

# Road Report

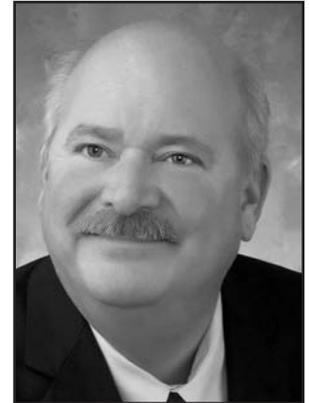
*A publication of the Road Commission for Oakland County for public officials serving Oakland County* [www.rcocweb.org](http://www.rcocweb.org)

## Wilson elected Road Commission chairman, Jamian named vice chairman; Fowkes reappointed

The three-member Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) Board, at its Jan. 12 meeting, elected Eric Wilson as Board chairman and Greg Jamian as vice chairman. Also in January, the Oakland County Board of Commissioners reappointed Ron Fowkes to a second six-year term on the RCOC Board.

The Board traditionally elects its officers at the first meeting of the new year in January. While the Road Commission is an independent unit of government and not part of Oakland County general government, RCOC Board members are appointed by the Oakland County Board of Commissioners in accordance with state law and serve six-year terms.

"I am looking forward to 2017," Chairman Wilson said. "With the influx of some new state road-funding dollars for the first time in 20 years, we will be able to begin the long process of restoring



*RCOC Board member (left to right): Chairman Eric Wilson, Vice Chairman Greg Jamian and Commissioner Ron Fowkes.*

Oakland's roads," Wilson added, referring to the state road-funding package approved by the state Legislature and governor in 2015. The package resulted in an increase in the state gas and diesel taxes and vehicle-registration fees on Jan. 1.

"We have been grappling with inadequate funds to maintain our roads for years," Vice Chairman Jamian noted. "This new stream of investment into our system will help stop further deterioration of our  
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## RCOC preserves historic Gingell Bros. sign

The Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) has saved a historic stone sign from a 1940s era building in Orion Township that is being demolished as part of the Baldwin Road widening project.

The sign was part of the original Gingell Brothers grocery store building in the unincorporated community of Gingellville. Gingellville was settled by the ancestors of current Oakland County Board of Commissioners Chairman Michael Gingell.

"Gingellville is an important part of both the history and future of Orion Township," explained RCOC Chairman Eric Wilson. He noted that while the Baldwin Road widening project requires the removal of the Gingell building, it will allow for the development of a more pedestrian-friendly downtown area along with a much-improved road that will help



*RCOC Chairman Eric Wilson, left, with RCOC Buildings and Grounds Foreman Ed Foreman, examines the sign.*

to reduce traffic congestion and improve motorist safety in the area.

The sign, which reads "Gingell Bros.," is made of carved stone. The Gingell family, for several generations, ran a number  
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## Road Commission again supports Oakland Bar Association's Americans Thank our Troops effort

For the sixth year in a row, the Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) is joining the Oakland County Bar Association's Veteran's Committee this year to help support U.S. servicemen and women serving overseas through the Americans Thank our Troops (ATOT) program.

Through the program, personal items are collected here, packaged and sent

overseas to the troops in care packages. Items are being collected at boxes at each RCOC facility.

Letters, notes and cards of encouragement to the soldiers are also welcome from both adults and children.

Last year, the Veteran's Committee donated 139 boxes of items to the troops. The packages were expected to be sent to the troops in late March.

### Use RCOC app

The Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) reminds motorists to take advantage of the RCOC app to get road project information, file a report about a road concern, send RCOC a photo and much more from any mobile device.

The app is available for free from the Google and Apple app stores: Simply search for "Road Commission for Oakland County."

## January thaw played havoc with gravel roads, was prelude to spring season

Anyone who lives along or near a gravel road in Oakland County knows the roads can be rough at times. That's been particularly true already this year.

Gravel roads are traditionally less stable in the spring and fall when the ground is freezing and thawing. And, there is a typically a "winter break-up" sometime in February when the temperatures rise temporarily, causing the gravel roads to again become unstable.

This year, however, Oakland County experienced an early break-up, when the temperatures rose into the 50s in late January, causing many gravel roads to turn to a muddy mess.

"Unfortunately, there really isn't a lot we can do for gravel roads when the temperatures rise in the middle of winter," explained RCOC Managing Director Dennis Kolar. "These temperature spikes cause the top layer of the ground to thaw and turn to mud. However, the ground remains frozen below that top layer, preventing the



*This is an example of a gravel road where the water is not draining because the ground remains frozen.*

water from draining."

Kolar noted the problem was compounded in late January by a significant amount of rain. "In this type of situation, you end up with a lot of water -- or mud -- on the surface of many gravel roads. Because the water cannot drain, the roads become very soupy. In these conditions, a grader does virtually no good -- it's like pushing around soup."

Kolar noted that the one thing the Road

Commission can do in these situations is to bring in additional gravel to help stabilize particularly bad areas. "But, the reality is we can only do that in a few locations, because it is very labor intensive and expensive," he added.

