



**Denver City Council**

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**Public Works Committee  
Summary**

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**Wed. Jan. 10, 2007**

**10:30 a.m.**

**Council Conference Room**

**Committee Members Present:**

**Johnson, Chair; Lehmann, Vice-Chair; Brown, Robb**

**Committee Members Absent:**

**Mackenzie, Montero**

**Other Council Present:**

**Boigon, Faatz, Hancock, Rodriguez**

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**1. Snow Operations Discussion**

Bill Vidal, Manager of Public Works, Dan Roberts, Director, Street Maintenance  
Gary Price, Director, Solid Waste, Ann Williams, Public Works Communications and Barbara Puls, Public Works Finance & Administration, discussed the snow removal operations for the recent snow storms. The following points were made:

- The City uses four maintenance yards to deploy snow plows when it snows: Park Avenue / Fox facility (3883 Fox Street); Roslyn; Osage; and Cherry Creek.
- Snowplows are stored at these facilities, as well as deicing materials like magnesium chloride and Ice Slicer, the dry deicer used in Denver.
- When it snows, drivers report to these maintenance yards to equip, load materials, and deploy to their assigned snow routes.
- There are 3200 lane miles of residential streets and 14,000 residential blocks in the City divided into "A" routes (1200 lane miles) and "B" routes (600 lane miles).
- The snow plowing policy in Denver is to clear arterials ("A" & "B") streets first to insure emergency vehicles have citywide access, and to plow where there is the heaviest traffic volume.
- The City has never had a policy of plowing residential streets simultaneously with the arterial routes. Residential streets are only plowed if there are 12" or more of snow followed by several days of expected cold weather.
- A change in policy will need to come from the Mayor and Council and will have serious financial implications. Already, Public Works has used almost all its 2007 budget allotment for snow removal already this year.

- The City has a total fleet of 68 plows. To staff 8 plows, 8 plow operators and 13 additional staff are needed; a total of 81 people are needed for 12 hour shifts.
- Public Works has completed plowing in ten business districts, about 30 schools and related areas and seven recreation centers.
- The recent weather is very unusual, being the third snowiest December and the second highest accumulation within a 24-hour period (December 21) storm in the City's history. When snow was not immediately removed and it remained cold, the snow turned to ice and is now much more difficult to remove.
- Public works employees are working as hard as they can in twelve hour shifts, and there are 120 vehicles dedicated to snow removal, but the ice removal is very slow work. Many vehicles from other departments have been retrofitted for snow removal (the light truck brigade).
- Citizen expectations may be unrealistic, given the unusual conditions.
- The department is moving snow out of the streets and neighborhoods into Coors Field and other areas.
- To date, citations for not clearing sidewalks or parking in snow routes have not been issues, due to the difficult conditions for citizens to comply; the city is providing help to disabled and elderly folks who cannot get their sidewalks cleared on their own.
- Trash collection has been on schedule except for two days when the trucks could not traverse the alleys.
- Parks & Recreation, 311, DPS, RTD, emergency management, and others all worked collaboratively to assure citizen safety and efficient responses during the recent storms.
- The City allows private contractors to work on snow removal for residential areas as long as they have the required permits and insurance.
- It is difficult to determine the cost benefits of purchasing more expensive snow plows and other equipment , given that these type of conditions may not occur again for another 60 years; It is also expensive to equip plows with GPS technology, but the department is phasing that in to increase efficiency.