

January 26, 2020

Robert Bauman
City of Milwaukee Alderman, District 4
Public Works Committee Chairman
200 E Wells Street, Room 205
Milwaukee, WI 53202

Alderman Bauman:

This letter regarding snow and ice control operations is respectfully submitted anonymously due to the possibility of redistribution were our identities known. We feel compelled to take this step as it seems that no one above our level of authority is (a) honestly listening to our concerns and/or (b) legitimately able to do anything to solve the crisis perpetuated by the existing system of snow and ice control staffing. Your assistance in adding more drivers to the snow and ice control effort is being sought for this reason.

As you may be aware, the heavy burden of driving the plow trucks for snow removal operations falls almost entirely on the employees of just two departments in DPW Operations: Sanitation (A Team) and Forestry (B Team). Personnel from Fleets and Parking assist in the effort in terms of keeping the trucks operational and clearing streets of illegally parked cars. For the benefit of the budget and the mitigation of customer complaints regarding snow removal, we strongly suggest doubling the amount of drivers that participate in snow and ice control. These additional 206 drivers (the number of drivers currently on the A and B teams, combined) could be pulled from the other departments of DPW that presently have a ready supply of CDL drivers, namely Streets/Sewers and Electrical Services. This would result in the formation of four teams (A, B, C and D), which would allow plow drivers to have a scheduled rotation where they would not be on 24-hour call with no break for the entire plow season (with no on-call pay), as the system currently stands.

In a time of pay freezes and service reductions due to budget shortfalls, this is, by far, the change most likely to improve employee retention, which benefits the City in a variety of ways:

- 1) reduced costs that the City of Milwaukee will incur due to the need to continuously recruit, hire, and train new employees in Sanitation and Forestry
- 2) vastly-reduced costs by having more City employees available to do the snow removal work typically performed by highly paid private contractors
- 3) reduced complaints from citizens due to a greater number of retained (i.e., experienced) drivers plowing routes with which they are familiar
- 4) increased public safety and less likelihood of property damage (to both plow trucks and private property) due to better plow performance from drivers who are less likely, on average, to be physically and mentally strained from multiple operations happening in close succession. This occurred very recently when many drivers worked for 22 days straight between normal, departmental operations and weekend snow and ice control events.
- 5) increased employee morale (either due to increased free time or increased opportunities for overtime pay), which will lead to better overall job performance in their respective departments

We've been told that DPW Infrastructure (Streets/Sewers/Electrical Services) does not participate in snow and ice control operations because "that's how we've always done it". We're suggesting that it's time to go back to the drawing board and take a serious look at how these operations are staffed. If different results are truly desired, does maintaining the operational status quo make sense? For the benefit of the City of Milwaukee's fiscal outlook, the safety of the citizens, and the well being of the dedicated public servants who perform this vital task, we urge you to consider advocating for this proposal.

Sincerely,
Dedicated DPW Employees