

Memo

To: Board of Managers
From: Michael Younes, Director of Municipal Operations *MY*
CC: Shana R. Davis-Cook, Village Manager
 Jerry Lesesne, Public Works Supervisor
Date: 3/10/2016
Re: Budget Work Session Follow-up – Village-wide Sidewalk Snow Clearing

Background

At your February 22 Budget Work Session, the Board asked staff to investigate the costs and policy parameters for implementing a Village-wide sidewalk snow clearing contract and to gather information from neighboring jurisdictions.

Overall the Village has approximately 10.5 miles of sidewalks including along Connecticut Avenue and Brookville Road. Currently, the Village is responsible for clearing snow from sidewalks surrounding all Village Parks and the Village Hall, and along the Buffer pathway, Connecticut Avenue and Brookville Road, the section of sidewalk along Western Avenue abutting the Western Grove Park, and, once completed, the pathways within the Western Grove Park, which will equal about 2 linear miles.

In the mid-1980s, for a single year the Village did a trial run of clearing snow and ice from Village sidewalks. However, at that time, we had a larger Public Works staff of 11 men (we now have six) since, at the time, we also did in-house trash collection. Per the report of a staffer who worked in the department at the time, the one-year trial proved so difficult, both on our equipment and personnel, that the Village Board decided not to continue the service and the responsibility reverted back to the abutting homeowners.

Other Jurisdictions—Costs and Policies

Only three (3) neighboring jurisdictions clear snow/ice from public sidewalks, which are outlined below:

	Extent of Sidewalk Clearing	Threshold	Cost
Town of Chevy Chase	All Public Sidewalks Only	3-inches	\$75/hour
Town of Somerset	All Public Sidewalks Only	None	\$60/hour
Section 3	For registered Elderly Residents only – Not Village-wide	2-inches	\$50/hour

Town of Chevy Chase (1,032 homes)

In the event of winter weather, residents are responsible for clearing snow from sidewalks abutting their property when a weather event produces less than 3-inches of snow. The Town will assist with the clearing of public sidewalks only when snow accumulates to 3-inches or more. Sidewalk clearing begins as soon as practically possible after the end of the snowstorm. In icy conditions the Town Manager has the discretion in determining whether the contractor is permitted to use salt (for melting) and sand (for traction) on public sidewalks. Once the initial shoveling and treatment with salt/sand is complete, any icy spots that develop as a result of refreezing is the responsibility of the abutting homeowner to address.

So far this season, the Town of Chevy Chase has been billed for over 2,000 man-hours from their contractor to clear snow from Town sidewalks. Based on their contract rates the total estimated one-year cost has been over \$153,000.

The Town's contractor uses a combination of both hand shoveling labor and snow blowers. If requested the town's contractor can apply salt/sand based on a per ton cost for materials.

Town of Somerset (414 homes)

The Town of Somerset uses the same contractor as the Town of Chevy Chase to clear the sidewalks in its Town; however, Somerset does not have a minimum threshold to activate its contractor. The contract outlines who within Somerset's management determined when to request the contractor's response, with no established minimum threshold for accumulation.

Previously Somerset had a 2-inch minimum threshold to shovel sidewalks, however, staff noted issues with managing the contract and how/where the 2-inch threshold was measured. Additionally, Somerset considered the impact that unclear sidewalks had on students attempting to access the elementary school located within the municipality. Ultimately, Somerset eliminated the threshold amount and tied mobilization to its decision to activate for roadway plowing/salting operations.

Overall costs were not available from the Town of Somerset, however during the blizzard in January a total of 866 man-hours were billed for sidewalk clearing operations (estimated at \$51,960).

The Somerset's contractor uses a combination of both hand shoveling labor and snow blowers. If requested the town's contractor can apply salt/sand based on a per ton cost for materials.

