and this is not being done in a timely manner. Olson expressed frustration that the Town knew the bridge was failing and has done nothing.

Bryan Vick, W6605 Casberg Coulee Road, understands that there will be no replacement in the next year or two but there has to be a way to open one lane to traffic. Blum said he did not know of any solution to shore up the structure and doubted we could find an engineer who would use their licensure to add bracing.

Jay Bratberg, N7274 Casberg Coulee Road, asked why we cannot put in a 15' by-pass and reported Kathy Stoen is willing to temporarily donate her right-of-way. Langeberg noted the Town would need DNR and Bureau of Structures approval.

Abbie Leithold-Gerzema, N7446 Casberg Coulee Road, said they endured the long detour last year because County Road V was closed but this detour is shorter. She noted that Moe Coulee is narrow, there are a lot of overhang trees and there is a dangerous hill in the winter. She asked what the plans were for safety during this detour. Stupi reported they have discussed this with School district and the Town crew is working on a turn-around so we can plow and buses can turn around. He noted they will look into additional stop signs. Kevin Olson stated there are no shoulders and Bratberg said it is hard for farm equipment because the road is narrow.

Mike Koziara, W6531 Casberg Coulee Road, asked if there will be a ban on fireworks since fire equipment will be difficult to respond. Stupi noted that fireworks bans do not work and enforcement is difficult because the County Sheriff is busy, but we will try to regulate the best we can. Kevin Olson asked if the Fire Department has done a dry run. Herlitzke responded that they have twice, once with a fire engine and once in the commander vehicle. Olson was concerned that they will lose a house to fire because the department will take too long. Rachel Olson noted that can affect their insurance. Herlitzke explained the current staffing of the fire department.

Kristen Marcou, W6610 Casberg Coulee Road, asked if the culvert on Moe Coulee has been inspected to be sure it does not fail with the extra traffic. Stupi explained we had our culverts inventoried last year and our crew does periodic inspections and cleaning.

Brad Heineck W6784 Casberg Coulee Road, said he understands there will be red tape and asked that with the dangerous structure and a possible severe accident could be hindered by the detour, could this be declared an emergency? Blum stated someone would have to make that case and suggested contacting their local politician. Stupi noted that would be Senator Brad Pfaff and Representative Steve Doyle. Langeberg noted they tried to make the case for a bridge in the Town of Washington that had a large hole in the deck but it did not get declared an emergency. Heineck asked about the culvert near him and whether it has been inspected. Stupi reported that when we have a severe rain or storm event, the crew inspects the trouble spots and addresses any blockage. He stressed that if a resident sees a concern with a culvert to notify the Town immediately. Heineck suggested the speed be lowered to 25 mph. It was noted the speed limit is not consistent as one way it has 30 mph and the other 25 mph. Stupi said they will look into this.

Cathy Olson, W6602 Casberg Coulee Road, understands that even if we did get a culvert, it would take a while and is thankful for the funding. She expressed concern with the narrow, hilly roads with deep ditches, especially in the winter and asked the Town to do some proactive work, like mowing more and plowing earlier. Stupi confirmed the Town will look at all options to make the travel safer. Herlitzke suggested additional signage like “local access only”.

Josh Wannemuehler, N7519 Casberg Coulee Road, asked that the Town not use “local access only” signs as there are businesses along this route.

Jerry Heintz, N7318 Casberg Coulee Road, asked if there were plans to clear the brush and build out the shoulder. He noted the middle line is not divided evenly, that if you meet a truck one vehicle has to pull over and there are 2” to 6” drops from pavement to shoulders in some spots. Stupi noted that this all happened quickly and the Town will assess and address each situation.

Kevin Olson spoke about the lack of road maintenance and money budgeted for road work. Stupi explained that seal coating is part of our maintenance plan and each road receives seal coating on a seven year cycle. Kevin Olson suggested that seal coating with ¾” rock is not road maintenance.

Meranda Kiel, W6663 Casberg Coulee Road, stated they are one of the families with kids and expressed her concerns with the school bus and with speeding. Clerk Pedretti explained the Town has asked for special attention from the County Sheriff.

Nancy Wannemuehler, W7626 Casberg Coulee Road, stated she leaves for work at 5:00 a.m. and sometimes her husband has to saw up a tree for her to leave. She asked who she should call. Stupi said they should call the County Sheriff who will contact our Town crew to clear trees. Kevin Olson said there are multiple trees over the road. Stupi noted Wednesday night’s agenda includes an item to possibly contract out to clean up the coulees.

Abbie Leithold-Gerzema thanked the board for the extra effort in getting the grant funding and would like to see it done well and done once so it will last 50 years. She noted they chose to live out on Casberg and deal with the infrastructure. She suggested we need to be good neighbors and not speed. Stupi said we want it to be built and no one wants to drag this out.

Ken Pickett, W6828 Casberg Coulee Road, asked about designating it as a one lane bridge with a weight limit. Blum stated that there are unknowns behind the plate arch so no handle on what it can or cannot handle. He noted that the deformity suggests a serious underlying issue. Pickett suggested some reinforcement. Blum said that would take an engineer analysis and there would be a cost to such a temporary structure.

Koziara asked if the grant would cover re-paving the approach from County Road V. Stupi said it would not but the Town was aware of the need and will repave at Town's expense.

Lindsey Meindl, W6880 Casberg Coulee Road, asked if something could be added to the signage about the bridge being closed as folks are coming down Casberg Coulee to find out they cannot get through. She asked about the timing of the design. Blum noted the DOT requires a quality design and they have certain standards. Langeberg explained the DOT process that they are following. Meindl asked about the plate option and stressed that they want all possible options vetted. Langeberg stressed not to put the grant money in jeopardy and that if the Town chooses to look at bridge span or other temporary fixes, they keep it completely separate from the bridge replacement. Kevin Olson asked why a by-pass was not included in the grant application. Blum reiterated that the Town must follow certain steps and that a by-pass was not part of the grant funding and said that, if it had been, the likelihood of grant approval would have decreased. Kevin Olson asked if a two-year detour was common. Langeberg stated it is rare.

Jessica Kollermann, W6575 Casberg Coulee Road, said they have six people in the family with everyone coming and going day and night. She is worried about speeding, stated the signs are disregarded and asked about enforcement. She also expressed concern with deer and brush. She asked if they could sign a waiver to use the bridge. Stupi reported he contact both the insurance company and Town attorney who said it was not viable.

Kevin Olson asked, once the bridge is built, will the Town maintain. Langeberg discussed the annual inspections and options to address cracking.

Rick Hauser, W7915 Prairie Meadows Street, said he drove the detour and it is a nasty road. He asked that we look at the long term and noted the Town does not have a magic checkbook. He stated the Town is hearing the concerns with the road and working to make that safe needs to be a priority.

Kevin Kiel, W6663 Casberg Coulee Road, asked if there could be some plating for a one lane road. Blum was not sure how that would work and noted the weight of the plates may add to the failure. Kevin Olson asked if the Town looks at temporary options, how would that be paid for. Stupi noted that the Town would take out a loan and add that to the Town tax levy.

Stupi thanked the residents for attending and providing their input. He noted the board is open to feedback.

## **ADJOURN**

Motion by Herlitzke/Weber to adjourn. **MOTION** carried. Meeting adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Marilyn J. Pedretti  
Town Clerk