

# Acworth 2022 Small Roads Initiative

## Why & What Are We Doing?

Our town highway resources, and budget is challenged by the 50 miles of roads that we have to maintain. We the most miles and we also have the smallest municipal budget of all our neighboring towns. The 2021 flood and the required response has further jeopardized our ability to maintain our roads. The Board of Selectmen asked the Small Roads Team to look for opportunities to redirect highway efforts, labor and materials from roads that have little or no residences to roads more frequently traveled.

	Miles (1)	Population (2)	Persons per sq mile (2)	Municipal Budget (2021) (2)
Marlow	24	755	29.0	\$ 2.30 M
Goshen	14	808	36.0	\$ 2.30 M
Acworth	50	907	22.6	\$ 1.70 M
Lempster	36	1,143	35.4	\$ 1.74 M
Unity	45	1,482	40.1	\$ 1.85 M
Alstead	48	1,890	48.5	\$ 2.35 M

The 7 person team assessed a set of roads that had 1 or no residences and/or roads that had less than 2 parcel owners and that provide little or no public use.

The Select Board asked to have 19 Class V roads assessed to see what the opportunity would be if the roads were reclassified to Class VI.

# What Was Reviewed for Each Road?

1. Conducted a physical inspection of each road
  1. Right-of-way for maintenance, plowing and emergency vehicles
  2. Condition of the road and culverts, length, width, # of parcels, # of parcel owners, # of residents/household units
  3. Public Use/Access (*per definition obtained in "A Hard Road Traveled" by NH Municipal Association set by legal precedent*)
    1. Authentic photos with testimony of lifelong resident OR references to the road as a public highway in documentation during the prescriptive period (1948-1968)
    2. Historical map evidence before or during the prescriptive period (1948-68)
    3. Being maintained by the town for at least 5 years
    4. Existence of cellar hole(s)
    5. Existence of mill site(s) with access only through the road in question
    6. Existence of stone wall(s)
    7. Commercial Use – primary use/business critical
    8. Public Recreation – ATV, snowmobile, hiking, walking, snowshoeing, etc.
2. Other data collected:
  1. Improvement Cost
    1. Cost to bring road up to a minimal set of safety standards
  2. Cost to maintain road (plowing, grading, ditching, etc.)
  3. Average annual portion of vehicle maintenance cost
  4. State revenue received
  5. Applicable regulations, warrant articles, town meetings, ordinances and court precedents
  6. Tax and market land value impacts

# How Did We Assess Each Road?

1. Information for each road was captured in an assessment spreadsheet.

Roads	Overall Recom. (1 - No Change, 2 - Reclass to VI, 3 - other recommendations)	Condition State (poor, fair, good)	Road Length (miles)	Cost to Bring to DOT Standard (subtotal) (less is better)	Length Cost Factor	Total Cost to Bring to DOT Standard	Cost for Minimal Standards	Cost to Maintain Road (\$10K per mile)	Average Annual Vehicle Costs	State Revenue Received (for Class V status)	Evaluation Criteria <i>Reclass if No in column 1 and at least 1 (one) No in the columns 2-4 OR Yes in column 1 but at least 2 (two) No's in the 3 columns (2-4)</i>				Public Use Criteria (3 or more indicate public use)							
											1 Adequate ROW for Maintenance (Y/N)	2 More than 1 Homes (Y/N)	3 2 or More Parcel Owners (Y/N)	4 Public Use (Y/N)	Authenticated photos OR References in Documents <sup>1</sup> (Y/N)	Being Maintained by Town (Y/N)	Historic Map Evidence (1948-1968) (Y/N)	Cellar Hole Present (Y/N)	Existing Mill Sites	Existence of Stone Walls <sup>3</sup> (Y/N)	Commercial Use (Y/N)	Public Recreation (Y/N)
	2	Good	0.31	\$88,693	\$48,781	\$137,474	\$68,737	\$3,090	\$ 501	\$445	Y	N	Y	N	N	Y	Y	N	N	N*	N	N

4 primary criteria were used to assess each road.

