



from your Associate Director

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BY THE TIME most of you are reading this edition of Perspective, the 109th Conference will have concluded. That being the case, it is important to take full advantage of what you have experienced professionally, personally and what you can share with your fellow township officials at the next township board meeting.

The Association offers the following recommendations to you as you return from the 2016 Annual Educational Conference.

- ✓ Keep the momentum, motivation and interest you have experienced very much alive. As you reflect on your experiences, new ideas found and networking relationships move forward with your ideas.
- ✓ Prepare for the next township board meeting by summarizing what your experiences were at the TOI Conference. Offer copies of handouts / materials you obtained from various resources while attending the event.
- ✓ Engage township officials that may not have had an opportunity to attend a TOI event. Help them realize the importance of education investment.
- ✓ Share the program agenda with your board members
- ✓ Promote attending TOI education events in 2017.

As we close soon on 2016, I am challenging you again to work with and among your current township board to improve your township's image and overall simplified approach to programs and services provided locally.

Look for ways to improve overall communication with your township electors. If you currently do not have e-mail addresses dedicated to individual board members or the township as a whole, create them. There are many free e-mail services that can provide this effective communication tool. Look at the 2017 year with a focus on what can be accomplished to promote township government in your area.

Look for additional training opportunities provided by the Township Officials of Illinois or other groups that will enhance current and future services provided by your township.

Tips that help justify making the most of township training

1. Create a line item in your township budget for education and training. Include the educational district meetings, Professional Development Day events and the Annual Conference.
2. Focus on the townships goals and objectives by focusing training activities on these issues.
3. Develop internal goals with the elected officials on the township board. Work together as a board to bring valuable training opportunities to your township, perhaps through a county township association event.
4. Allow the training focus to go beyond scheduled (classroom) events. Look at alternative training opportunities like webinars, books and magazines.
5. Step outside your comfort zone by exploring other topics of interest. These opportunities provide well rounded elected officials and employees.
6. Work with your local members of the Illinois General Assembly so that they are aware of the work done by your township.

Reflections from "Around Illinois" ... A unique experience ...

One of the highlights of my job with the Township Officials of Illinois is having the opportunity to travel out in the field and meet with both township officials and township residents experiencing the true essence of township government programs and services. It is amazing what these individuals do working to promote, engage, and empower communities across our great state, ILLINOIS.

Recently, I have been working with each of the supporting divisions of the Township Officials of Illinois on various "division" projects to assist in promoting membership to their individual divisions. The projects range from website development and publication distribution to, member services. I would like to share my personal reflections from the highway commissioners film project because it has been an eye opening experience to the individual benefits of township government.

We have heard discussions throughout the past few years regarding the importance of townships, the value



of their services, or the services provided, I would hope that this project explains why the road district and other services provided by local government or township government are so important to the local government landscape.

The objective of the highway commissioner's film project is to show the diversity that the different road districts provide to the communities and how the services vary for numerous reasons from the North to the South and from the East to the West in Illinois.

The differences in budget, expectations of residents, and access to equipment are evident and the call for road and bridge maintenance far surpasses the available resources. Additionally, that through intergovernmental agreement many counties rely on township government to address road and bridge maintenance issues that they simply cannot for various reasons.

The film project named **"HIGHWAY COMMISSIONERS JOB SHADOWING PROJECT"** began in September and is being filmed by staff from the media department of the University of Illinois, Springfield. The project is targeted to be completed by January 1, 2017 and will be promoted by the Highway Commissioners Division throughout the 2017 calendar year as a way to highlight the unique quality and demand for adequate road and bridge maintenance by township highway commissioners.

I would like to thank Charlie Montgomery from Monticello Township / Piatt County and of the Highway Commissioners Division, TOI Board Member and Chairman of the TOI Education Committee for his commitment to the project and for traveling to each film location to ensure that the message is conveyed in the appropriate way. His commitment to township government, specifically the role of the highway commissioner is simply amazing. Charlie cares about preserving local government, township government. All townships officials could learn a lesson from his attentiveness to

the cause of preserving what you all do in your responsibilities as an elected official in the oldest form of government — TOWNSHIP GOVERNMENT.

Additionally, I would like to thank the individual regional associations of the Highway Commissioner Division. Their financial contributions made the project possible. Lastly, a thank you to the highway commissioners in each of the areas we traveled to that took time out of their schedules to allow us access film the work that they perform.

