City of Milwaukee

Department of Public Works

Ghassan Korban P.E.
Commissioner of Public Works

Laura Daniels
Director of Operations

April 4, 2017

City of Milwaukee Bicycle & Pedestrian Task Force
Attention: Andrew Tillman, Chair

Dear Mr. Tillman,

Recently, it was brought to my attention that The Bicycle & Pedestrian Task Force's letter dated June 5, 2015 regarding the City's snow removal ordinance had not been previously addressed. My apologies for the delay of our formal response, as being new to the Director of Operations position, I was unaware of your correspondence, but I want to assure you that Mayor Tom Barrett, Commissioner Ghassan Korban, and I are firmly committed to design and maintenance standards that provide for the safe use of public thoroughfares by motorists, cyclists and pedestrians. We also appreciate having the opportunity to update the task force on sidewalk snow ordinance enforcement practices followed by the Department of Public Works at your upcoming meeting on April 7, 2017.

It is true that enforcement of sidewalk snow and ice violations have been historically handled on a complaint basis. However, since 2011 the department's approach to sidewalk snow and ice enforcement has been highly proactive, with an average 80% of violations identified and cited by DPW staff in advance of resident complaints. Much like the parking enforcement model, Forestry code enforcement personnel are assigned to defined service areas with high violation history and actively monitor for sidewalk snow violations on a block by block, street by street basis throughout the winter months. While staffing limitations prevent city-wide monitoring, emphasis on high violation areas of the City has significantly increased the number of properties cited annually, generally increased ordinance compliance and improved pedestrian access and public safety in neighborhoods that are highly dependent on public transportation.

City code requires that all property owners remove sidewalk snow and ice within 24-hours after snowfall. DPW inspection staff begins sweeping service areas for violations

immediately after the 24-hour period. Property owners noticed for a violation are afforded an additional 24-hour period to remove all snow and ice. If upon re-inspection the sidewalk is not cleared, it is sent to a DPW contractor for clearing and the property owner is assessed special charges prescribed by ordinance and the cost of removal. Typically the contractor will clear the sidewalk within 1-2 days of assignment.

Snow and ice code requirements for removing sidewalk snow are posted on the department's website and also included in media alerts, which serves as a reminder for residents. The Department also performs sidewalk snow removal work on some 4,600 city-owned properties through a contract workforce.

Most cities in North America that receive snow have instituted similar ordinances, placing responsibility to clear the abutting sidewalk with the adjoining property owner, and enforce violations on a complaint basis. Toronto Transportation Services performs sidewalk clearing in certain areas of the City, and limited proactive enforcement following major storm events, but otherwise enforces sidewalk snow violations on a complaint basis. A 2015 Toronto study explored alternative options, including proactive enforcement in high compliant areas similar to Milwaukee, all of which required a significantly increased resource allocation. http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2015/pw/bgrd/backgroundfile-85337.pdf While we do not benchmark our services against any European city, Milwaukee's sidewalk snow enforcement practices are quite progressive in North America and deploy available resources as efficiently as possible.

Should you have further concerns or suggestions please do not hesitate to contact David Sivyer, Forestry Services Manager, at 286-3729 or david.sivyer@milwaukee.gov

Sincerely,

Laura Daniels
Director of Operations

LD:kjj
c: D. Sivyer
K. Dettmer