- If the road does not:
  1. Provide adequate right-of-way (ROW)
 And fails one or more of the following
  2. Have more than one home/residence
  3. Have 2 or more parcel owners
  4. Provide public access (\*\*defined on the next page)

Then the road was considered

OR

- If the ROW was met but the road failed 2 or more of the other criteria then the road was also considered

# How Did We Assess Each Road? *(continued)*

## Public Use Definition

- According to NH Municipal Association six (6) criteria define public use
- We added two (2), commercial use and public recreation
  1. Authenticated photos OR References in Documents
  2. Being Maintained by Town
  3. Historic Map Evidence (1948- 1968)
  4. Cellar Hole Present
  5. Existing Mill Sites
  6. Existence of Stone Walls
  7. Commercial Use
  8. Public Recreation
- If the road in question met 3 or more of the above criteria then the road was considered to be “Public Use”

The costs and revenue were also tallied for each road for consideration by the board

*Each road was fairly and consistently evaluated against the same criteria.*

## Costs *(potential effort to be redirected)*

There were 3 cost categories considered, (1) maintenance costs – include plowing, seasonal grading and ditch clearing, (2) annual vehicle cost – expense required to maintain the town trucks and equipment, (3) cost to bring the road up to minimal safety standards. Our town cannot afford to bring our 50 miles of roads to DOT standard, so a range was developed to represent this cost.

- **Maintenance Cost** was determined by dividing the highway department expenses (per the 2021 Town Budget Report) by the number of Class V state recognized miles of road according to the State Highway Grant Report. Maintenance cost per mile = Annual cost to maintain roads divided by the number of miles of roads. Cost per mile = ~\$10K
- **Annual Vehicle Cost** was determined by averaging 7 years of actual and budgeted costs from our 2021 Capital Improvement Plan, Highway Equipment Replace costs (years 2020-2026).
- **Minimal Safety Standard Cost (range)** leveraged the most recent FEMA evaluations for 3 roads. An average per mile was established with consideration for the condition (poor, fair, good). Each road being evaluated was assessed for current condition (culverts, ditches, right-of-way, gravel, etc.). The average per mile was applied to the roads in question based on their condition. 50% less was established to illustrate the minimal amount based on a review of a couple of roads.

# Issues & Risks

## Loss of State Revenue

- The state provides the town with revenue each year for the miles of roads that we maintain.
- The total annual amount is \$3,102.

## Annual State Revenue per Road

Roads	Total
Breier Hill Road	\$833.46
Echo Valley Road	\$167.27
Hoagland Road	\$416.73
Langdon Road	\$89.24
McWethy Road	\$301.77
Meader Road	\$116.40
Nelson Road	\$201.18
Parson Road	\$445.47
Polly Hill Road	\$129.33
Russell Road	\$314.85
Coffin Hill Road	\$86.22
	\$3,101.91

## Impacts to the tax value of the land and town tax revenue

- Acworth town tax accessor (Municipal Resources Inc.) state that the change would only impact land value and not the house value. The impact to the land value would depend on the condition of the road. A road in good condition would see a reduction of 5%, a road in fair condition 20% and a road in poor condition would see a reduction of 30%. Most of these roads are in fair condition currently.
- Over 50% of the land on these roads are in Current Use and some are in conservation therefore the impact to the annual town revenue would be minimal.

## Impacts to the market value of the land

- If the road in question is the only Class V Road access to the land, then the value of the land could be impacted. The amount of change would depend on how accessible/inaccessible the land is via the road.
- Lands that have access to Class V roads other than the road in question would not be affected.
- Source: Sotheby Realty
- *The team is still attempting to obtain input from Century21 and Better Homes and Garden Realty.*

# Issues & Risks *(continued)*

## **Class VI roads and subdivisions**

- The current Acworth Subdivision Regulations disallow subdivision on Class VI roads, but the same regulation also allows the Planning Board to waive provisions within the regulations.
- Waivers are possible if the 4 conditions outlined in Subdivision Regulations Section 2.2 are met. “Upon written request of the subdivider, the Board may waive compliance with any part of the Regulations ..”.
- In the Acworth Zoning Ordinance XVI Definitions, it also references that frontage could be on an approved subdivision right-of-way. “Frontage means the length of a lot bordering on a Class V or better public right-of-way, or approved subdivision right-of-way.”
- There is no guarantee for waivers, permits, etc. each request must be assessed by the town for approval.
- If the property in question has adequate frontage on another Class V road, then subdivisions without waivers on that section of the land would be possible, as long as all the applicable subdivision requirements were met.

