



# The Chairman's Corner

by

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## **THANKING STORM WORKERS**

**2/24/26**

They're out there in winter weather conditions while many are still safely home in bed, perhaps roused from their slumber only by the sound of a snowplow going by outside. When it comes time to get up and head out for the day, ordinarily the roadways have been cleared by the folks who got up much earlier, reported to work, and hit the road armed with plows, salt, and sand.

The winter of 2025-26 has been particularly challenging for Columbia County Department of Public Works and town highway department, as well as the county's Facilities Department, under Director Brian McDonald. Long workdays are frequently called for to adequately address expected and unforeseen situations caused by storms and cold weather.

Said Ron Knott, chairman of the Department of Public Works committee, "I certainly have to commend all of our county highway staff for their recent efforts to maintain safe highways here in Columbia County. We have experienced a 'real' winter this year, after becoming accustomed to several mild winters in the past few years."

"Multiple storms and severe cold have kept our trucks on the road and staff very busy this year. It also seems as though storms have focused on weekends. While providing opportunities to capture some valuable overtime pay, this commitment can rob staff of valuable personal and family time."

"While we all see and often thank our plow drivers as those we see taking care of our highways, we also need to thank those who provide support behind the scenes, the mechanics and maintenance staff working hard to maintain all the equipment," Chairman Knott continued. "Cold weather stresses all equipment and causes issues unthought-of during warmer weather. Of course, anyone working out in the element's knows everything just seems harder to do in cold weather."

"Repeated storms this year leaves little time for lengthy repairs and routine maintenance, so our mechanics work harder, too, and should be thanked. And let's not forget that members of our crews are always on call during winter months. We owe them all big thank you."

While we focus on winter storm removal for the moment, the same workers involved with that process will turn to face the underlying issues that have developed during the extreme cold and snowy conditions over the course of the winter. Issues such as frost heave, potholes, and the like that crop up over the course of a winter such as the one we have been in will require repair as we head into spring and summer.

At another time, I'll speak to the budgetary challenges posed by multiple storm activity.