

BEYOND CHIP SEAL

The Full Picture of What Your Road Tax Actually Pays For

Spring Lake Township, Tazewell County, Illinois | 2024 Tax Year
 Official budget data · NOAA climate records · IDOT road cost benchmarks

Section 1: The Complaint — and What It Actually Represents

When residents post on Facebook complaining about tar bleeding through their chip seal road on a hot day and blaming the road commissioner, they are expressing frustration about one specific maintenance activity — chip seal surface treatment — that represents roughly 35% of the township road budget. The other 65% of the budget, which silently keeps their roads passable through ice storms, spring floods, and daily wear, receives zero acknowledgment.

This report documents what the Spring Lake Township road commissioner is actually responsible for managing — and exactly how much of that responsibility is funded by the two households most vocal about chip seal.

Section 2: What a Township Road Commissioner is Legally Responsible For

Under Illinois Compiled Statutes (605 ILCS 5), the Township Highway Commissioner is responsible for:

- Construction, maintenance, and repair of all township roads within the district
- Snow and ice removal to maintain safe passage
- Drainage maintenance — keeping ditches, culverts, and roadside drainage systems functional
- Bridge maintenance and inspection compliance (required by IDOT every 2 years)
- Roadside mowing and vegetation control within the right-of-way
- Traffic sign installation and maintenance
- Weight limit postings in spring to prevent frost-heave road damage
- Responding to emergency washouts, storm damage, and accidents
- Equipment acquisition, maintenance, and storage
- Budget management, record-keeping, and required reports to the County Highway Department

Chip seal resurfacing is one item on a ten-item list. A Facebook complaint about it ignores nine other responsibilities the commissioner fulfills every single year, often invisibly, before the complainers ever notice.

Section 3: The Full Annual Budget Breakdown — All 115 Miles

Estimated Annual Cost by Category

The following estimates are based on: actual 2024 Spring Lake Township road budget (\$241,765 for 115 miles), Illinois county road engineer reports, IDOT local road cost benchmarks, NOAA climate data for central Illinois (Peoria station: 26.2" snow / 20 snow days per year average), and standard rural road maintenance industry rates.

Responsibility	Est. Annual Cost	% of Budget	\$/Mile	Notes
----------------	------------------	-------------	---------	-------

Snow & Ice Removal	\$17,034	7.0%	\$148	Fuel, labor, salt (~13 plow events + 8 salt runs/yr), equipment maintenance
Roadside Mowing	\$18,000	7.4%	\$157	2 passes/season over both sides of 115 miles (~345 acres of right-of-way)
Culverts & Drainage	\$23,400	9.7%	\$203	~7 culvert replacements + ditch grading and cleaning
Gravel Road Maintenance	\$27,850	11.5%	\$242	Grading 3×/yr on ~23 miles of unpaved road + periodic regravels (~5 mi/yr)
Pothole Patching & Repairs	\$14,000	5.8%	\$122	Frost heave repairs, edge cracking, crack sealing — year-round work
Signs	\$2,850	1.2%	\$25	Replace/repair ~30 signs per year (stop, speed, road name, warning)
Bridge Maintenance	\$12,000	5.0%	\$104	Routine maintenance on ~8 township bridges (deck, joints, inspection)
Equipment & Insurance	\$21,200	8.8%	\$184	Truck depreciation, fuel, tires, hydraulics, maintenance, liability insurance
Commissioner & Admin	\$16,500	6.8%	\$143	Salary, record-keeping, permits, county reporting requirements
Chip Seal Surface Treatment	\$85,000	35.2%	\$739	THE THING BEING COMPLAINED ABOUT — ~5 miles resurfaced per year
TOTAL BUDGET	\$241,765	100%	\$2,102	For all 115 miles, all 365 days

At \$2,102 per mile per year, Spring Lake Township is maintaining its roads at roughly one-fifth of what highway engineers consider adequate for rural roads (\$5,000-\$15,000/mile/year). The commissioner is not overspending — he is dramatically underfunded relative to the task.

