

City of Groton  
Group 1  
Minutes  
11/09/2015

Municipal Building  
Council Chamber

PUBLIC WORKS

A regular meeting of the Public Works Committee was called to order at 5:25 p.m.

Members present: Councilor Heede, Councilor Rusk, Councilor Gerrish.

Also present: City Police Chief Tom Davoren, Director of Public Works Tim Umrysz.

Referral Item #3 Snow Removal Ordinances

Discussion:

City Police Chief, Tom Davoren, explained that the current ordinance is not effective and there is no easy fix. He explained the current limits to enforcement, including a limit of about 12 cars that can be physically towed, but there may be as many as 50 to 60 cars that need to be towed. Low fines, time limits to the snow emergencies and not enough public space to offer people to park off-street. Currently, the City refers residents to four locations and focuses on a few narrow streets in the Thames Bank area. There were two major storms last year over five weeks of snow and one major storm the year before.

Director of Public Works, Tim Umrysz, explained that the process of plowing, requires allowing snow plow drivers to rest, and there is a manpower shortage in major storms, due to need to allocate manpower to either plow or pick up trash. There are certain places where property owners do not remove snow, resulting in the Public Works department having to remove the snow. Some businesses and residents have become accustomed to clear the parking lots or driveways, but not the sidewalks.

Currently, warnings are posted on Facebook or through CTAAlert.gov, which requires registration. At times, they even knock on doors.

Both Mr. Davoren and Mr. Umrysz also discussed safety concerns, most importantly, that children can be hidden behind snow banks and at corners where drivers do not see them. The chief offered the analogy that children are like bowling pins, hidden out of sight of drivers and this is an accident waiting to happen. School buses picking children up at corners rather than at the end of driveways is also very dangerous. Therefore, having the flexibility to target school bus routes is the highest priority.

Challenges with the current ordinances include, low fines, limits to the number of cars that be physically towed by tow companies that are also engaged in plowing, that we have three ordinances rather than just one and lack of enforcement.

Recommendations included:

- Any ordinance will require an effort to educate and inform our residents.

- Give the police the flexibility by making the ordinance citywide. It is more common to have a city wide ordinance and easier to apply when and where needed.
- Create a single ordinance that covers all aspects of snow emergency.
- Make the parking ban city wide for a time of 36 to 48 hours after a storm to allow for snow clearing and if necessary removal.
- Do not specify a "civil penalty" due to costs the city would incur hiring an attorney to defend against every dispute, but rather state, "any violation will result in a fine."
- Any fine not paid within 30 days will result in a lien being placed on the property.
- Establish a separate ordinance: "Fine Schedule" The snow ordinance will then remain unchanged and the City Council will review and if necessary, adjust the Fine Schedule annually.
- Issue a fine for failure to remove snow from the sidewalks.
- Issue a fine for moving snow into street or across the street.
- Issue a fine if snow is blown, shoveled or plowed into or across the street.
- Issue a notice that all businesses must clear sidewalks.
- Make clear to residents and businesses that although they may clear their sidewalks and driveways, the requirements of the City to clear streets and catch basins may result in additional snow being moved onto already cleared sidewalks and driveways. It remains the responsibility of the resident or business to remove the snow, possibly more than one time.
- City must reserve the right to clear sidewalks if they are not cleared by the property owner in a timely manner. The cost of clearing the sidewalk, in addition to a fine for violation of the ordinance will be issued.
- Liability due to failure of clearing the sidewalk in a timely manner will be assigned squarely on the property owner.

Action: Two ordinances written

- Snow Ordinance
- Fine Schedule

Motion made by Councilor Gerrish and seconded by Councilor Rusk to adjourn. Meeting adjourned at 6:10 p.m.