

**CITY COUNCIL
COMMUNICATION:**

ITEM _____

98-193

**OFFICE OF THE CITY MANAGER
CITY OF DES MOINES, IOWA**

AGENDA:
MAY 4, 1998

SYNOPSIS –

SUBJECT:
SIDEWALK SNOW
REMOVAL
ORDINANCE

On February 23, 1987, by Roll Call No. 87-757, the City Council gave final approval to the City’s Sidewalk Snow Removal Ordinance requiring that snow be removed from sidewalks within 48 hours following a snowstorm. Enforcement of that ordinance was delayed beyond the 48 hours following the blizzard of March 7 and 8, 1998, during which the City received 13 1/2 inches of snow. Continuous snow removal operations on the City’s streets delayed snow removal on city-owned sidewalks and the inspection of sidewalks for which private property owners are responsible. This report summarizes the City’s Sidewalk Snow Removal Ordinance and the reason why enforcement was delayed following the blizzard of March 7 and 8, 1998.

TYPE:
RESOLUTION
ORDINANCE
RECEIVE/FILE

SUBMITTED BY:
JOHN BELLIZZI
PUBLIC WORKS
DIRECTOR

FISCAL IMPACT –

N/A

RECOMMENDATION –

The City Manager to direct the Public Works Department to survey other Iowa and surrounding midwestern cities to determine whether or not the 48 hours allowed to clean snow from sidewalks under the City’s Sidewalk Snow Removal Ordinance is acceptable.

BACKGROUND –

The Municipal Code of the City of Des Moines (Chapter 23.165) requires that the owners of any property abutting a public sidewalk remove snow and ice accumulations from such sidewalks within a reasonable time, but in no case more than 48 hours after a snow or ice storm. However, the code does

provide that in extraordinary weather circumstances, the Director of Public Works may extend the period of time provided for snow removal. If snow is not removed, or ice is not treated within the time allowed, property owners may receive a civil citation of up to \$30 for a first offense and \$75 for a second offense. Repeat weather events automatically restart the 48 hour period for removal according to the City's Legal Department.

Enforcement of the Sidewalk Snow Removal Ordinance was delayed following the unusually heavy snowfall associated with the blizzard of March 7 and 8, 1998. During and following the storm, the City of Des Moines' snow removal crews concentrated their efforts on the City's 200 miles of snow routes and 600 miles of residential streets. Dropping temperatures during the storm and continuous blowing conditions caused the snow to bond to the streets. As a result, most streets had to be plowed more than once to remove the laminated ice and snow. The continuing efforts on the streets delayed the removal of snow by the Public Works Department on the City's 80,000 lineal feet of sidewalks along overpasses, bridges, and other City facilities for which the department is responsible. Consequently, enforcement of the City's Sidewalk Snow Removal Ordinance was delayed until Monday, March 16, 1998.

Beginning on Monday, March 16, 1998, City sidewalk inspectors began inspecting sidewalks on a complaint basis. As a result of their inspections, 43 warning letters were issued along with one citation for a repeat offense. Freezing rain and drizzle nearly every night throughout the remainder of the week constituted a repeat weather event resetting the 48 hour period for snow removal. Subsequent rising temperatures the following week precluded the need for additional inspections.

While the City's Sidewalk Snow Removal Ordinance was designed to allow adequate time for property owners to clear their walks, the amount of time necessary could be reviewed. Prior to the next winter season, the Public Works Department will proceed to survey other Iowa municipalities and surrounding midwestern cities to compare and contrast the City's Sidewalk Snow Removal Ordinance to theirs. Any recommendations for modification will be brought to the attention of the City Council prior to the 1998/99 winter.

[[Council Members](#) | [Leave a Message](#) | [Meeting Agendas/Info](#) | [Recent Ordinances](#)]
[[Board/Commision List](#) | [Meeting Schedule](#) | [Request to Speak](#) | [Election/Voter Reg](#)]