## **Town Liability and Law Suits**

- Advice from NH Municipal Association and our town insurance company (Primex) indicates that the town is not liable according to state statutes, 231:59a and RSA 231:93.
- RSA 154:1-d provides liability protection for fire fighters and RSA 21-P:41 provides protection for other emergency management activities.
- RSA Section 231:45-a authorizes the discontinuance of a Class V road with the vote of the legislative body. RSA Section 229:5 VII indicates that “all other existing public ways” will become a Class VI road, subject to gates and bars.

## **Actual Costs and Savings Could be Higher or Lower**

- Averages based off of 2021 Town Budget numbers were utilized for the road maintenance costs
- 2021 Town Budget expenses were leveraged; costs for materials, fuel and labor have all increased
- Vehicle recovery efforts were not factored in. Roads with inadequate right-of-way or turnaround areas increase vehicle recovery incidents
- Roads without adequate ROW create more wear and tear on the vehicles

# Recommendations

Recommending that 11 roads be considered for reclassified. 4 roads be considered for other actions improve maintenance and emergency vehicle right of way. No change to 4 roads.

## 1 - Road Remain as Classified

- 1 Currier Road
- 2 Livermore Roads
- 3 Quarrier Road
- 4 Clough Road

## 2-Recommend Reclassifying to Class VI

- 1 Breier Hill Road
- 2 Echo Valley Road
- 3 Hoagland Road
- 4 Langdon Road
- 5 McWethy Road
- 6 Meader Road
- 7 Nelson Road
- 8 Parson Road
- 9 Polly Hill Road
- 10 Russell Road
- 11 Coffin Hill Road

## 3-Other Recommendations

- 1 Gates Mountain Road
- 2 John Symonds
- 3 Royce Hill Road
- 4 Ryan Road

Roads	1-Maintenance Cost	2-Vehicle Cost	3 - Cost to Bring Road Up To Standard	
	Estimated Cost to Maintain Road (\$10K per mile)	Average Annual Vehicle Cost (est.)	Estimated Cost for Minimal Safety Standards	Est. Cost to Bring Road to DOT Standards
Breier Hill Road	\$5,782	\$938	\$199,129	\$398,258
Coffin Hill Road	\$598	\$97	\$13,304	\$26,608
Echo Valley Road	\$1,160	\$188	\$34,413	\$68,825
Hoagland Road	\$1,000	\$100	\$85,736	\$171,472
Langdon Road	\$619	\$100	\$18,359	\$36,719
McWethy Road	\$2,093	\$340	\$46,564	\$93,127
Meader Road	\$807	\$131	\$31,929	\$63,859
Nelson Road	\$1,396	\$226	\$31,042	\$62,085
Parson Road	\$3,090	\$501	\$68,737	\$137,474
Polly Hill Road	\$897	\$146	\$19,956	\$39,912
Russell Road	\$2,184	\$354	\$64,775	\$129,550
<b>Totals</b>	<b>\$19,628</b>	<b>\$3,121</b>	<b>\$613,944</b>	<b>\$1,227,889</b>

*Annual cost redirection of \$20K\* in maintenance and vehicle replacement costs can be realized now, and future savings anywhere from \$613K to \$1.2M in costs to bring the roads up to safety standards.*

*(\* loss of state revenues applied)*



# Next Steps

- Conduct public meeting (goal – solicit feedback)
- BoS Determine Next Steps (30 Jan)
  - *Review team findings, feedback from town and the public hearing*

