

# Leroy Township

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May 28, 2019

Dear Resident:

The Board of Trustees would like me to follow up with some post-election news regarding local roads in Leroy Township. The Bond Proposal to address all 45 miles of local roads on the May 7 ballot was turned down by Leroy voters by a very narrow margin: 588 NO votes to 572 YES. Thirty-eight percent of our registered voters turned out on election day to cast a ballot. We have 2,992 registered voters and a total population of 3,712.

There is a new development that we think is important for you and residents of Calhoun County to know about. At the May 16 Calhoun County Board of Commissioner's meeting a 'Local Road Infrastructure Failure Policy' was introduced and tabled without action. It will be discussed again at a future date. Allow me to summarize the policy that the Calhoun County Board of Commissioner's is looking at to deal with failed local roads:

"In order to provide a road system that is reasonably safe and convenient for the public to travel, while also allowing the Road Department the ability to provide cost effective and efficient maintenance, it is the recommendation of the Road Department that the Calhoun County Board of Commissioners support and approve the presented Local Road Infrastructure Failure Policy.

This policy applies to local roads that are deemed a complete failure by the Road Department. This policy will be implemented after evaluation of a specific roadway. After this initial evaluation, the Road Department will meet with Township Officials to discuss improvement options. If no plans for road improvements are implemented within 3 months of the initial meeting with Township officials, CCRD will initiate actions to return the failed roadway to gravel. Safety concerns, PASER ratings, and maintenance costs will all be factored into the decision making process for each roadway under consideration.

Should the townships not agree to road improvements within 3 months of the Initial meeting regarding the specific roadway(s) discussed, CCRD will fund 100% of the pulverizing costs from the annual state allocated funds for local roads. These projects will be sent out to bid and awarded to the most cost efficient and reputable company."

The policy that the Calhoun County Road Department has recommended for adoption is very similar to a failed road policy in Kalamazoo County. While our County Commissioner's have NOT adopted this policy yet, I want you to know that it will be addressed again at a future meeting.

At the same time, I will remind you that Leroy Township does NOT receive any road funding money. Not from the state, county or from property taxes. If this policy is adopted and the Road Department comes to the

Township Board to discuss turning roads back to gravel, we will not have funds to pay for any type of maintenance work to repave them and save the hard surface roadway. The best we can do is to keep you informed.

Leroy Township voters have twice turned down local road funding proposals at the polls: in 2016 and 2019. Both of these plans were comprehensive; meaning, they addressed every local road. Since the 2019 proposal was rejected by voters, I have heard comments about making the plan less costly by including more gravel roads or excluding neighborhoods. Think about those comments for a moment – we want people to support the proposal and yet omitting neighborhoods and including more gravel roads only alienates large numbers of voters.

Putting together a ballot proposal takes months of planning and negotiations – meeting with legal counsel, bond counsel, road department engineers and county administration. The ballot language alone must be submitted 3 months prior to the actual election per state election laws. The Board has directed my office to go through this exercise twice. The first time by the Board's own action in 2016. The second proposal in 2019 was brought about by overwhelming resident support to place a road funding question back on a ballot from a mailed questionnaire requesting resident opinions to be stated on a return card. Both attempts failed.

In response to the current calls and personal office visits from residents asking, "What is next with our local roads?"; the Failed Road Policy from the Calhoun County Commissioners may be next. Asking our residents to approve a 1 mill road proposal would generate less than \$120,000 per year in Leroy Township. Currently, we would have to pay a 70% match for projects while the Road Department would pay 30% of road projects that are located in townships levying less than 3 mills. Asking for 1 mill would repair less than half a mile of roadway a year and we have 45 miles of local roads to address. One mill does not seem like an effective solution to such an overwhelming problem.

Due to the overwhelming cost and the split population between township residents living on primary and state roads versus those on local roads, our attempts to pass comprehensive road bond proposals have failed. **The responsibility for all primary and local roads falls on the Calhoun County Road Department which is controlled by the Calhoun County Board of Commissioners.** Without the State Statute's requirement of matching funds to reconstruct local roads, they will have to take drastic steps to continue to provide safe roadways to travel. The Road Department cannot continue to pay \$5 million per year to fill potholes and must take action on failing roadways. The Calhoun County Commission meetings are open to the public and are held at the County Building in Marshall. Their meeting schedule can be seen at: [www.calhouncountymi.gov/government/board\\_of\\_commissioners/meeting\\_schedule/](http://www.calhouncountymi.gov/government/board_of_commissioners/meeting_schedule/). Our elected County Commissioner is Derek King. Commissioner King is very approachable and can be contacted at: [dfkvvs1@sbcglobal.net](mailto:dfkvvs1@sbcglobal.net).

We as a township, both Board and residents, have done what we can do. Without additional funds, the fate of local roads is in the hands of the Calhoun County Road Department and the Board of Commissioners. Please watch the township website at [leroytownship.org](http://leroytownship.org) for further updates.

Sincerely,



Laveta Hardish, Supervisor

Board Members: Trustees Doug Chapman and Jon Bolton, Treasurer Mark Christoff, Clerk Brenda Schuetz