



MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor Burch and City Council Members

FROM: Gregg Guetschow, City Manager

SUBJECT: Sidewalk Snow Removal Ordinance Implementation

DATE: August 7, 2015

Council has requested an opportunity to review and consider changes to the manner in which the sidewalk snow removal ordinance was enforced last winter. You might recall that the procedure for implementing the ordinance was promulgated as an administrative policy. In brief, it required that sidewalks along major streets and in other areas about which complaints were received be inspected as soon as possible after 48 hours had elapsed following a snow fall. Warning notices were left at locations in violation. Contractors removed snow, if necessary, following a reinspection.

In general, the program operated as intended with few problems. As expected, the majority of property owners voluntarily complied. When contractors were called to clear walks, they responded very promptly. Costs of contractor services were adequately covered by the standard fee established by Council.

We were challenged at the beginning of the season with the timing of inspections. Snowstorms followed closely on the heels of those that preceded them. This was a circumstance that occurred because of the 48 hour time frame for initiating inspections. If we saw that a second storm was on its way, we delayed inspections. As a consequence some walks were not cleared as quickly as might have been the case with, say, a 24 hour delay.

For the season, violations notices were left at 65 properties. All but 8 of these were found to have been cleared upon reinspection.

Very few complaints were received about properties in areas that were not part of the routine inspections. I suspect that this reflects as much an unwillingness to tattle on one's neighbor as it does voluntary compliance with the ordinance.

Staff is not recommending changes to the implementation of the ordinance. Council might wish to discuss whether the 48 hour delay between the end of the snowfall and the beginning of enforcement activities affects the effectiveness of the policy.