

Winter/Spring Communication 2016

To the membership,

We had intended to post the quarterly comms on the website earlier but have had access issues which now seem to be solved . This will be a combined winter/spring comm.

First and foremost subject is our roads. This last winter has been challenging, to say the least, regarding snow accumulation. Fortunately, there are members with the proper equipment, willing to remove snow from the association roads and we have been able to travel our roads with only a few exceptions. The county has done a very good job maintaining travel on their roads. In the past the membership has decided not to consider a budget line for snow removal it has been up to the year-round residents to deal with this issue. Members with the proper equipment have banded together to remove snow and make the roads passable. Members sharing these roads have contributed cash for fuel to those using their own private equipment. This is not only laudable but the way a community should work together. In the past some members have put up snow fence at their own cost to alleviate snow accumulation and have contacted members for permission to do so on otherwise unoccupied lots. We will likely see more members in specific areas organizing to produce a beneficial effect. Please contact lot owners for permission prior to installing snow fencing.

I would very strongly encourage those removing snow to not block any driveways or scrape gravel from the road surface and dump it onto the easement, while they are clearing the roads. It has happened that a member who works away from the Madison Valley has come home to a blocked driveway after dark. Removing surface from the roads does not produce any benefit.

There is also an issue of implied liability regarding snow removal and we are working with our insurance carrier to determine the potential impacts.

The 2016 Road Plan is in work and we have developed several options. Last year, just as in years past, we spent the largest percentage of our total budget on our roads, around \$18,000. The dry grading and application of dry gravel did not last even a week in some areas. The roads returning to a condition no better than, in some cases worse than, before the road work of 2015.

Debbie and I have lived on "unimproved" roads for over 40 years and have some experience with what works and what does not. Craig Schroder and I worked together to examine expenditures and costs over recent years. Bottom line is that dirt/gravel roads will always take a beating in our weather. Inadequate drainage is the biggest enemy of dirt and gravel roads followed closely by excessive speeds.

There are ways to receive a better bang for our bucks.

The first is to raise the road surface above the surrounding grade/level as much as practically possible. Then use a road mix that has as a constituent, a "binder", most often clay. The third is to wet, unless climatic conditions cooperate, the surface and then use a "roller" to compact the material. This is the ideal "improved" dirt/gravel road. It is also expensive. At the 2015 Annual Meeting the membership directed the BoD to address two specific roads, Falcon and Nutcracker. To bring these two roads up to the "ideal" condition would eat the entire budget. We will solicit contractors for advice on these two roads and specifically on Nutcracker due to the steep conditions while also determining what we can accomplish within budgetary constraints.

Winter/Spring Communication 2016

Option #1 would be to spend the entire road budget upgrading two roads.

Option #2 would be to repeat what we have done in the past.

Option #3 would address Falcon and Nutcracker to an acceptable degree, address the roads requiring a "fix", grade the roads, and include a test section upgraded to the "ideal" condition to determine if that approach is cost effective. In the following year we can assess the effectiveness of the "test section". There are also several areas that require culverts to accomplish drainage.

The budget will direct what we can accomplish.

We are currently soliciting bids from local contractors and plan to do a job survey with those contractors as soon as possible. We would appreciate your feedback and input on this subject.

Exterior lighting issues are members leaving exterior overhead lighting on all night, lighting directed in a manner that it is shining at neighbors, motion sensors set at levels too sensitive for windy conditions, or have photocells directing their lighting. Our governing documents specifically prohibit this type of overhead lighting/lighting control. Please be considerate of your neighbors. Most of us live here to be away from light sources that obstruct our enjoyment of the night sky.

Dogs, specifically, members dogs running loose and harassing/attacking other members, their pets, and livestock. Montana state law prohibits allowing dogs to run loose and harass or damage other persons and property. The usual and legal citizen response is to shoot the offending dogs. There have been recent incidents where members dogs have killed small livestock, severely mauled a pet causing considerable expense to the pets owner, harassed horses, and been seen loose on neighboring ranches during calving. At least one member has been cited in those incidents by Madison County Sheriffs Office. It is irresponsible to allow your dogs to cause damage and suffering to your neighbors and put those dogs at risk.

In the June comm we will provide contact information regarding weed control. Madison County and the Madison Ranch Lands Group will, at our invitation, be conducting a weed survey.

The water case has been concluded and we should not incur any further costs on this issue.

Our proposed budget forecast will be available in the June comm and will be considered for approval at the 2016 Annual Meeting.

Currently, SMWOA has \$23,998.00 in checking and \$10,751.00 in savings for a total of \$34,749.00 in our bank accounts.

Please feel free to contact us or me at the SMWOA website, otherwise I have a new home phone number 406-682-4008.

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