IRON RIVER—Iron County road commissioners approved a $6.13 million budget but voted against a state-wide initiative to increase political funding during a meeting Dec 27.

The 2013 budget is a $1.75 million increase over the previous year, due mostly to projected $1.62 million in expenditures for the Iron County Heritage Trail, according to Superintendent Doug Tomasoski. __PUBLIC__

The Road Commission approved spending $713,400 on heavy road maintenance during 2013, an $88,400 increase from the current year budget of $625,000.

Local road heavy maintenance costs will more than double from $250,000 allocated during 2012 to $590,000 for the new year. Of that, $150,000 will be budgeted for Iron River Township, $145,000 for Bates Township, $100,000 to Mansfield Township, $75,000 to Stambaugh Township, $70,000 for Crystal Falls Township and $50,000 for Mastodon Township.

According to the budget document, no local road maintenance funds have been allocated to Hematite Township.

The primary road heavy maintenance projects receiving funding for 2013 are: Idlewild Road, receiving $281,250, and Alpha Road (County Road 424), receiving $100,000.

A signage project on County Road 424 has a budget of $50,000. Two phases of heavy maintenance on Gibbs City Road are budgeted for $260,000. During 2012, the Road Commission spent $400,000 on phase one of the Gibbs City Road project. Commissioners also allocated $98,000 of improvements to the McNutt Road intersection.

The budget features a pay freeze for all employees.

During last week's meeting, commissioners also voted on a County Road Association of Michigan constitution amendment that calls for a one-time payment of $1,000 per county for political lobbying.

"We should not waste $1,000 on CRAM," Commissioner Carl Sholander told his colleagues. "The bottom line is always the same: We had input, but not enough to get a bill to pass," he said of feedback from association lobbyists.

Sholander added that some county road commissions have left CRAM as budgets tighten and that fewer participating municipalities can raise insurance rates.