## If Warrant Articles Are Required:

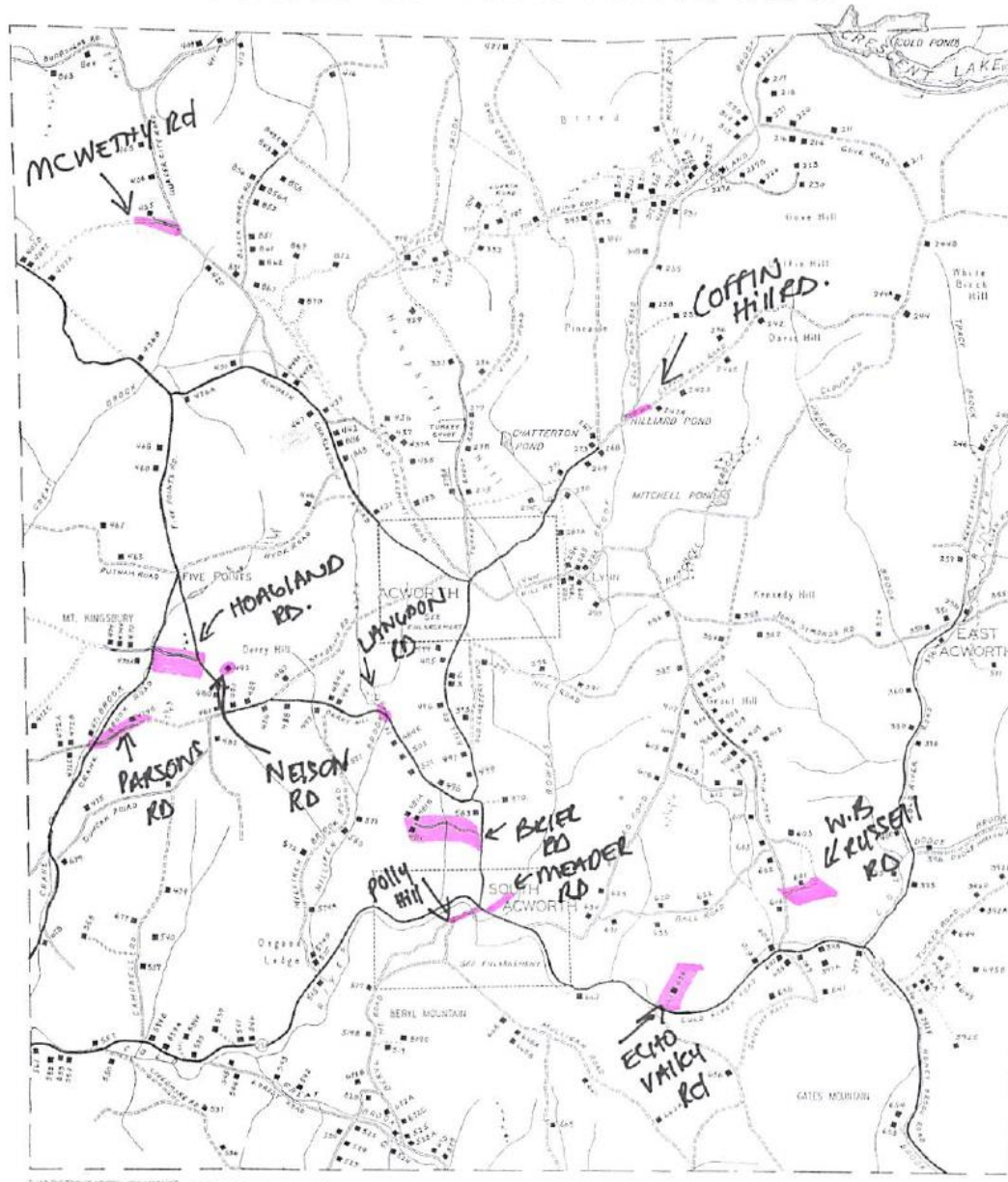
- Abutter notifications (14 days prior to town vote)
- Town meeting and vote

# *Questions*

# Acworth Small Roads – 11 Recommended Roads

## TOWN OF ACWORTH, N.H.

1. [Nelson Road](#)
2. [McWethy Road](#)
3. [Meader Road](#)
4. [Russell Road](#)
5. [Echo Valley](#)
6. [Breier Hill Road](#)
7. [Coffin Hill Road](#)
8. [Langdon Road](#)
9. [Parsons Road](#)
10. [Polly Hill Road](#)
11. [Hoagland Road](#)