The project began on a great summer day with a trip to Schuyler County. We met Highway Commissioner and TOI Third Vice President Danny Hanning outside Huntsville Township. This area of the state is unique



A FILM CREW records Highway Commissioner and TOI's 3rd Vice President Danny Hanning on the job in rural Huntsville Township (Schuyler County)

as it is mostly rural. Danny says that ... “This is probably the only township in Illinois where you cannot purchase anything because there are no active businesses anymore.” As a heavily rural area with a budget of under \$100,000.00 he has limited if any equipment and is forced to hire all of his work through intergovernmental agreements or direct contracts. A simple tile installation on a country road is a collaborative effort by adjoining townships. With mostly gravel roads, maintenance in harsh winter climates is paramount.

We moved north the next week to film success and projects with TOI first vice President Bob Miller in Algonquin Township / McHenry County. A much different area both in services provided and a much different financial picture. Located far North in Illinois and with a budget of well over \$1M Algonquin Township offers so many services to the area. Just to mention a few: Extensive recycling (electronics, paint), road maintenance, car charging stations, goodwill donations, community available mulch free to residents and many more. The entire operation is running with one intention—serving the residents of



ALGONQUIN TOWNSHIP Highway Commissioner (McHenry County) and TOI’s 1st Vice President Bob Miller participates in the “Highway Commissioners Job Shadowing Project” to highlight the many programs and services offered by his township department.

Algonquin Township with efficient, effective and beneficial services. This is a community outside of the city of Chicago working to maintain a community environment. The message with this location is that with the proper financial support township residents benefit so much from personal community services.

Next, we moved to Eastern Illinois and met with Pilot Township Highway Commissioner Roy Knight in Collison, Illinois. Unique to this area is not only the rural setting again but the unique placement of wind turbines generating electricity in the farmland landscape. This area has no county zoning requirement. We focused on discussing intergovernmental agreements and how neighboring communities work together in corporate America to benefit their bottom line. Without the financial resources brought to the community by the wind mill industry many of the rural roads would not have been able to be repaired and maintained near the level they are today.

This location drives home the message that without the income received from the wind mill industry for the installation as well as the existing positive relationship with the county officials, the roads would not be maintained anywhere near the level they are today.

We were introduced to the practice of recycling old oil tanker train cars into tiles to offset the cost of rural bridge needs. The practice is cheaper and provides an alternative to new tile installation. Again, a cost alternative for an expensive component to bridge repair.

We also filmed in Arthur, Illinois in Amish country. Highway Commissioner Steve Helton of Bourbon Township / Douglas County provided us with discussion and up close visions of what it is like to be a highway commissioner in an area where one mode of transportation is horse and buggy. With over 600 carriages used by the Amish community using roads, the unique damages incurred cost several thousand dollars a year. Back in early 2,000’s a buggy license plate fee was instituted to assist in offsetting the damage caused to the



BOURBON TOWNSHIP (Douglas County) Highway Commissioner Steve Helton.

roads by the buggies. This has not met the entire financial need but assists in maintaining adequate road use.

Again in this area, we discussed the relationships between county and township government, with either having adequate resources to maintain/ develop roads and bridges. I comment often, speaking around the state that I have yet to hear a county board say that they have adequate resources (staff and finances) to take on the road and bridge maintenance of township government.

Steve provided us a view of a multi-year project on the creation of a roadway. The work and product needed to make a new roadway with an already shrinking budget. They make it happen.

Traveling to Southern Illinois, we met with Mt. Vernon Township / Jefferson County Highway Commissioner Terry Moore. This area is unique as they have rural road responsibilities and funding issues related to the cost of asphalt. This road districts relies on a patch system to its roads as an alternative to complete road replacement.

The rural setting provides unique opportunities for road and bridge maintenance. We traveled out into the township and observed road repair in action. This particular township purchases used vehicles from the Illinois Department of Transportation and repurposes their abilities in the work performed by the township. Again, we observed an area heavily reliant on the township to perform road work, as the county simply does not have adequate resources.



HIGHWAY COMMISSIONER Steve Helton shows the damage that horses have done wearing down roads in Bourbon Township (Douglas County).



MT. VERNON TOWNSHIP (Jefferson County) Highway Commissioner Terry Moore speaks to a film crew from a garage that houses township equipment needed to maintain area roads and bridges.



Lastly, we traveled to Northwest Illinois and filmed in the beautiful Galena Territory area. We met with Jeff Winders, Guilford Township/ Jo Daviess County. What is unique about this area the type of roads and experience needed to maintain as well as plow snow on them. The landscape is so unique and the hills and terrain make plowing and repairing a unique skill.

Jeff took us on a road oil / chip project that provided a view of how the product is applied to build up the road and make it withstand the traffic. Additionally, we viewed several bridge projects. The township has worked with the federal and state government on improving water flow in such a vast area.

Overall, this experience provided many examples of the value, efficiency and need for township highway departments. The untrained governmental official has no idea how much rural and urban communities rely on township road districts to maintain and build new roadways. This video provides just this message. I encourage all of you to watch for its release. 📖

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