IRON RIVER—The point at where a county road ends will determine the legality of a gate across Little Finland Road in Bates Township.

At the Sept. 11 meeting of the Iron County Road Commissioner, landowner Glen Meine, representing several generations of his family, questioned whether or not a gate erected by another landowner with property along the Paint River was legal.

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"Where does the road end?" Meine asked. "The gate is quite a ways up."

The answer may be in old Road Commission documents, but even those are confusing, said Superintendent Doug Tomasoski.

As the road pertains to Public Act 51, which determines state funding for road maintenance, "then since 1969, the distance is just short of the gate."

In 1951, Tomasoski added, descriptions changed, and there is confusion.

Additionally, there is some documentation that a request for abandonment was made in 1974.

"Was it formally abandoned?" asked attorney Mark Tousignant.

On Sept. 16, 1974, he explained, meeting minutes directed the prosecuting attorney to draw up abandonment documents, but there are no further records indicating that was done.

A request for abandonment would imply the quarter-mile stretch of seasonal road was county-owned.

"I don't know legally what has precedent," Tomasoski said.

"Is it historic use, or Act 51? If Act 51 stands, then the gate is not on a county road."

"There is no precedent that it was ever anything but a county road," Meine said. He said the issue is becoming contentious between his family and the owner of the gate.

"This is no mere chain gate," he added. "It is big, it is made of iron, and it has cameras on it.

"Please give this due consideration," he said. "It's maximally important to our family to just return to the status quo.

"We would also oppose any request for abandonment by the Meehan family."

The road board tabled any action, pending more research into documentation and a possible public hearing.

Chairman Carl Sholander felt it may be a matter for the courts to decide.

Bates Township Supervisor Grant Helgemo said he also had heard complaints about the gate, since it limits access to the Paint River

Meine said his family has always allowed access through their property, and people generally show respect.

in other business:

--The board approved $15,000 in repairs to Loader 525. It is the first time the loader has needed repair and replacement of some parts, Tomasoski said. He put it out on bids, and took the lowest.

--The board approved putting out on bids the purchase blades for the winter maintenance and plowing. Total cost for both shops' equipment is $43,801.80.

--Construction of Phase VII of Bates-Amasa Road should get under way the week of Sept. 17 or 24, Tomasoski said. Northeast Asphalt will begin blacktopping next week as well, he said.

--Clearing has begun on the land slated to access a gravel pit in Bates Township. Once opened, crushing will get begin.

--Crack filling has been completed for the season, Tomasoski reported, with 50,000 pounds of material applied to the roads. The decision to hire a work crew leader for the summer “was great,” he added. “Everything went smoothly.”

--The board approved financing proposals for trucks, at 3.9 percent for 24 months.

--Tomasoski was given approval to advertise for temporary help for the winter months, and night patrol for MDOT. He said he would hire a minimum of two total for each garage.

--Sand bids were received at the same price as last year, he said. Forty-five tons were ordered for each garage, at $9.25 per ton, delivered. The single bid was received from Williams Redi-Mix.

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