



MUNICIPALITY CLOSE-UP: TOWN OF ELLINGTON



Shown here is a bridge maintenance crew dredging the channel at Windermere Bridge.

An Ellington crew works on maintaining an unimproved road.



Timothy Webb has headed up Ellington's Department of Public Works since 2011. Recently, *Highways & Byways* staff chatted with Tim about the hard work that goes into ensuring the safety of Ellington's transportation infrastructure, as well as other DPW-related responsibilities.

Q. Let's start with some personal information. What "path" did you take to get to your current position in terms of your educational background and work experience prior to going to work for the Town of Ellington? What drew you to Ellington particularly? Are you a Connecticut native with roots in the region, etc.?

A. Back in 1976 I attended college in Springfield, Massachusetts where I earned a degree in environmental technology, with a major in wastewater treatment. While in school, I moved from the Boston area down to Ellington, where my wife Kathy (to whom I have now been married for 44 years) and I lived with her parents. I interned at the Enfield Treatment plant in 1978 and took a job in the Greater Lawrence Treatment Plant in North Andover out of school, after which I was hired as the lab technician at the Enfield Plant in 1979. I worked for the Town of Enfield until 1989 when I left the deputy director's position to become superintendent of Public Works in Mansfield. I was very fortunate to work for two terrific Public Works Directors – Roger Mullins in Enfield and Lon Hultgren in Mansfield – both of whom were great mentors to me. In February 2004, I was hired as Coventry's Director of Public Works, a position I held until July 2011 when I accepted the Director's role in Ellington. Coming to Ellington was a tough decision due to the many projects that were moving forward in Coventry, but still living in Enfield and having traveled as I say, over the mountain to Mansfield and Coventry for 22 years, stopping at Ellington was – and continues to be – a great decision.

Q. Describe the overall organization of the Ellington Public Works Department.

A. The Town of Ellington's Public Works Department is made up of the following divisions: Roads, Grounds, Facilities, Water Pollution Control and Solid Waste and Recycling (see Facts & Figures). Our dedicated staff of 22 consists of a foreman, asst.

foreman, 10 maintainer I's, truck drivers, two maintainer II's, equipment operators, lead mechanic, mechanic, lead custodian, two custodians, a grounds crew chief, water pollution control crew chief, and a WPCA technician. All of the DPW's employees are under the care of our Administrative Assistant, Lori Smith, who has been with Ellington for more than 30 years. Together, they make a great team!

Q. Given the budget challenges facing so many Connecticut towns and cities – and the need "to do more with less" –do you do a lot of cross training so that the employees in various divisions can help each other out? Cite some examples.

A. Many communities in Connecticut, including Ellington, work with very tight budgets and are faced with the challenge of holding the line or reducing the bottom line by "robbing" from one activity to support another. Here in Ellington our staff is assigned duties that change depending on our overall activities. For example, during the spring the grounds crew

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A catch basin is repaired as part ongoing efforts to ensure effective road drainage throughout Ellington.



State Representative Chris Davis (third from the left) and Ellington First Selectman Lori Spielman assist Big Y and Ellington DPW staff in the annual Fill-a-Truck campaign during National Public Works Week.

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chief will utilize a larger staff than the roads, only to shift come late spring and into the summer months when the road activities need more staffing. All members of the Ellington DPW are working winter events where our front line trucks will take on the onset of the events and the cleanup crew will be called upon as the event comes to an end. During winter months, the crew can be found performing interior work in all of our facilities, from painting to constructing closets or enhancing the facilities. The crew never has a dull moment.

Q. Is there anything particularly unique about “getting the job done” in Ellington with regard to terrain, geography, zoning, etc.?

A. The Town of Ellington has a population of 18,000 + and is mostly residential and rural in nature. Oak Ridge Farms, for example, operates one the largest livestock and cow operations in Connecticut. Ellington is somewhat hammer-shaped, which creates a problem with only one main access roadway to the Crystal Lake area. This limited access has in the past blocked emergency and public works crews in responding to call-outs for windstorms or winter weather events. As a result, at times DPW crews are stationed at the Crystal Lake Fire House. The

topography also impacts the community with the higher Crystal Lake area receiving snow while raining in the valley area. These features alone make Ellington quite unique.

The Town of Ellington operates two separate sewer districts, the Hockunam (Vernon) district and the Stafford Springs district. The Vernon system is mostly made up of a gravity collection system with six pump stations. The Stafford district is mostly low pressure with 125+ individual grinder pumps and one main pump station.

Q. Talk about the people who work for you and how they are special and/or unique with regard to carrying out their responsibilities and meeting the needs and demands of the people of Ellington. In short, what makes Ellington DPW special/unique?

A. As noted before, Administrative Assistant Lori Smith, who has been monitoring the Department for more than 30 years, provides the glue to our operations. In addition to Lori, the Ellington DPW is comprised of one foreman, Tom Modzelewski, who came to work for the town back in 2011, moved on to the private sector and then returned to Ellington

as foreman in 2018. Tom, who has more than 15 years of Public Works experience, holds his P-6 license and is a certified-to-be the Deputy Tree Warden. He also has experience in fleet maintenance as a certified Master ASE Medium/Heavy Duty Truck mechanic. Alongside Tom is the Ellington’s Assistant Foreman Kevin Gambacorta, a graduate of the T2 Programs at UCONN in both the Road Master and Transportation Leadership Program with more than 15 years of experience. Working to ensure all activities are under control, Tom works closely with other key staff members, including: Lead Mechanic Taylor Olson, a 2018 graduate of the T2 Transportation Leadership program; Rebecca O’Brien, the crew chief for the Water Pollution Control division; Bob Ouellette, who, as the crew chief of Grounds Operations oversees all recreation and school fields as well as other Town of Ellington properties; and our lead custodian, Kim Gallicchio, who provides oversight of all of our facilities by monitoring sub-contractors for cleaning and HVAC, as well as guidance to the Department’s two custodians with regard to scheduling, supplies and general facility maintenance. These lead positions utilize the remaining 16 staff members to maintain the Ellington community. Together, they get the job done – effectively and efficiently.

