

A necessary nuisance

Each summer, many neighborhoods in Pittsford undergo work to resurface their streets.

For most of the streets, our Department of Public Works uses a method called "chip-sealing." It's the road treatment we all dislike the most.

You come home one day and the street looks different than it did in the morning. You hear the clatter of thousands of little stones ricocheting from your wheel wells and think, "Oh no. Not this." You experience world-weariness, grievance and irritation.

I bet you know the kind of road work I'm talking about now, don't you?

I was really annoyed when they did it on my street a few years ago.

So why do they do it? But the difference from a few years ago is that now I'm the Supervisor, so I guess the proper form of the question must be, "Why do WE do it?"

We do it because it preserves the road at one-tenth the cost of full-blown repaving. Until recently it was one-eighth the cost, but the expense of repaving has increased. Secondly, we do it because it extends the life of the road substantially. That means repaving less frequently.

This year 15 streets in Pittsford are slated for chip-sealing. For this we've budgeted just over \$124,000. If we repaved those roads, it would be a little over \$1.2 million. About ten times more expensive than chip-sealing.

Under the Town's long-term maintenance program, each newly-repaved road is chip-sealed once it's 12 years old. Thereafter it's chip-sealed every 8 years, until year 36, when it's repaved again and the cycle begins anew. In this way we preserve roads for 36 years between repavings, as compared to a substantially shorter life without chip-sealing.

When the process works as it should, and usually does, the stones settle and the road hardens after a few weeks of normal traffic. Then we dispatch street-sweepers to remove any loose stone. And you're good for another 8 years.

Last year a contractor applied excess stone in a couple of neighborhoods. Snow plows loosened a lot of it, leaving behind a mess once the snow melted. We've been back with street-sweepers and leaf-blowers to clean streets and lawns. With this year's contractors we've gone over strict procedures to minimize the volume of stone applied.

Chip-sealing is a tiresome nuisance that saves a tremendous amount of money, helping the Town to maintain tax stability. In common with nearly all other local municipalities, we endure the short-term inconvenience for the long-term gain.

You may contact Supervisor Smith at bsmith@townofpittsford.org or at 248-6220.