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Road survey to aid maintenance, construction schedule

BY MARNEY SIMON
EDITOR

The city of Braidwood will take a new approach to road work.

This spring, a comprehensive road survey will be created for all city-owned roadways in the city limits.

Last month, the Braidwood City Council approved a contract with Robinson Engineering to complete that survey.

"They're going to go out there with the GIS and mark all the roads, and then they'll prioritize them in the order that they should be done," city administrator Tony Altiery said.

"Then we'll have it on a map, so if we say we want to [fix specific streets], we can ship that out to a company because that has all the points, measurements, everything is ready to go. That way, we can get on a year-to-year road improvement plan."

According to the agreement, the survey will classify city streets based on the Pavement Surface Evaluation and Rating scale (PASER), which rates roads on a 1-10 system.

PASER ratings translate as the following:

- 9-10 – Excellent, no maintenance required
- 7-8 – Good, routine maintenance such as crack sealing and

minor patching needed

- 5-6 – Fair, surface repairs, partial depth patching, and preservation treatments needed
- 3-4 – Poor, overlays and/or extensive rehabilitation needed
- 1-2 – Failed, full reconstruction required

The evaluation provides the city with a scientific look at roadway conditions, allowing not just to determine annual maintenance needs, but for the city to create an unbiased annual street maintenance program.

Beginning in the spring, Robinson Engineering will evaluate the streets and create a map as a visual representation of the road network.

That survey and evaluation will include a narrative that will identify typical costs for required repairs and a suggested annual budget based on a 10-year revolving program.

The survey will help the city create not just a plan for construction, but a schedule for regular maintenance for those streets that do not necessarily look like they need to be addressed. By proactively performing maintenance on those streets, the city can extend the lifespan of roadways, creating a cost savings over several years.

Altiery said the report will also cross reference infrastructure, to record where water mains are insuffi-

cient or in need of work.

"If we can work and do the water mains along with the roads at the same time, then we're not working backwards, we're not doing the roads and then tearing it up later," Altiery said.

"It makes more sense than having someone come and say, there's a pothole, and we go look at that," Mayor Karen Hart added.

The council approved the council with Robinson Engineering unanimously, for a cost not to exceed \$20,000.

Road surface evaluations were completed in 2023 in Wilmington and Diamond.



Photo by Marney Simon

THERE WAS NO RECESS at Reed-Custer Elementary School on Tuesday, as students stayed home to participate in an e-learning day. While the winter storm didn't leave as much snow on the ground as predicted, district officials opted to take the e-learning day out of an abundance of caution. More snow is expected later this week, with below freezing temperatures expected at the start of next week.

Wet and Wild

Winter weather packs less punch than expected

STAFF REPORT

After a mild start to the winter season in December, Mother Nature finally brought the white stuff into the region for a visit, first with a lighter snowfall after the New Year, and then a bit more Monday night into Tuesday morning this week.

While the snowfall in the region was not as heavy as forecast models predicted, the storm did bring about an inch of wet heavy snow followed by rainfall. The storm left roadways slick in the pre-dawn hours of Tuesday, with the Illinois State Police reporting dangerous road conditions in western Illinois with wet roads and some icing locally.

The storm was enough to keep local school districts on their toes.

In Wilmington, students were sent home on Monday with their Chromebooks in anticipation of a potential e-

learning day on Tuesday, but the district was able to keep those students in class when the heavier snow stayed away.

The Reed-Custer School District enacted their remote learning plan for Tuesday, allowing students to log in from home for the day.

Both districts opted to use remote learning rather than traditional snow days again this year, when possible. Students are sent home with their technology in order to participate in e-learning, which allows the districts to complete the school day without the need to add an emergency day to the calendar at the end of the academic year.

Coal City School District Unit 1 utilizes traditional snow days, but was able to keep school in session on Tuesday when the storm showered down less snow than predicted.

Meanwhile, local roads were reported to be clear by

the morning commute, thanks to local municipal public works crews, as well as state and county officials salting and plowing.

Wilmington, Coal City and Braidwood all prohibit street parking when snow accumulates to the depth of two inches or more, until that snow is removed.

Residents are also asked to clear the way around fire hydrants located on residential lots while shoveling so that local fire protection districts can locate those hydrants quickly in case of an emergency.

While the snowfall early this week didn't pan out as expected, there's still plenty of winter left.

The National Weather Service (NWS) reported as of Tuesday afternoon that after a brief respite toady (Wednesday), another round of light snow accumulations is expected Wednesday night

which will likely lead to pockets of slick travel into Thursday morning.

Another strong storm system may develop in the region Thursday night into Saturday, although the storm track remains uncertain.

The NWS reported potential for heavy snowfall and strong winds expected across the Great Lakes Region, particularly Friday and Friday night, with much colder temperatures expected next week, including wind chills near -20 degrees at times.

Local officials urged patience for residents when it comes to snow and freezing rain events.

"If there's one crucial message to convey about heavy snowfall, it would be: Prioritize safety and patience," said Wilmington's Public Works Director James

SEE WINTER, PAGE 2

Sludge building doing its job at WWTP

BY MARNEY SIMON
EDITOR

It's unlikely that most people give it a second thought what happens after you flush the toilet.

But the waste that disappears like magic in the powder room sticks around for awhile, first entering the city's wastewater treatment plant, then through the oxidation ditch, and eventually it's reduced to what is unfortunately referred to as "sludge."

Getting rid of that sludge can cost the city a pretty penny. That's why city leaders erected a building to house the sludge until it can be hauled away.

That new sludge house got its first real test as winter began.

"We got to use the new building for the sludge that we put up last summer, and it allowed us to have an extra five dryings to be able to dry without having to use chemicals," city administrator Tony Altiery told members of the City Council, gathered during their regular meeting on Dec. 27.

In January 2023, the City Council approved the purchase of a building from Freedom Buildings of Iowa, for a total of \$65,743. That building was completed in June 2023.

The building will help keep the sludge, a byproduct of the wastewater treatment process, dry, which in turn will make it easier and cheaper to dispose of.

In short, sludge is what's leftover after the several step process to treat and clarify waste—what gets flushed away and never thought of again—that enters the plant. Sludge is disposed of by the city, and can be sold as fertilizer for some type of agricultural land, though it is not used on crops grown for human consumption.

Prior to the installation of the building, the sludge beds were left to dry in the open air. City leaders expect the building could help reduce sludge removal by 25-30%, since the sludge will remain dry instead

SEE COUNCIL, PAGE 2

How do you get around?

Will County wants to know your transportation priorities

Do you think Will County roads are congested? What roads do you think need improvement?

Will County officials want public input as it embarks on a long-term planning effort to guide the next 25 years of transportation projects.

The "Our Way Forward 2050 Long Range Transportation Plan" will evaluate future priorities through an online survey and workshops.

The public is invited to take the online survey to share their travel preferences

and transportation priorities. The survey is available online at www.ourwaywill.com through February.

"Public engagement will be critical to ensure that this plan is successful," said Will County Board Public Works & Transportation Chair Joe Van Dwyne (Wilmington). "This is

SEE TRANSPORT, PAGE 2



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