



## Providence Green and Complete Streets Advisory Council

Jorge O. Elorza, Mayor

**Staff Report: Sidewalk Snow Removal Working Group 4/13/22 meeting summary (For Discussion)**  
*Presented at 4/18/2022 GCSC meeting*

### **Project Background and Meeting Summary**

Following the correspondence from GCSC at the March 24, 2022 meeting, a working group was convened to discuss improvements to City procedures around sidewalk snow clearance. Attendees to the first meeting were:

- Leo Perrotta, Director of Public Works
- Wendy Nilsson, Director of Parks
- Capt. Luis SanLucas, Traffic Division Commander, Police Department
- Joe Lazzarini, Director of the Mayor's Center for City Services
- Joe DiPina, Chief Operating Officer
- Josh Avila, Deputy Director of Operations
- Liza Farr, Curbside Administrator
- Alex Ellis, Principal Planner
- Kathleen Gannon, GCSC member
- Will Cornwall, GCSC member

The Providence Code of Ordinances Section 23-13 states: *"All owners or persons having care of any property" have **8 hours from the first daylight following the end of any snowfall** to clear a path at least 3 feet wide the entire sidewalk frontage of their property, including curb ramps, corners, hydrants, and catch basins, as well as applying salt or sand or comparable substance to any remaining snow or ice. The fine for failing to do so is \$25-500 per day, enforceable by the police department or DPW. Failure to pay can result in a lien on the property. In addition to this fine, DPW may remove the snow, for which the owner must reimburse the city.*

The meeting began with Mr. Ellis summarizing information shared by Mr. Perrotta & Ms. Nilsson regarding the activities of snow clearance operations run by the Public Works and Parks Departments, as well as raising questions regarding potential opportunities for improved sidewalk clearance.

Each snow storm has different timing, duration, temperature conditions, and intensity, making snow clearance challenging for all locations. Depending on the storm, Public Works deploys up to 60 City staff and up to 40 vendors, and Parks deploys 50-65 City staff. Most of these people are driving plows. Depending on the storm, these people are working up to 30-36 hours straight, just keeping roads clear.

Parks equipment (smaller plows sized appropriately for sidewalks) is all in use for the duration of most storms. The 6 environmental inspectors who are the DPW staff eligible to issue fines are all occupied with snow plow work for the duration of most storms. Capt. SanLucas stated that the Parking Enforcement Officers who work under him, who have occasionally been suggested as eligible

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enforcement personnel for sidewalk snow clearance tickets, for a variety of training and availability reasons would not be able to do that work following snow storms.

One clear theme that emerged from all participants in the first meeting was a desire to focus on proactive, educational efforts more than fines. It was mentioned that both the Police Department and the Mayor's Center for City Services have sent letters in the past based on complaints about poor sidewalk snow clearance. Ms. Gannon highlighted the value of showing constituents why sidewalk clearance is important. When asked whether such a communications campaign should be general or focused on the most critical areas, attendees expressed a preference for a focused campaign.

Ms. Farr suggested instituting a system whereby City staff and constituents could submit timestamped photos of poor sidewalk clearance for communication and enforcement after the fact.

Mr. Cornwall brought up the point discussed at GCSC that perhaps many of the noncompliant properties are owned by absentee landlords, and asked about the status of increased enforcement capability in the Department of Inspections & Standards recommended in the Affordable Housing and Anti-Displacement Plan. Mr. Ellis said he would seek an answer to that question.

Mr. Ellis committed to working with Mr. Lazzerini and others on developing more the idea of a proactive educational campaign, and that he would schedule a second meeting before the May GCSC meeting.

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Respectfully submitted by Alex Ellis.