

Memo

To: Mayor and City Council
From: Jim Wheeler, City Manager
Date: October 19, 2020
Re: John Deere Rollover Protection Systems (ROPS)

On Tuesday October 13, 2020 I was contacted by Mike Turner of Nortrax. Mike contacted me to communicate that he had inspected the four 2003/2004 John Deere loaders, forwarded information to John Deere Engineering and that John Deere Engineering had indicated that all four ROPS, which passed last year, now fail due to further corrosion. The Council will recall that we replaced 3 loaders last year of the same age and use because of compromised ROPS.

Knowing this eventuality, the City Manager's Budget, submitted in March of this year, did include an appropriation for loader replacement. However, by the end of the budget process in June, this money was removed with the hope that we would get another year out of some, or all, of these loaders.

Suffice it to say that the timing of this news is less than perfect. I believe that Mr. Turner was asked to inspect the loaders very early in, or prior to, the end of the fiscal year. Because of a personal issue he was not able to do it then and following Ben Hall's resignation, this issue lingered longer than it should have.

So that is the bad news. Fortunately, there is good news. With the three new loaders acquired last winter, two new salt trucks with wings and plows we purchased last year and one new salt truck with a wing and plow we've ordered this year, we are in a much better position with equipment this year.

Ideally we run 9 pieces of plow equipment when responding to a storm. We run 2 pieces per the old ward system, which totals 8 and we run one grader on Cates Hill and East Milan Road.

We are going into winter with the following pieces of plow equipment:

3 – 2019 Front End Wheel Loaders

3 – 2020/2021 Salt Trucks with wing and plow

1 – grader

1 – 2001 Salt Truck with wing and plow (see following 2001 Salt Truck discussion)

This provides for a total of 8 pieces which does not meet the ideal but is very close and with the reliability of new equipment has us in a good position.

2001 Salt Truck

Through the New Hampshire Clean Diesel Program we have been intending to receive a grant in the amount of 25% of our new 2020 salt truck. This should be approximately \$25,000. We actually have a 1978 salt truck that would be better to retire but the grant program does not allow replacement of equipment older than 1996. Given our current situation and in light of the fact that the 2001 truck is in decent condition, it does not make sense to take it off the road to claim the \$25,000 in grant money. Instead, we will keep this truck, with wing and plow, operating.

While we prefer the versatility of loaders on our tight and steep streets, we are able to plow with the loaders we have augmented by the trucks we have.

In summary, I think our current fleet takes a little pressure off such that we can take the time needed to evaluate our options to acquire additional equipment. Having said that, we are reaching out to suppliers of equipment to see what may be available. If we continue standardization with John Deere, perhaps we consider purchasing one or two additional loaders this year and consider all options going forward when we have a new Public Works Director.