Where the roads are not just mud, the Road Commission will attempt to grade them, as time permits, and this sometimes helps.

"When we have these winter break ups, we certainly sympathize with those who live along or near gravel roads," Kolar said. "We attempt to do everything we can, but this is the nature of unpaved roads."

Kolar added that the January thaw was just a prelude to the spring which is coming before long. "Depending on how quickly or slowly the ground thaws, the spring can be brutal or tolerable for gravel road drivers," the managing director warned. "We're hoping for a gradual thaw that will allow the gravel roads to dry out gradually and evenly without turning to soup."

### BOARD -- CONT'D FROM FRONT roads, and allow for real improvements."

Fowkes thanked the County Board of Commissioners for his re-appointment, and noted he looks forward to working to continue RCOC's efforts to provide safe roads. "We in Oakland County have the safest roads of any county in Michigan, based on the traffic-fatality rate," Fowkes said. "This didn't happen overnight. We have been a leader in using crash-data evaluation as a primary basis for selecting road projects for more than 30 years," he added.

Chairman Wilson is an attorney in pri-

vate practice and former member of the Oakland County Board of Commissioners and the Orion Township Board of Trustees. He was first appointed to the RCOC Board in 2007 and re-appointed in 2013.

Vice Chairman Jamian has served on the RCOC Board since 2009 and was re-appointed to a second term in 2015. He is a resident of Bloomfield Township and former member of the Oakland County Board of Commissioners and the Bloomfield Township Board of Trustees. For more than 30 years, Jamian has been president and CEO of an integrated health-services corporation in Troy.

Fowkes has served on the RCOC Board since 2011. A resident of the Village of Milford, he has frequently advocated for better roads and highways in Oakland County.

Fowkes served on the Milford Village Council from 1999 through 2006, including serving as its president in 2003. He owns and operates Sealtite Inspection Company based in Milford.

The RCOC Board typically meets twice monthly -- approximately every other Thursday morning at 9 a.m. at the RCOC administrative offices at 31001 Lahser Road in Beverly Hills.

## New state road funding will help to begin to restore road system

On Jan. 1, the State of Michigan began collecting revenue from the first gas tax increase in 20 years. At the same time, the state's diesel tax rate increased as did vehicle registration fees.

These three items constitute the largest source of road funding in Michigan. The fuel tax rates and registration fee were increased by the state Legislature in late 2015, but the increases did not take effect until this year.

The gas tax rose from 19 cents per gallon to 26.3 cents per gallon, while the diesel tax increased from 15 cents per gallon to 26.3 cents. The vehicle registration fee increased by 20 percent.

"This is the first significant funding increase we've seen since 1997," noted Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) Managing Director Dennis Kolar. "After years of declining revenue, it is remarkable to finally be able to begin the long process of restoring our roads."

The new dollars will be devoted to restoring the condition of RCOC road surfaces, upgrading the agency's vehicle fleet and filling a few of the positions that remained vacant for many years. "Sixty percent of our roads are now in poor condition,



*A recent resurfacing project. With the new road funding, more of these are coming.*

much of our vehicle fleet has exceeded its intended lifespan, and we reduced our staff by more than 35 percent since 2007," Kolar explained. "At long last, we are going to start to reverse these detrimental trends."

Among the tactics the agency will employ to restore the roads are the expansion of the road "preservation overlay" and "spot resurfacing" programs. Preservation overlays are simple resurfacing projects where roads in moderate condition receive an inch-and-a-half or two-inch asphalt cap, which extends the useful life of the road by five to 10 years while providing a smooth, new driving surface.

Spot resurfacing involves removing

bad pavement in small areas and replacing it with new asphalt. Ideal target areas range from a couple hundred feet of road to a couple thousand feet.

"Both techniques are cost-effective ways to quickly improve as much road surface as possible," Kolar noted. "We will also continue to focus on more intensive resurfacing and reconstruction projects as well."

The managing director noted RCOC urgently needs to upgrade its vehicle fleet, from the dump trucks used for plowing and salting and many other tasks, to the pick-up trucks and more specialized equipment, such as graders. "When revenue was stagnant or declining, we simply could not afford to replace equipment as we should," Kolar explained. "The new funding allows us to begin to catch up."

Kolar noted the agency must also fill some of its long-vacant positions if it is going to be able to take on an increased work load. "The new money allows us to increase the amount of work we're doing. However," he added, "more staff is required to accomplish more work. We are, though, filling positions very judiciously -- we're only filling positions we absolutely need."

### RCOC conducting Strat Plan meetings

Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) officials have begun meeting with leaders of virtually every city, village and township in the county as part of RCOC's biennial Strategic Planning process.

RCOC officials meet every two years with the communities to ensure community leaders play an active role in setting Road Commission strategy.

