

Offered by Councilors Kenzie Bok and Brian Worrell, Coletta, Arroyo, Breadon, Fernandes Anderson, Flaherty, Lara, Mejia, Murphy, Louijeune and Flynn



CITY OF BOSTON IN CITY COUNCIL

ORDER FOR A HEARING REGARDING THE SUPPLEMENTAL SIDEWALK CLEARANCE PROGRAM DURING SNOWSTORMS IN BOSTON

WHEREAS: During snowstorms, the City of Boston is responsible for clearing the roadway while property owners are responsible for clearing their sidewalks, but often sections of sidewalk and crosswalks, including at busy intersections, go uncleared; *and*

WHEREAS: During each snowfall, City Councilors, the Mayor's Office, and 311 receive countless calls, emails, and messages from concerned constituents detailing where lack of snow removal has made their ability to get back to their home, to work, or to the grocery store, dangerous, difficult, or impossible; *and*

WHEREAS: Lack of proper snow clearance by property owners has a disproportionate impact on the disabled community, individuals with mobility challenges, elders, parents and guardians with children and strollers, and residents without a vehicle, even to the point of making it untenable for certain people to leave their homes in the days after a heavy storm; *and*

WHEREAS: The prioritization of road access over pedestrian access in the wake of a snow storm does not reflect the needs of the many Bostonians who do not own vehicles or routinely travel by car; *and*

WHEREAS: In the City of Rochester, New York, while property owners are responsible for removing snow from the sidewalk in front of their property, the City provides the low-cost supplemental service of plowing sidewalks when there are new snow accumulations of four inches or more; *and*

WHEREAS: The City of Rochester clears 878 miles of sidewalk when four inches of snow has fallen, with the sidewalk divided into 15 mile "plow runs" that take approximately five hours to clear, in the morning and evening where there is minimal pedestrian traffic; *and*

WHEREAS: The City of Syracuse, New York also has a Supplemental Sidewalk Snow Removal Program covering roughly 100 miles of city sidewalks, conducted in partnership with Syracuse University; *and*

WHEREAS: Following a 2021 Boston City Council hearing focused on sidewalk snow removal, Councilor Kenzie Bok and leadership at the Public Works Department worked together to find solutions for clearing essential sidewalks, crosswalks, and intersections during snowstorms; *and*

WHEREAS: On a trial basis for the winter of 2021-22, the City of Boston took the important step of adding roughly 40 additional skid-steer loaders to clear crosswalks and ramps in areas with heavy pedestrian traffic, testing how much area each piece of such equipment can reasonably clear in the period immediately after a storm; *and*

WHEREAS: This pilot proved so successful that the Public Works Department has now made the deployment of the skid-steer loaders to address ramps in major pedestrian areas a permanent part of their post-snowstorm operation, and expects to double the number of such equipment to roughly 80 pieces for the winter of 2022-23; *and*

WHEREAS: The Public Works Department has also identified and continues to tackle various challenges of the program, including intense competition for the limited number of available drivers with Commercial Driver's License (CDL) and the need to ensure a break, in case of prolonged storms, to refresh the same drivers between operating plows and then operating skid-steer loaders; *and*

WHEREAS: The City Council and the Wu Administration collaborated to appropriate American Rescue Plan funding to launch a further pilot for the winter of 2023-24, which will work to clear ramps and sidewalks in local Main Streets districts across the city; *and*

WHEREAS: The City of Boston should use the information gathered from the exciting work over the past winter of 2021-22 and the current winter of 2022-23 to continue to make progress towards providing a supplemental snow removal service on City sidewalks during winter snow storms above a certain level of severity and snow accumulation, which could also provide additional local workforce development opportunities; *NOW THEREFORE BE IT*

ORDERED: That the appropriate committee of the Boston City Council hold a hearing to discuss progress towards a supplemental sidewalk clearance program in the City of Boston, and that representatives from the Public Works Department, 311, the Office of Workforce Development, the Office of Budget Management, and the public be invited to testify.

Filed on: January 9, 2023