# 1 - Nelson Road (off of Derry Hill Road)



- 0.14 mile (700') road with one resident
- Road ends at the one home
- One parcel and one parcel owner
- Road does not provide public use access
- Most of the property is in Current Use
- Adequate road frontage on Derry Hill limits any land value impact and supports subdivision requirement

Cost or Revenue	\$\$
Cost to Maintain Road	-\$1,600
State Revenue Received	\$201
Annual Cost (-/+)	-\$1,399
Cost for Minimal Safety Standard	\$31K-\$62K

## 2 - McWethy Road (off of Quaker City Road)



- 0.21 mile Class V road with one resident
- Road ends at the home
- One parcel and one parcel owner
- Road does not provide public use
- Most of the land is in Current Use
- No other access to Class V roads

Cost or Revenue	\$\$
Cost to Maintain Road	-\$2,500
State Revenue Received	\$302
Annual Cost (-/+)	-\$2,198
Cost for Minimal Safety Standard	\$47K-\$93K

[Return to Overall Map](#)

### 3 - Meader Road (off of 123A near the South Acworth store)

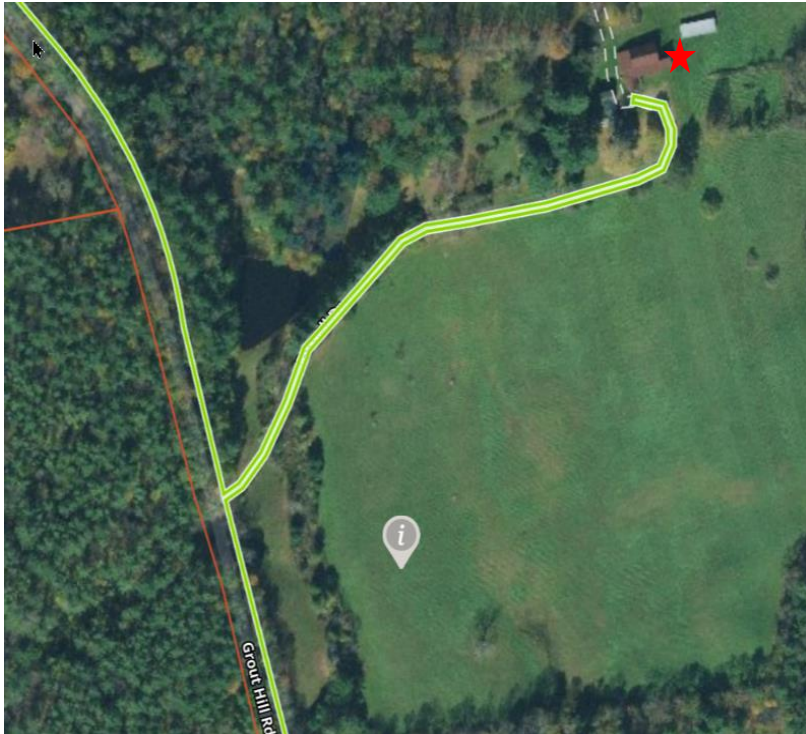


- 0.08 mile (428') road with one resident
- Road ends at the one home
- 4 parcels and parcel owners
- Road does not provide public use
- Largest parcel is 6 acres
- 3 parcels access from 123A; limits any change in land value

Cost or Revenue	\$\$
Cost to Maintain Road	-\$1,000
State Revenue Received	\$116
Annual Cost (-/+)	-\$884
Cost for Minimal Safety Standard	\$32K-\$64K

[Return to Overall Map](#)

## 4 – Russell Road (off of Grout Hill Road)



- 0.22 mile Class V road has one residence
- 1 parcel and 1 parcel owner
- Owner does not want the road to remain Class V road
- Road does not provide public use
- Large portion in Conservation

Cost or Revenue	\$\$
Cost to Maintain Road	-\$2,500
State Revenue Received	\$315
Annual Cost (-/+)	-\$2,185
Cost for Minimal Safety Standard	\$64K-\$130K