The process allows RCOC regularly to take the pulse of the communities on large issues as well as ensure community officials have an avenue to discuss road needs and road-maintenance issues. Also, during the process, RCOC asks the local officials to prioritize the needs on county roads in their communities. This information is used to help prioritize projects in coming years.

The Strategic Planning meetings will take place through the spring. Once they are completed, RCOC will compile a report summarizing the information gathered at the meetings.

### SIGN, CONT'D FROM FRONT

of businesses in the community, including a hardware store and gas station as well as the grocery store. Wilson noted the sign will be preserved and included in the landscaping along the reconstructed Baldwin Road, potentially in the center of a roundabout.

Oakland County Board of Commissioners Chairman Gingell was pleased that the sign was saved. "On behalf of my family, I would like to thank the Road Commission for preserving the Gingell Brothers sign," Chairman Gingell said. "The monument sign is a reflection of the community that my great grandparents and their descendants built along with many others throughout Orion Township. Gingellville is about community, neighbors helping each other and supporting one another. Preserving these qualities is important."

Orion Township Trustee Mike Flood was also concerned that the sign be preserved. "In 2011, I was first made aware of the Gingell Bros. building sign by former Baldwin Barber Shop barber and Gingellville resident Bud

Stout," Flood recalled.

"It was Bud's suggestion that started the whole process to retrieve and preserve this historic artifact before the buildings were removed for the Baldwin Road widening project. Many civic, appointed and elected officials have successfully come together to preserve this historic artifact to be viewed for future generations along the new Gingellville/Baldwin Road corridor. This was truly a collaborative effort," Flood said.

The Baldwin Road project involves widening and reconstructing Baldwin Road between Gregory and Waldon roads. It will include widening part of the road to five lanes and part to a four-lane boulevard. It will also include the construction of five modern roundabouts.

"We want our roads to be as modern, safe and efficient as possible," RCOC's Wilson said. "But, we also want to recognize the history of the county and the communities that make up the county. Preserving this sign is one way of retaining a bit of that history and helping to remind people about the historic aspect of our communities."

## Volunteers needed: RCOC seeking partners to help beautify county roads

Want to help beautify your community? If so, the Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) has just the opportunity for you: There are roads available as part of the Adopt-A-Road program.

Volunteer groups that adopt a road segment are asked to pick up litter along the road during two of the three available cleanup periods each year (spring, summer and fall). The 2017 clean-up dates are April 15-23, July 15-23 and Sept. 23-Oct. 1.

Any group interested in adopting a paved county road section should call the RCOC Permits Division at 248-858-4891 or send an e-mail to: [adoptaroad@rcoc.org](mailto:adoptaroad@rcoc.org). Interested organizations will receive orange safety vests, training and garbage bags.

Additionally, RCOC will erect Adopt-A-Road signs at both ends of the designated road sections recognizing the volunteer groups responsible for the sections. Road segments are approved by the RCOC Board.

Participating groups are reminded to call the RCOC Permits Division to arrange pick up of litter bags after the clean-up. Additionally, RCOC relies on groups to call and verify that contact information is current. Groups needing additional garbage bags or orange vests can also call.

Motorists can help augment the effort by slowing down when volunteers are picking up trash along the roadways and join RCOC in reminding others not to litter.

## RCOC completes 37th three-year budget

The Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) has completed its 37th three-year budget, laying out anticipated revenues and expenditures for 2018 to 2020.

RCOC has operated on a rolling, three-year budget cycle longer than just about any other governmental agency in the state. The three-year budgeting process has allowed RCOC to anticipate challenges and opportunities before they arrive.

For example, RCOC was able to reduce its workforce by more than

35 percent between 2007 and 2012 without laying off any employees.

The three-year budget, officially known as the Three-Year Financial Plan, considers state budgeting forecasts and other sources to anticipate potential changes in revenues and expenditures. For the three-year period containing fiscal years 2018, 2019 and 2020, the plan anticipates revenue from RCOC's largest funding source -- state-collected vehicle-registration fees and fuel taxes -- will rise modestly each year.

## Contacting RCOC

If your constituents need information about a road project or want to report a pothole, traffic signal problem or other road issue, they should call RCOC's **Department of Customer Services** toll free at:

**(877) 858-4804**

**OR**

Send us an e-mail via the RCOC Web site:  
**[www.rcocweb.org](http://www.rcocweb.org)**

## ROAD REPORT

*Road Report* is published quarterly by the Road Commission for Oakland County. Have a question or comment about **Road Report**? Call Senior Manager of Communications Craig Bryson at (248) 645-2000, ext. 2302.

### **Board of Road Commissioners:**

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*Gregory C. Jamian, Vice Chairman*

*Ronald J. Fowkes, Commissioner*

*Dennis G. Kolar, PE, Managing Director*

*Gary Piotrowicz, PE, PTOE, Dep. Managing Dir./County Highway Engineer*

**Have a question for RCOC? Call:**  
*Department of Customer Services*  
**(877) 858-4804 or visit RCOC online at**  
**[www.rcocweb.org](http://www.rcocweb.org)**