

From: Kohlhase, Kent E. <kent.kohlhase@anchorageak.gov>

Sent: Friday, December 30, 2022 9:05 AM

To: LaFrance, Suzanne <suzanne.lafrance@anchorageak.gov>; Constant, Christopher <christopher.constant@anchorageak.gov>; Quinn-Davidson, Austin <austin.quinn-davidson@anchorageak.gov>; Zaletel, Meg <meg.zaletel@anchorageak.gov>; Rivera, Felix <felix.rivera@anchorageak.gov>; Perez-Verdia, Kameron <kameron.perez-verdia@anchorageak.gov>; Allard, Jamie <jamie.allard@anchorageak.gov>; Dunbar, Forrest <forrest.dunbar@anchorageak.gov>; Cross, Kevin <kevin.cross@anchorageak.gov>; Sulte, Randy <randy.sulte@anchorageak.gov>; Volland, Daniel R. <Daniel.Volland@anchorageak.gov>; Petersen, Pete <pete.petersen@anchorageak.gov>

Cc: Hess, Darrel W. <darrel.hess@anchorageak.gov>; VanLandingham, Gaylon P. <Paul.VanLandingham@anchorageak.gov>; Wilber, Lance R. <lance.wilber@anchorageak.gov>; Shearer, Saxton O. <saxton.shearer@anchorageak.gov>

Subject: Snow Removal status update

Good Morning, Assembly Members,

I know you are receiving complaints (and some compliments) from the public. I appreciate that you continue to forward those complaints to me. I apologize that I'm behind on responding to some of them. I also appreciate how understanding you've collectively been to the responses I've sent to your constituents.

I thought I'd take a moment to give you an update as to what has been done, and what efforts we continue to have in place.

As of this yesterday evening, MOA and contract crews have hauled about 16,000 (end dump equivalent) truckloads of snow from main and residential streets. That totaled about 320,000 cubic yards of snow. For reference, a residential washer or dryer is about 1 cubic yard in volume. So, think of a pile of 320,000 Maytag washers!

Crews continue to work around the clock, although we did give all but a skeleton crew the Christmas weekend off. Many of the MOA operators had worked 20 days straight without a day off; at some point, safety concerns begin to grow. It was the right thing to do.

Hauling crews include graders, snowblowers, and trucks. Graders and snowblowers are operated by Street Maintenance operators.

We are using a combination of standard end dump trucks, as well as side dump trucks that have a significantly larger capacity; as much as 75% greater.

We have a contract for end dump trucks that was awarded last fall. That contractor has been challenged in his ability to provide the number of trucks ordered on a daily basis. To help provide additional hauling capacity, we've acquired 15 side dumps per day utilizing the existing CBERRRSA maintenance contract. Contrary to what you may have read on social media, we did not execute a sole-source contract. We used an existing contract to acquire these side dump trucks. In addition, we are using Street Maintenance trucks. Also, AWWU and Solid Waste Services have provided trucks with drivers, generally over weekends when they are not busy conducting their business. Their assistance has been very helpful and deeply appreciated.

With this combined effort, daily load counts regularly exceed 600 truckloads. For example, on December 28, crews hauled about 1150 end dump loads of snow.

Hauling efficiency is affected not only by the number of trucks, but also the distance from snow disposal sites. We only have about a half dozen sites available.

Crews are hauling day and night. Day crews are working in subdivisions; it isn't safe or effective to haul main roads during the day. Night crews are hauling main roads: arterials and collectors. We also have a night crew focusing on hauling main streets adjacent to schools, with the goal of having key streets around every school cleared by the time school starts on January 9.

To further increase our snow hauling capacity, we have advertised for a supplemental snow hauling contract. Bids are due next week. Mayor Bronson has waived the required 14-day bid period for advertising this contract, shortening it to 7 days.

We are also leveraging another existing contract, our miscellaneous services term construction contract, to have a team of 4-5 dump trucks and a front end loader working to remove snow in cul-de-sacs. Our records show 1373 cds in Anchorage. That effort will start next week. Please know that in order to maximize benefits across Anchorage, the crew will not be removing all snow. Instead, they will remove enough snow to open up the area to better allow residents to maneuver.