## 5 – Echo Valley Road (off of 123A)



- 0.12 mile (615') road has one resident
- Road ends at the home
- One parcel with one parcel owner
- Road does not provide public use
- Property in Current Use

Cost or Revenue	\$\$
Cost to Maintain Road	-\$1,400
State Revenue Received	\$167
Annual Cost (-/+)	-\$1,233
Cost for Minimal Safety Standard	\$34K-\$69K



## 6 – Breier Hill Road *(off of the south end of Hill Road)*



- 0.58 mile Class V road has one residence
- Road ends at the residence
- 4 parcels and 4 parcel owners
- Does not provide public use
- Land is in Current Use
- One property has frontage on Hill Road and 123A; limits any value change and additional subdivision requirements

Cost or Revenue	\$\$
Cost to Maintain Road	-\$6,700
State Revenue Received	\$833
Annual Cost (-/+)	-\$5,867
Cost for Minimal Safety Standard	\$ 199K-\$398K

[Return to Overall Map](#)

## 7 – Coffin Hill Road (off of Cold Pond Road)



- 0.06 mile (317') Class V section of road ends at one home; the road continues as a Class VI road
- 4 parcels and 4 parcel owners; 1 resident
- Residents on the existing Class VI road are prepared to support maintenance of this portion
- Road provides some public use
- Properties in Current Use
- Properties too small for subdivisions
- Two properties have access to Cold Pond Road; may limit any land value change

Cost or Revenue	\$\$
Cost to Maintain Road	-\$700
State Revenue Received	\$86
Annual Cost (-/+)	-\$614
Cost for Minimal Safety Standard	\$ 13K-\$26K

## 8 - Langdon Road (off of Derry Hill)



- 0.06 mile (328') road Class V with one residence
- Road ends at the home; continues as a Class VI road
- Two parcels and one parcel owner
- Limited public use
- Limited property value change due to the frontage on Derry Hill Road

Cost or Revenue	\$\$
Cost to Maintain Road	-\$700
State Revenue Received	\$89
Annual Cost (-/+)	-\$611
Cost for Minimal Safety Standard	\$ 18K-\$37K

## 9 - Parson Road *(between Crane Brook and Duncan/Derry Hill Roads)*



- 0.31 mile Class V road with one home
- Road continues as a Class VI road to Duncan/Derry Hill
- Two parcels and two parcel owners
- Limited public use
- Large parcel has adequate frontage on Crane Brook for subdivisions which also limits any impact to land value
- House parcel is too small for any subdivisions

Cost or Revenue	\$\$
Cost to Maintain Road	-\$3,700
State Revenue Received	\$445
Annual Cost (-/+)	-\$3,255
Cost for Minimal Safety Standard	\$69K-\$137K

## 10 – Polly Hill Road (between McLaughlin Rd and Beryl Mtn Roads)



- 0.09 mile (475') road with two residents
- Road ends at the home
- One parcel and one parcel owner
- Limited public use

Cost or Revenue	\$\$
Cost to Maintain Road	-\$1,000
State Revenue Received	\$129
Annual Cost (-/+)	-\$871
Cost for Minimal Safety Standard	\$20K-\$40K

***19 Jan - A request has been placed into the Select Board to discontinue use of this road.***

## 11 – Hoagland Road (between Crane Brook Road and Derry Hill)



- 0.29 mile Class V road has no residences
- 2 parcels with 1 parcel owner
- Town does minimal maintenance
- Some commercial use
- Properties are in Current Use; minimal impact to town revenue
- Land values and subdivisions not affected with a change due to the frontage on Derry Hill Road and/or Crane Brook

Cost or Revenue	\$\$
Cost to Maintain Road	-\$1,000
State Revenue Received	\$417
Annual Cost (-/+)	-\$583
Cost for Minimal Safety Standard	\$85K-171K

[Return to Overall Map](#)

Thank you

## Changes

- 27 Jan Public Presentation Created
- 30 Jan Replaced all references to committee with team
- 30 Jan Removed reference to 700 hours