

**HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT:
MAILBOX POLICY, DRIVEWAY CULVERTS, THE TOWN RIGHT OF WAY,
PAVING TOWN ROADS, AND WINTER OPERATIONS**

- I. The mailbox policy says that mailboxes placed within the town's prescribed travel right of way are placed there at will and are not the town's responsibility.
- *To go one step further, there is an RSA that clearly states that ANYONE placing items within the town's right of way is liable for any resulting damages incurred due to its placement there.*
- a) During winter plowing operations, mailboxes do sometimes get hit. However, more often than not, the weight of the snow hitting the box merely takes the box off the post. All plow truck operators are urged to use caution and report boxes that have been hit and or knocked off the post.
- b) Also, with the installation of a mailbox, the maintenance becomes the issue of the installer or owner, not the town. This includes any breakdown of the shoulder of the road within the approach to the mailbox. Thought being that if the mailbox wasn't there in the first place, there would not be a reason for someone to keep driving off the edge of the road. In fact, this could cause damage to the road making the person placing the mailbox there responsible for damage to the town road. There are several exceptions. The first being roads with new pavement. The town will shim the shoulders the entire length of the road both sides including in front of mailboxes. The second exception is someone elderly or disabled that simply can't take care of it.

II. DRIVEWAY CULVERTS:

Driveway culverts are the responsibility of the homeowner. This includes the installation and maintenance after the installation. This is addressed in **RSA 236:16**, which, clearly states that responsibility lies on the owner or those responsible for the roadway cut.

- a) There are several exceptions to this. A few examples are:
1. The first being during reconstruction projects when the drainage issues are addressed, the town may opt to change existing culverts or install driveway culverts where there were none before.
The second is elderly or disabled folks that simply cannot perform required maintenance to the driveway culverts.

III. THE TOWN RIGHT OF WAY:

The town right of way is just as it says; "It is a right of way." It is the town's responsibility to provide a way of safe passage according to town policies.

- a) Roads today are laid out in feet. When the vast majority of town roads were laid out, they were two rods or three rods wide. A rod being 16 ½ feet, making a two rod road 33 feet wide and a three rod road 49 ½ feet wide. Most all of the older roads in town are defined by stone walls. This is what is gone by for maintenance purposes, the town stays between the walls. In those sections where there are no walls, a measurement is taken at the closest part of the road where there are walls and then that width is taken from the center of the road at the location where there are no walls present.
- b) There are places in town where there are lawns maintained down to the edge of the road. It looks great and it makes the road look nice however, there are times when the lawn may need to be moved for ditching purposes or even snow removal concerns. It has to be done. It is part of the town's responsibility to provide reasonable and safe passage. The town will do whatever possible to keep a maintainable lawn to the road by re-grading or sloping and sometimes creating a mow-able swale. The town encourages homeowners to maintain the front of their property to the road.

IV. PAVING TOWN ROADS:

Frequently, we get asked why one road gets paved and not another when one seems just as bad. There are several reasons and rationales that factors into the decision process:

- a) **Costs:** Paving is roughly 1/3 of the total annual budget. This is because it isn't only the actual pavement that is being paid for. You have reconstruction cost in contracted services, culvert replacement work, ditching etc. Cost of culverts and materials in the form stone and road base gravels.
- b) ***Then you have an unknown factor:*** This can be troublesome at best. Sometimes the unknown can be ledge, old pavement or even poor soils in the road bed. Before new pavement is put in place this all needs to be addressed. Many times, these unknowns have been the underlying cause of the road failure in the first place. Sometimes, the cost to do a section of road is greater than the cost of two sections of other roads that are just as bad.
- c) ***Another contributing factor is the average daily traffic count (ADT):*** The ADT is done for the town by The Southern New Hampshire Planning Commission. The traffic counts are done annually and are done for a minimum of 1 full week including a weekend.
- d) ***Other factors:*** the ability to keep the roads plowed clean in the winter, places to push snow back, the amount of school traffic and the number of houses on the road. Pavement comes in a variety of forms or mixes. For simplicity, we need only mention two. The base pave and the top coat or overlay. The base that is first put down is placed at a depth of 2½ inches. The base asphalt consists of larger aggregate (stone) to give it strength. The base however is porous and does allow water to penetrate. Water is one of the causes of pavement failure and frost heaves. Most often than not, to get more miles of road completed, the base is done the first year and the top coat done the following. The top coat or overlay, is an asphalt mix using a much smaller aggregate and is typically put down 1 to 1 ½ inches thick. The smaller aggregate acts as a sealer to the base. This being the reason roads are done a second time the following year.

V. WINTER OPERATIONS:

The town has a snow removal policy in place that was developed to create parameters to be followed for snow removal within the town.

- a) With roughly 60 miles of maintained roads, it is impossible to plow everywhere at the same time. Keep in mind, that the 60 miles of road is doubled. You have 120 +/- lane miles of road to take care of, there are two sides to every road. We have tried to keep the routes set up so that every 1½ hours the plow truck is going through. There are some exceptions, outlying roads, sometimes are tough to include into plow routes and receive plowing when we can. Also, we have agreements with surrounding towns to plow certain sections of roads that border their towns as they are going through there anyway. That works both ways, we plow sections for other towns as we are there anyway.
 - b) The annual winter operating budget is roughly ½ of the entire Highway budget. There is full time staff hourly pay and overtime, we have several on call employees used during most winter operations, salt, sand, winter contractors (hired plow trucks), fuel costs, and we also generate spring clean-up costs as a result from sanding and plowing that needs to be included.
 - c) Another misunderstood practice is the winter maintenance of gravel roads. More times than not you cannot merely get away with just plowing a gravel road. They need to be sanded as well. You cannot treat a gravel road with salt. It creates mud as the salt penetrates and thaws out the gravel. We unfortunately have a spread-out gravel road system that causes plow routes to include both pave and gravel roads to maintain. The driver typically does all the paved portions sometimes twice before he empties out his salt and then loads up with sand and does the gravel roads. Depending on the severity of the storm, there could be as much as 3 to 6 inches of snow on the road.
 - d) Winter breakdowns can also be problematic for the highway department. When one truck is broken down for even as little as an hour that puts a huge backlog on that one route. We try to reroute trucks as best as we can to help but it creates a wave affect for everyone concerned. Because of the size of the trucks, one truck down as a rule means two, the first truck needs a hand getting back to the shed or assistance in making repairs. It becomes a joint effort by all to get that piece of equipment up and out working again.
 - e) We have taken one of the full-time employees out of a plow truck to oversee the operations at the shed, loading sand and salt and keeping track of the trucks progress through out the storm. This has helped manage the storm in an efficient manner and has been cost effective allowing the use of materials to be monitored closer than in the past. Also, along the same lines, we make every effort to assist the rescue squad, police and fire whenever possible plowing and sanding to lead the way during storms.
- **All town highway staff has up to date standard first aid training and are CPR certified.**
 - **We will assist on the state roads as needed as a service to the residents of Deerfield.**
- There are circumstances that sometimes prohibit the state from getting quickly to the scene.**