Section 3 of the Village of Chevy Chase (280 homes)

Section 3 is the most unique municipality when it comes to sidewalk snow clearing. Overall sidewalk snow clearing is the responsibility of the abutting resident, however, residents who qualify for Medicare and vacant homes can pre-register at any time up to the night before a storm to request clearance of the sidewalks abutting their property. Section 3 has a 2-inch minimum threshold and sidewalk clearing does not begin until after roadway clearing operations have been completed.

Section 3’s contractor only uses hand shoveling labor. All abutting residents, regardless of age or occupancy, are responsible for addressing re-freezing that may occur following the initial clearing by the contractor.

These neighboring municipalities were unable to provide the linear miles total for their communities; however, for comparison below I have outlined the number of roadway miles in each municipality as reported by the State:

	Roadway Miles
Chevy Chase Village	9.4 miles (10.5 miles of sidewalk)
Town of Chevy Chase	9.92 miles
Town of Somerset	4.72 miles
Section 3	2.61 miles

In addition to contacting neighboring municipalities, I have also contacted two (2) current Village contractors to obtain preliminary/non-binding pricing for sidewalk clearing.

1. ValleyCrest Landscape Maintenance: ValleyCrest currently performs snow clearing operations for homeowners’ associations and commercial buildings (parking lots and sidewalks).

All work would be completed with only snow blowers. In addition to the sidewalk clearing, ValleyCrest would apply sand/salt to public sidewalks.

	Cost	Threshold
Snow Blower w/operator	\$95/man-hour	No Requirement
Salt/Sand Mix	\$200/ton	

ValleyCrest estimates that it would take about 24 hours for 5 men to clear a 6” snowfall from Village sidewalks at an estimate cost of \$12,600 per storm.

2. Capitol Hardscapes: While Capitol Hardscapes does not currently provide snow clearing services, it is something that the company has recently considered to address a seasonal slowdown in its business.

All work would be completed with a combination of snow blowers and hand shoveling. In addition to the sidewalk clearing, Capitol Hardscapes would apply sand/salt to public sidewalks.

	Cost	Threshold
Skid-Steer Loader w/operator	\$135/man-hour	2-inches required
Snow Blower w/operator	\$85/man-hour	
Laborer (hand shoveling)	\$65/man-hour	
Salt/Sand Mix	\$200/ton	

Capitol Hardscapes estimates that it would take about 24 hours for 10 men to clear a 6” snowfall from Village sidewalks at an estimated cost of \$18,720 per storm.

Although this matter has not been solicited for public comment, we did receive communication from the Community Relations Committee in support of a Village-provided service for general sidewalk clearing following winter weather events.

Action Requested

Based on the findings thus far, staff requests direction on how the Board would like to proceed.

Attachment

- 1) Letter of support from the Community Relations Committee

Younes, Michael

To: Davis-Cook, Shana
Subject: RE: Budget Request for Clearing Sidewalks

From: Karen Spangler [<mailto:karen.e.spangler@gmail.com>]
Sent: Wednesday, March 09, 2016 12:13 PM
To: Davis-Cook, Shana <Shana.Davis-Cook@montgomerycountymd.gov>
Cc: Saralisa Brau <saralisabrau@gmail.com>; Soniya Mitra <soniyamitra@gmail.com>; paloma zuleta <pmzuleta@gmail.com>
Subject: Budget Request for Clearing Sidewalks

Dear Ms. Davis-Cook and Board members,

Although Spring seems to have sprung today, we haven't yet forgotten Snowzilla. We, the members of the Community Relations Committee, are writing to ask that the Chevy Chase Village Board of Managers please consider budgeting funds to clear the Village sidewalks of snow in addition to clearing the roads. We are grateful for the street-clearing, particularly the herculean job of clearing during this year's record storm, and realize that this will require more time and resources, but it is a service that would benefit everyone and improve safety during snow events.

Sincerely,

Karen E. Spangler, Chair

Saralisa Brau

Soniya Mitra

Paloma Zuleta