

David Buccetti

David Buccetti may have only been Superintendent of highways for only six months, but he has been part of the department for 24 years. He started as a driver/laborer, worked his way up to foreman and is now heading up a 25-person department. When Peter Hill recently retired, David was ready to pick up the reins.

A very outgoing, positive person, David enjoys serving the public. He takes pride in his job and feels that his department helps to make the community a better place in which to live. Finding new challenges in each new day, does not deter David.

According to David, winter is usually the most difficult time of the year due to the snow and ice storms. The snowplows, the sanders and salters need to be ready to go at a moment's notice with an effective plan of attack. The highway department is not responsible for the state highways and private roads.

When school busses are involved, the call usually comes at 4:45 a.m. in the morning. The town has 14 large snowplows, 3 dump trucks with plows, and 7 private contractors for the smaller roads. Public sand is available for the public across from the highway department on 60 South Street, next to ROAR. There is no salt in this sand. Residents can also pick-up wood chips for their property inside the recycling center fenced in area. The town uses the wood chips on the trails and around various town buildings.

When there are no storms, the town highway department is taking care of a multitude of issues. They are working with the tree warden, Steve Lavatori, to determine what needs to be done with arborist problems. If a tree is lying on an electrical line, the electric company takes care of the situation. If the tree falls across the road or inside the town boundary, the town will take care of the tree. The boundary line between a resident and town property can vary from 1 foot to 50 feet depending on the terrain and size of the property.

The highway department is also responsible for road repair, repaving, potholes, drainage problems, guard rails, mowing on town property, cutting back brush, road signs, and issuing special driveway permits. When prioritizing what needs to be done first, Dennis looks at safety factors, then flooding issues. Aesthetics is what he looks at last.

Hurricanes and microbursts provide the most difficulty for the highway department. The department still remembers Sandy and many of the hurricanes that took out power for over a week, many times in the center of town. David says that since 2011, he has seen more damage than usual from storms. In addition to the severity of the storms, David also notes our trees are now older, bigger and weaker.

Under the umbrella of the Highway Department is the recycling center and the transfer station. The actual job of garbage collection is handled privately. David, however, also works closely with the schools, engineering and building departments, the town hall, the fire and police departments, parks and recreation, CERTS, the tree warden, etc. When everyone is on the same page, he says it makes a big difference.

The highway department is on the job by 7:30 each morning and their day ends by 4 p.m. if there are no storms. The staff includes 2 women in the clerical office, a foreman, Rich Morrell, 16 driver/laborers,

and four mechanics, with one head mechanic. There are no women driver/laborers, but David would have no problem hiring a woman.

When talking about the “perks” of his job, David commented positively on the people that he works with, the Women’s Club that drops off great cookies from time to time, being able to be outside, always working on something different, and serving the town where he grew up. He also liked meeting the author, Maurice Sendak, while working on a project. He found him to be very nice. David also finds the Adopt a Street Program very helpful.

As a youth, Dennis went to Farmingville Elementary School, East Ridgefield Middle School and was a 1980 graduate of Ridgefield High School. He now lives in Brookfield with his wife, Ellen, and loves to putter around his house doing special projects and working in his garden.

Ridgefield is fortunate to have a man like David Buccetti caring so responsibly for our highways.