

Board Report: Private Drive Safety Committee, September, 2007

Submitted by Gary Anderson, Sept 11, 2007

In August, the committee completed the evaluation of the top 20 extreme hazard private drives. Evaluation participants included Bill Easterling and Fritz Ihrig from Genesee Fire and Rescue and Bill Cole and Gary Anderson of the Genesee Foundation.

Of the 20 drives reviewed, 7 have been identified with opportunities for ingress/egress enhancement through the addition of a turn around, turn out, hammerhead or drive widening at modest cost. One additional drive was identified as having an improvement opportunity which would entail additional work for hillside cutting and construction of a retaining wall. The cost for that drive would be somewhat higher. The remaining 12 drives reviewed had no viable alternative for enhancement.

The conclusion of the reviewing committee is that the enhancement of the 7 or 8 drives that appear practical will be cost estimated by the Foundation and a plan developed for including the enhancement in the Genesee Foundation private drive re-paving project. That project is funded through the capital reserve accounts. Since no new paving is planned for 2008, no funds to address this are needed in 2008. We will work with the Finance Committee to incorporate cost estimates into the Foundation's reserve analysis.

It became clear to us that many private drives without viable enhancement choices still had opportunities for homeowners to reduce risks on their properties and reduce risks for the community as a whole. Getting the message to homeowners and winning their support will be a focus of effort for 2008. A request for \$5,000 to support community education was given to Carla and the Finance Committee for inclusion in the budget for 2008. It isn't clear yet how much of this money will actually be needed for educational materials and mailings but the need for some funds to support the activity is clear.

In the remaining good weather period of 2007, we will attempt to review 20-30 additional private drives. Accomplishing this will complete the 50 drives where the hazard is categorized as "extreme" by the Fire Department.

Maps of the private drives with notes as to locations of possible improvements and the type of improvement proposed are on file in the Foundation office and in Bill Easterling's office at the fire station.

A planned outcome of the county wide protection plan (CWPP) that has been initiated by Jefferson County is a fire hazard assessment of all the properties within the various communities in the urban wildland interface. When that is complete a categorization of those properties into defensible, defensible with problems, or non defensible categories is a logical outcome. Such a categorization might take the form of color coding (green/yellow/red) of communities by address. This would make it clear where the needs for improvement lie and could have an impact on the hazard insurance costs of specific properties. Educating our community about the upcoming assessments will be important.