Section 4: Snow & Ice Removal — The Invisible Budget Eater

Central Illinois Winter Reality

Manito and Spring Lake Township fall within the Peoria-area climate zone. Based on NOAA 1991-2020 climate normals (Peoria station, the nearest major weather recording site):

- **Annual average snowfall:** 26.2 inches per year
- **Average snow days per year:** 20 days with measurable snowfall (≥0.1 inch)
- **Typical plow-response events:** 12-15 per winter season (events exceeding 1-inch threshold)
- **Ice events (freezing rain/sleet):** 4-8 additional events requiring salt treatment alone

Cost Per Snow Event — 115 Miles

Item	Cost/Event	Basis
Fuel (diesel, one full pass)	~\$131	~35 gal @ \$3.75 (230 mi round trip)
Operator labor	~\$196	7 hrs @ \$28/hr
Road salt (salted events only)	~\$1,035	14.4 tons @ \$72/ton (250 lbs/mile)
Equipment wear/maintenance (annual)	~\$4,500/yr	Plow blades, spreader, hydraulics
TOTAL ESTIMATED ANNUAL SNOW COST	~\$17,000	13 plow events + 8 salt-only events

Important: this \$17,000 estimate assumes an average winter. A heavy snow year or severe ice storm can easily double these costs — and there is no supplemental budget. If snow removal eats more than expected, chip seal mileage gets cut.

Section 5: The Chip Seal Complaint — Quantified to the Penny

What Purdy and Honsman Actually Contribute to Chip Seal

	Purdy	Honsman	Combined
Total annual road tax	\$271.59	\$183.05	\$454.64
Share going to chip seal (35.2%)	\$95.49	\$64.36	\$159.85
Share going to snow removal (7.0%)	\$19.14	\$12.90	\$32.03
Share going to culverts & drainage (9.7%)	\$26.36	\$17.76	\$44.12
Share going to mowing (7.4%)	\$20.10	\$13.55	\$33.64
Share going to ALL other costs (57.6%)	\$175.95	\$118.60	\$294.55

What \$159.85 in Combined Chip Seal Contribution Buys

Metric	Value
Total chip seal budget per year	\$85,000 (~5 miles)
Cost per foot of chip seal	\$3.22/foot (\$17,000/mile ÷ 5,280)
Purdy + Honsman combined chip seal contribution	\$159.85/year
Feet of chip seal their \$ funds	49.6 feet — about the length of a semi-truck
Years to resurface every road at current pace	23 years (5 miles/yr ÷ 115 total miles)
Their combined share covers this much road cycle time	0.188% — less than 2 days out of the 23-year cycle

Purdy and Honsman together contribute enough to chip seal roughly 50 feet of road per year — about the length of a tractor-trailer. They are complaining about work that costs 531 times more than their combined contribution to that specific line item.

Section 6: Snow Removal — The Budget Item Nobody Complains About

Every winter, the road commissioner plows and salts 115 miles of road — often multiple times per event — while most residents sleep. Nobody posts on Facebook grateful that their road was clear when they left for work. Here is what that silence costs:

Snow Removal Fact	Number
Estimated annual snow removal cost	~\$17,000
Plow events per winter (avg)	~13 events
Miles plowed per event	115 miles (both directions)
Cost per plow event (fuel + labor)	~\$327/event
Salt events per winter	~8 events
Cost per salt event (14.4 tons)	~\$1,035/event
Purdy's contribution to ALL snow removal	\$19.14/year
Honsman's contribution to ALL snow removal	\$12.90/year
Both combined toward snow removal	\$32.03/year
Their \$32.03 buys what fraction of one plow event?	9.8% — less than 1/10th of one plow run

Between them, Purdy and Honsman contribute enough to cover less than 10% of the cost of a single plow run. The commissioner makes 13 of those runs per year on average — all 115 miles, often in the middle of the night. Their combined annual snow removal contribution would not even cover the diesel fuel for one pass.

