

Snow Sidewalk Questions

Public Facilities and Public Safety and Transportation Meeting

June 8, 2022

Snow Questions

I am still hearing complaints that corners are being dumped on, making clearing sidewalks impossible for residents. How can we do better? Is there a plan to track repeatedly violated corners?

- 1) The Streets Division will be holding a snow plowing training for all employees and contractors this fall. We always include training on not plowing in intersections and curb ramps. We will also highlight the issue with our snow chasers. We maintain a hot spot list which is address based and contains all snow recurring issues and areas of concern.

Can we get snow priority routes labeled, where enforcement and spot touchup should happen first?

- 2) We maintain sidewalk clearing routes within DPW. The priority routes are updated each year. Enforcements are complaint based

How soon can DPW get these repeat violations, priority rankings and priority spot touchup areas in its new GIS system?

- 3) People receive a warning first and are revisited in the next 24-hours to ensure that the sidewalk has been cleared. If has not, a ticket is issued.

We simply need more staff out with sidewalk plows. This winter a handful of people did the routes constantly for the heavy snowfalls. This was likely a staffing challenge specific to the last two winters, but it should be acknowledged and addressed going forward.

- 4) Procuring snow contracts is becoming more and more difficult nationwide. We put out a sidewalk only clearing contract multiple times and received no response.

We need to think about how to clear snow from bike lanes as we get more bike lanes.

- 5) More protected bike lanes will require more specialty snow removal equipment.

What can be done (training?) so that more flexposts can stay in the ground in the winter, and portable speed cushions/ speed humps can stay in place?

- 6) These devices are not designed to withstand winter conditions.

I never got a firm answer on whether the Senior Center maintained a list of snow shovelers. Some residents said yes, a list compiled by Newton Neighbors Helping Neighbors, but Jonathan

Yeo said no. I followed up several times with the person who was said to have compiled the list but did not hear back from her.

7) The Senior Center does not maintain a formal list.

With back-to-back storms, 311 requests were cleared out between storms, even though the snow accumulated so the concern was still there from the first storm. It was frustrating that you had to go out to report the concern a second time.

8) There is no way to prove that it wasn't cleared before the second storm occurred. This is not a regular occurrence – happens once or twice a year

Shawna mentioned what seemed like a high number of tickets that were unpaid/taken to court. We should confirm what happens if they simply don't pay, or what happens if they go to court (just dropped?).

9) We are working with Treasury to develop an automated snow ticket collection process through our financial software. The snow ticketing data is provided as part of the backup for this meeting. If a ticket is appealed through court system, it is up to the judge to uphold or dismiss the ticket.

Agree that priority maps would be helpful, or a shared protocol about what is cleared when and by whom. One item that seemed to be missed this winter were the new crosswalks along City routes.

10) If new crosswalks are missed, they will be added to the route. As mentioned, we have a hotspot list for recurring issues.

In an ideally staffed winter, there would be more coordination between the sidewalk team and the street team so they aren't undoing each other's work.

11) In the perfect world, yes. Unfortunately, coordination is challenging due to staffing, vehicle equipment breakdowns, changes in priority (accident, emergency), length of storm and conditions.

Sidewalk Questions

Please clarify the protocol for residential sidewalks being blocked. My understanding is that the sidewalk can be closed during the day indefinitely (months) if the contractor has the right permit, and just needs to be reopened and packed stone dust in the evening. If that is the case, the ordinance/protocol needs to be changed. It seems like the ordinance/protocol was created assuming no one would be out walking during the day.

1) All contractors need to provide alternative pedestrian access when they close a sidewalk. We are meeting with all contractors that pull a permit through the

engineering division to discuss pedestrian access during their construction project. A pedestrian access checklist that is provided to contractors is attached as part of the backup.

Someone needs to be enforcing keeping construction vehicles/worker cars from parking on the sidewalk and the berm and, increasingly, in bike lanes. I think this falls under the jurisdiction of Newton Police/Parking Control, in which case it should simply be enforced every day as part of their routes. Can a fine or other penalty also be added to the construction permit? The vehicles damage the sidewalk and berm, take out street trees, and block access to the sidewalk/bike lane for users. It also makes our sidewalks feel unsafe when a vehicle is pulling up onto it while someone is walking along. Vehicles park on the sidewalks not just of the house under construction but also adjoining sidewalks.

- 2) Without a sidewalk occupancy permit and closing the sidewalk, the police can ticket for this violation.

Construction detail officers. What is their role specific to pedestrians and pedestrian detours? See the incident at Lowell/the Carriageway where the police officer watched the pedestrians continue along the sidewalk and go into the work site (and then one was hit by a truck).

- 3) NPD

City street and sidewalk work needs walking/biking detours set up as basic setup for the work. I'm seeing some good examples of this with utility work, including an excellent example today on Beacon near Cold Spring Park.

- 4) We agree and are using the pedestrian checklist during construction projects.