Q. What are some particular projects or DPW activities that you are particularly proud of with regard to going “above and beyond” citizen expectations, etc? Does the department use any special equipment to enhance the quality of its work?

A. Many of the projects or activities undertaken by the Ellington DPW are consistent other Departments of Public Works: catch basin repairs, installing drainage, minor paving, winter operations, signage maintenance, turf maintenance, and the maintenance of all athletic fields, as well as Board of Education and Recreation grounds. We also maintain a rolling stock of 85 vehicles, all Town of Ellington facilities, and, as previously noted, two separate sewer districts.

During 2018, the Ellington DPW teamed up with East Windsor and Somers to purchase an asphalt recycler and hotbox and with Vernon and Stafford to purchase an underground utility camera truck. These new pieces of equipment, which were acquired through the State ICE Grant Program, have been a great benefit to all four communities.

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TRUE HEROES!

On June 10, 2019 at 12:45 p.m. the Town of Ellington experienced an event that no town, business or family ever wants to experience. Shawn Bull, an 11-year employee, 48 years of age, received massive injuries while using a gas powered chop saw. A severe laceration to the neck/throat area, severing the carotid artery and jugular vein were the life-threatening wounds.

Immediately, the crew on site sprang into action, led by Ronald Moser who applied immediate pressure to the area while calling for his coworker, Richard Daugherty. Rich, who was inside a catch basin, leapt out and ran to take over. Being a veteran Army medic, Rich had the experience necessary to save Shawn’s life, and that is just what he did. Knowing the severity of the injury, Rich called out to the third member of the crew, Denis Giroux, and instructed him to call 911 and request that Life Star be activated. While instructing Denis on the necessary disclosures, Rich was able to prevent deadly blood loss and/or suffocation.

Rich handed Shawn’s life over to the paramedics, who got Shawn into the ambulance and transported him to the grounded helicopter. After stabilizing Shawn for flight, the Life Star crew transported Shawn to Bay State Hospital where he immediately went into surgery. A mere four days later Shawn was released from the hospital and was in the comfort of his own home to recover as comfortably as possible.

It is hard to describe the amount of talent that went into saving one man’s life. The three men that were working with Shawn that day are absolute heroes. As noted by the doctors, paramedics, Life Star crew, and all first responders involved, Ronald Moser, Rich Daugherty and Denis Giroux saved Shawn Bull’s life. Their actions were truly heroic!



Facts and Figures TOWN OF ELLINGTON

Department of Public Works

ellington-ct.gov

Incorporated: 1786

First Selectman: Lori L. Spielman

Square Miles: 34.8

Population: 15,725 (as of 2015)

Department of Public Works

21 Main Street

Ellington, CT 06029

860-870-3140

Director: Timothy M. Webb

Number of Employees: 24

Public Works Dept. Divisions: Roads, Grounds, Facilities, Sewer, Fleet

Household Waste/Recycling: All American Waste, MIRF

Household Hazardous Waste: Mid NEROC

Electronic Recycling: Transfer Station, 21 Main Street, Ellington

Brush Drop Off: Hoffman Road, Ellington

Department Facts and Figures:

- Road Miles Maintained: 95 improved; 7 unimproved
- State Road Miles: 24.62
- Sewers: Sewer Districts – Hockuman (Vernon), Crystal Lake (Stafford)
- Airport: Private
- Bridges Maintained: 6
- Rolling Stock Maintained: 85
- Snow Plow Routes: 10 large (40K GVW)
1 Small, 450 Lake Area
- Catch Basins Maintained: 1,200+
- Town Facilities Maintained: 9
- Acres of Parks/Grassed Areas Maintained: 10 parks/turf areas, 170 acres



Ellington's new hotbox was made possible through the State ICE Grant program.



DPW crew members work on servicing/repairing a grinder pump.

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Q. Is there anything on the horizon with regard to projects, personnel, equipment, etc. that you are excited about? What would you most like to accomplish in the next five years?

A. The Ellington DPW continues to upgrade our unimproved road inventory to improved roads with the support of the Board of Selectman and Finance. We are also working with the State of Connecticut on two sidewalk projects: Main Street sidewalks through the Community Connectivity Grant; and a 2.5-mile sidewalk along Route 83 under the LOCIP program.

Q. To what extent is Ellington involved in CASHO activities and why do you think CASHO programs – such as the Snowplow Safety Rodeo – technical seminars and other events are important to the Public Works community?

A. Training for those of us involved in Public Works consists of many of the opportunities sponsored by CASHO and the T2 community at UCONN. Our lead mechanic and mechanic have attended many of the fleet seminars held by CASHO and our maintainers have competed in the Snow Plow Rodeo over the years. Ellington Public Works personnel also have served as Rodeo judges on a regular basis. I am proud of how my guys have performed at recent CASHO Rodeos: In 2017, for example, we were able to secure third place in two categories along with a “Best in Show.” In 2018, we secured a second place finish in the Class 3 Dump Truck category and in the 2019 competition one of our drivers finished second in the Class 4 Dump Truck category. All in all, the Ellington DPW’s relationship with CASHO has been both highly educational – and fun. We look forward to building on that relationship for years to come. 🟡