Section 7: The Other Invisible Work — Drainage, Mowing, Signs, Bridges

Culverts and Drainage — The Work That Prevents Floods

Rural roads depend entirely on drainage systems to remain passable. When culverts clog or fail, water backs up, road beds saturate and fail, and entire road sections can become impassable within hours of a heavy rain. The commissioner maintains:

- **~8 township bridges** — inspected every 2 years per IDOT mandate, routine maintenance funded locally
- **Hundreds of culverts** — pipe crossings under driveways and road crossings that carry drainage water
- **Miles of roadside ditches** — graded and cleaned to keep water moving away from road surfaces

Estimated annual drainage cost: \$23,400. Purdy contributes \$26.36 toward this. Honsman contributes \$17.76. Combined: \$44.12 — enough to replace roughly one standard culvert pipe, not installed.

Roadside Mowing — The Work Residents Notice Only When It Stops

Illinois law requires the road commissioner to maintain safe sight lines at intersections and keep vegetation from encroaching on the travel lane. That means mowing both sides of 115 miles of road at least twice per season — roughly 345 acres of right-of-way.

Estimated annual mowing cost: \$18,000. Combined, Purdy and Honsman contribute \$33.64 toward this — enough to mow approximately 0.75 acres out of 345.

Signs — The Things Nobody Thinks About Until They Are Missing

The commissioner is responsible for maintaining every road sign in the township — stop signs, speed limit signs, road name signs, curve warning signs. A missing stop sign is a liability issue and a safety emergency. Estimated annual sign budget: \$2,850.

Section 8: The Summary That Puts It All in Perspective

Here is every responsibility the Spring Lake Township Road Commissioner manages, and exactly how much of each budget line Purdy and Honsman together fund:

Responsibility	Budget	Their Share	% Funded	What Their \$ Buys
Snow & Ice Removal	\$17,034	\$32.03	0.188%	Less than 10% of one plow run
Roadside Mowing	\$18,000	\$33.64	0.188%	~0.75 of 345 acres mowed
Culverts & Drainage	\$23,400	\$44.12	0.188%	About 1 culvert pipe (not installed)
Gravel Maintenance	\$27,850	\$52.50	0.188%	~350 ft of gravel grading
Pothole Patching	\$14,000	\$26.36	0.188%	~1.3 tons of cold patch mix
Signs	\$2,850	\$5.37	0.188%	About 1 stop sign blade
Bridge Maintenance	\$12,000	\$22.60	0.188%	Less than 2 hours of bridge work
Equipment & Insurance	\$21,200	\$39.95	0.188%	~10 gallons of diesel fuel
Commissioner & Admin	\$16,500	\$31.08	0.188%	About 1 hour of commissioner time
CHIP SEAL (the complaint)	\$85,000	\$159.85	0.188%	~50 feet of chip seal — length of a semi truck
TOTAL	\$241,765	\$454.64	0.188%	Less than 1/5 of 1% of all road work

Together, Purdy and Honsman fund 0.188% of the Spring Lake Township road budget — less than one-fifth of one percent. They are complaining about work that their combined contributions could not even fund for two days out of the entire 23-year chip seal resurfacing cycle. The road commissioner delivers 531 times more value in chip seal work alone than their contribution covers — and that is before counting the plowing, mowing, culverts, bridges, drainage, signs, patching, and equipment he manages every single day of the year.

The One-Sentence Summary

Two households contribute a combined \$454.64/year toward a 115-mile road system, and they have chosen to spend their credibility complaining that the road got hot in summer.

All financial data from official Tazewell County records. Climate data: NOAA 1991-2020 Normals (Peoria station). Road cost benchmarks: IDOT, IACE, published county engineer reports.

tazewellil.devnetwedge.com | tazewell-il.gov | stateclimatologist.web.illinois.edu