



## Engineering Department

City of La Crosse  
400 La Crosse Street  
La Crosse, WI 54601-3396  
(608)789-7505  
Fax (608)789-8184

### MEMORANDUM

**To: Board of Public Works**  
**From: Engineering- Doug Kerns**  
**Date: October 3, 2019**  
**Subject: 2019-2020 Sidewalk Snow Removal**

Last winter was very challenging the City of La Crosse. Multiple back to back snow events created full boulevards and snow windrows out into the streets; making it impossible to travel at certain times for pedestrians. With the potential for similar conditions this upcoming season, the Engineering Department requests the following.

1. Review of the municipal code Chapter 40 Streets and Sidewalks (attached)
2. Review of property owner responsibilities for corner clearing after street plowing pushes the snow back in the ramp.
3. Consideration of additional workforce when conditions merit.
4. Consideration of "snow emergency" language with regard to sidewalk clearing if impassable situations arise similar to last winter.

Chapter 40 requires sidewalks to be cleared within twenty-four hours after snow ceases to fall. The conditions last winter challenged whether or not that time frame was even possible. Essentially, should the time frame be extended to forty-eight hours?

Section 40-8(b) references "6:00 p.m. of the day following any snowfall" as the time when the BPW can mobilize a contractor to start clearing. Snowfalls occurring every other day, with measurable accumulations last year, reset the clock on a number of occasions. It is recommended that a longer window of time is given and it not have an exact time of day in the ordinance.

Most corners were impassable last year. By the end of the season, snow windrows were three to four feet out into the street. Property owners are expected to clear falling snow. Questions arise when the snow is pushed back into the corner. What is the expectation of the BPW with regard to the number of times a corner is to be cleared per snow event by a property owner?

Conditions last year were out of the scope of a typical sidewalk clearing contract. Larger equipment and the ability to haul snow in quantity will be required if La Crosse is faced with another winter like last. Current loader rates with an operator are \$150.00 per hour while dump trucks with a driver are around \$100.00 per hour. Does the BPW wish to pursue a larger separate contract this upcoming year? If so, should that contract be executed by the Engineering Department or Street Department?

Last year, conditions created a real snow emergency. Individuals needing wheelchair assistance got stranded in intersections and some were forced to just stay home. All pedestrians had difficulty traveling last winter and took some risk when venturing out. Declared snow emergencies by the BPW or the Director of Public Works will alert the media and help individuals assess that risk.

Sec. 40-8. - Snow, ice and debris removal.

(a) *Snow and ice on sidewalks.*

- (1) The owner, agent, occupant or person in charge of each and every building fronting upon or adjoining any street, and the owner or agent of every unoccupied building or parcel of land fronting as aforesaid, shall clean the sidewalk in front of or adjoining such building or unoccupied lot or building, as the case may be, of snow and ice to the full width of such sidewalk to the pavement, except those sidewalks where the distance from the edge of the sidewalk, including the width the sidewalk, to the back of the curb is less than eight feet; then the minimum width shall be 48 inches, within 24 hours after it ceases to fall, and cause the same to be kept free from snow and ice; provided, that when ice has so formed on any sidewalk that it cannot be removed, the persons herein referred to shall keep the same sprinkled with ashes, sand or salt; provided, also, that in case snow shall continue to fall for some time, then and in that case it shall be removed immediately after it shall cease to fall.
- (2) The owner, agent, occupant or person in charge of a corner lot or crosswalk shall also keep free from snow and ice any and all curb ramps extending past the curb and gutter to the edge of the street pavement. A corner lot is defined as a lot abutting upon two or more streets. The owner, agent, occupant or person in charge of the property adjacent to a public alley shall keep free from snow and ice that portion of the sidewalk which crosses the alley to its centerline.

(b) *Board of Public Works to remove.* In any case where any sidewalk in front of or adjoining any lot or parcel of land shall remain covered in any part with snow or ice by 6:00 p.m. of the day following any snowfall, the Board of Public Works may as soon as possible cause such snow or ice to be removed from the full width of such sidewalk and to report the expense of so doing to the Council as soon as practicable, with a description of the lot or parcel of land in front of or adjoining which such work has been done, and the Council shall cause such expense to be audited and paid out of the general fund and shall direct the City Clerk to charge such expense to the lot or parcel of land adjoining which the same shall have been incurred, and the amount of such expense shall be inserted in the tax list next thereafter to be made out as a special tax against such lot or parcel of land and shall be collected as other taxes upon real estate are collected. The cost for removal by the City shall be charged at the rate per foot per snowfall event for any snowfall or accumulation for snowfalls, including windblowing and trace amounts established by resolution. Said snowfall or accumulation of snowfalls shall be determined by using the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (National Weather Service). In addition, there shall be an administrative fee per parcel in the amount established by resolution. Any appeal of a special tax under this subsection shall be delegated to the Board of Public Works, which is authorized to review and adjust the same.

