



Hard at work on the Dyers Crossing Road bridge - A coffer dam will allow the area around the abutment to be pumped dry. Meanwhile, the machine that drives the coffer dam pilings into place takes a break.
 Photos by Charlie Darling (l) and Roger Godwin (r)

Water Runs Downhill — Part 3

By Roger Godwin
 Andover Board of Selectmen

Part 3 of our continuing series on the challenges Andover faces in keeping its roads in good condition.

Do our roads have to meet any particular construction or maintenance standards? Nope. There is no such thing as a “legal” standard for how a Class 5 road must be built, and most of the roads in small New Hampshire towns are Class 5.

The State road classification system merely describes which level of government is responsible for which of the six defined classes of roads. But good subdivision regulations will specify current State-recommended minimum standards or better, and all new roads should be required to meet these evolving standards, which are available from both the New Hampshire Department of Transportation and the University of New Hampshire Technology Transfer Center.

After the roads are built, are there any generally applicable maintenance stan-

dards? Sure. Road maintenance science continually advances and good road managers keep abreast of evolving knowledge and standards. Road maintenance is not just a matter of common sense, as some folks claim, but of applied science.

A few years ago we relied on pushing dirt around to make water go where it should, but now new products called “geotextiles” – plastic mats of many different weaves and weights – are in widespread use to help wick water away from roadbeds, prevent the contamination of gravel bases from dirt being pumped up into the gravel through the repetitive pressures of passing vehicles, and so preserve roads much longer.

Once we just poured oil on gravel to get paving, and we replaced a paved road by digging up the paving and carting it away. Now we reclaim the whole surface, digging it up and grinding it, then laying it back down and compacting it as a base for a new paved surface, saving a great deal of money and get-

ting a better road in the process.

In approaching all of this, however, the rules that apply to maintenance of a town’s roads are solely those that the Town adopts, whatever evolving science might indicate.

Sometimes these rules apply only to certain conditions, like the removal of ice and snow. But money is limited, making perfection impossible, and no town wants to waste it in any case. It helps to have written policies for addressing those problems. Those policies should deal with the priorities of actions to be taken.

The very existence of such policies can make a big difference in the Town’s liability for damage to private property arising from natural events like rainstorms. If the Town follows its own policies and damage results to abutting land due to the force of nature, the Town is not responsible for such damage.

Next month this column will describe Andover’s road policies and municipal liability.

Traffic Advisory From the Beacon Traffic ‘Copter

The bridge on Dyers Crossing Road is closed while it is being replaced, closing the road north of Route 11. Use Hoyt Road instead.

Traffic on sections of Route 11 between Hoyt Road and Webster Lake is limited to one lane during the day, Monday through Saturday. To avoid delays, consider alternate routes between Andover and Franklin, including Flaghole Road.

The Road Agent plans to pave about the first half mile of Switch Road south of Route 11 this summer, as well as part of Bradley Lake Road. Expect delays, and slow down in construction. Give the crews a brake!

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