Snow hauling is made even more complex by other issues, and two in particular:

1. Cars on the street, buried in snow. See attached picture for an example. There is no way for an operator to tell that this wasn't just a pile of snow. Once it is hit, that work stops. A supervisor needs to visit the site. APD shows up to write a report. It can be more serious; equipment can be damaged, and occasionally operators have been injured. We are working with the Communications team to appeal to the public to help mark their cars that are buried in snow.
2. Private contractors (and residents) pushing snow into public streets. This is against municipal code, and it causes much extra work for crews. Some of you may have been on email strings immediately after the snowfall, where we had to tell residents that our equipment was getting stuck in cul-de-sacs because of all the snow their neighbors had pushed into the street. However, the bigger issue is with private contractors clearing parking lots and driveways. MOA Right of Way enforcement responds, but it is difficult to catch folks in the act. Taxpayers are

paying the cost of dealing with this 'private' snow, both in money and the added time it takes for MOA crews to deal with it. We continue to work to address this issue.

In addition to hauling snow, we have snowblowers working in subdivisions to 'blow back' snow in areas where it is practical. This involves using the snowblower to place snow behind the curb line, but still within the right of way. This helps widen the streets. There typically is a grader with the blower, to clean up behind it.

We also have graders, including graders with wing plow attachments, working in subdivisions to push snow back, again in an effort to widen streets.

I hope the above helps explain the broad efforts already underway, as well as the new actions we are taking to help expedite dealing with this massive quantity of snow. For reference, Street Maintenance typically does not need to start a full-out hauling effort until late January or even February.

While I have your interest, I want to touch on the issue of berms across driveways. Some of you may know that many years ago I worked for Street Maintenance. Among other work, I operated graders and plowed snow. So, I have some familiarity with this issue. Depending on the grader, the size of the blade, and the depth of the snowfall, it is very difficult to plow past a driveway and not leave a berm. Snow simply spills over and around the gate on the end of the blade. The problem is exacerbated significantly when lots are narrow, driveways are close together, and mailboxes are mounted on posts in front of homes. The operator must have someplace to open the gate and release snow. If they can't do that, the spillover is worse, resulting in larger berms. I know residents are frustrated by this. I know they would like our operators to back up and make a second pass to clear berms. In fact, operators do that occasionally. But it simply isn't efficient to have graders continually backing up; that slows down the overall response time. Street Maintenance dispatch does take calls about berms, and they will coordinate with MOA ROW, or a supervisor with a plow truck, to clear berms for the elderly or those with disabilities.

As a point of information (little play on Roberts Rules there!), I was not able to find any northern cities that use gates on their snow removal equipment, at least based on my research over the past few weeks. In my opinion, that is one major reason that these other jurisdictions have plow-out times that are shorter than ours.

I hope the above information is helpful in explaining our efforts. I'm immensely proud of the work the Street Maintenance crews are doing. I am also aware of how frustrated many residents are. I see one of my roles as continuing to insulate the crews from the external influences, and allowing them to continue their good work.

I'm always open to newer, better ways of conducting business, whether it be plowing snow or building roads. I can tell you that we have had many brainstorming sessions over the past few weeks, looking for more efficient ways of tackling this.

I also do think that we can do a better job of proactively explaining to residents what to expect as a response to snow events. This is less a Street Maintenance issue, and more an opportunity to work with the Communications team to explore what we can do on that front.

I'm always glad to talk with you, as a group or one-on-one. I know there is a work session scheduled for next week. Unfortunately, I have long planned to take that week off with my family, before school starts. I was actually planning to be out this week as well, but I'm glad to be here to help the administration and the city. However, I don't think my wife and son will be as understanding if I miss a second week of vacation!

Certainly Paul, Lance, and others can attend the work session and have a productive discussion. I may try to attend by phone, but I'm just not sure whether I'll have coverage. There is a slight possibility I will be back in town by Thursday. If I am, I'll make a point to attend.

Happy New Year!

Best regards,

Kent

Kent Kohlhase, P.E.

Acting Municipal Manager

Municipality of Anchorage

632 W. 6th Avenue, Suite 850 Anchorage, Alaska 99501

(907) 343-7120

kent.kohlhase@anchorageak.gov