

MINUTES

D OF PUBLIC SAFETY

February 4, 2011

An **EMERGENCY MEETING** of the Board of Public Safety was held on Friday, February 4, 2011, in the City Hall Auditorium.

Those in attendance included Mayor Ryan J. Bingham, members of the Board of Public Safety Douglas Benedetto, James Potter, and Christopher Cook. Commissioner Richard Zaharek participated via telephone. Also present were Police Chief Michael Maniago, Fire Chief John Field, Traffic Officer Robert Shopey, Public Works Director Gerald Rollett, Superintendent of Streets Robert Lizotte and Superintendent of Schools Christopher Leone. Commissioners Battle and LaMonica were absent.

Mayor Bingham called the meeting to order at 1:45 p.m.

EMERGENCY PARKING BAN

Mayor Bingham explained to the Board of Public Safety, as the traffic authority, the current snow accumulation is becoming a problem with road widths being narrowed significantly, and parked cars are preventing safe passage of emergency vehicles. He said he has received public comment via emails and phone calls, and has contacted the Superintendent of Schools and the NWCT Transit District. Mayor Bingham urged residents who normally walk, to take advantage of services provided by the NW CT Transit District, including Dial-A-Ride and the Candystriper Bus.

The recommendation from the Street and Public Works Departments, he said, was to push back the windrows, and in some cases pushing them onto sidewalks, creating an issue for sidewalk ordinance enforcement. Mayor Bingham explained that his request is not necessarily to plow the windrows into the sidewalks, but to allow no parking at all in the streets identified in Mr. Rollett's memo of February 3, 2011. (see attachment 1) He clarified that live parking such as oil delivery, garbage pick-up or somebody attending to their vehicle is acceptable. He asked the Board of Public Safety to consider allowing parking on one side of the street only, and on the identified streets, to consider no parking whatsoever until such a time when we have to re-evaluate.

Mr. Rollett expressed his appreciation to the Board and gave some background into the typical winter in Torrington with snow accumulation ranging from 40 to 60", with some breaks where snow can melt.

He said we've received more than 93" of snow to date, which has not had an opportunity to melt. Seventy percent of our (snow removal) budget has been expended, but financially, we're in much better shape than surrounding towns.

Mr. Rollett pointed out that if the snow is not pushed back or removed altogether, every storm we get is going to make the roads narrower and cause passage problems. He said there are almost 5 miles of roads in the streets mentioned in his memo, with every snow removal option costing more than \$100,000, and it takes many days. Mr. Rollett said the melting option would cost tens of thousands of dollars and still take many days.

He recommended one-side parking, city wide, the pushing of snow banks to open them up, and a short term no parking solution to try to keep the roads open as best we can, with a lot of coordination with the Police Department. In response to Commissioner Benedetto's question, Mr. Rollett said his figures came from a 2001 report that was updated in 2006. He said even the cheapest option, pushing back the snow, would be 30 hours of overtime efforts, and could cost \$26,000. He looked at many different options for snow removal, taking the data already developed and updating it for the workers we have right now.

These included:

- 1) Hauling the snow using City forces, with 104 hours of labor because of the size limit of our trucks, and costing about \$92,000.
- 2) Hauling the snow using contracted forces, estimated to take about 37 hours and costing about \$86,000.
- 3) Melting 10,000 tons of snow in those 5 miles or roads, which would take 167 hours and \$33,000 in fuel costs.

Commissioner Benedetto asked what the crews do on days when it's not snowing out. Mr. Rollett replied that they work on opening up intersections to improve sightlines.

Commissioner Potter asked how long would it take to remove snow just from one side of the street.

Mr. Lizotte replied that some of those streets have already had the snow removed from one side but you can't even tell we've been there. The other issue, he said, is scheduling the crews to be fresh for new storms as there just aren't enough hours in the day for our forces to still do the job of plowing.

Mayor Bingham noted another item to be addressed -- the need for enforcement action against pushing snow from driveways into the street. Logic should prevail, and our residents need to take notice that sidewalk and driveway snow should be going onto yards or some other place where it doesn't compound the problem. Mayor Bingham said contractors who push driveway snow across the street into the road causes significant safety issues as well as compounds the problem.

Chief Maniago stated that Police Officers will actively enforce the City Ordinance regarding people blowing, shoveling or plowing snow out in the road. There will be no warnings issued, he said, and it is a \$90 infraction for that violation. He added that a lot of contractors believe if they plow snow out into the road, and then clean the road by pushing it in, that that negates the City Ordinance, which it does not. Chief Maniago said the Police will also strictly enforce the Parking Ordinance, towing at owner expense, if necessary, and also enforce the Sidewalk Ordinance.

Chief Field said his biggest concern is access, not only in the narrow widths but also the turning radius. He said he understands the difficulties and appreciates whatever help is available.

Commissioner Potter expressed concern about sidewalks not being available. Mayor Bingham said parking should be restricted on those streets to allow fluid movement and to avoid the sidewalk issue.

Commissioner Potter said these residents probably only have one or two spaces on their property, and asked where would visitors park. Mayor Bingham said they could arrange for Dial A Ride or Candystriper busses to public parking areas if necessary.

Commissioner Zaharek suggested snow be pushed back on one side of the street only, leaving an open sidewalk and room to park a car.

Commissioner Potter said a lot of the homes in this area are 2 or 3 family homes with retaining walls that leave only a 3 ft. wide sidewalk. Mr. Lizotte said he is not 100% confident there is enough room on the sidewalks to push the snow onto, and that this only scratches the surface as there are eight one-lane roads off Prospect St. that need to be addressed.

Commissioner Potter clarified that this is the quickest solution at the lowest cost to solve the problem.

Mayor Bingham explained that there are two proposals -- the first allowing parking only on the even side of the road throughout the entire City. There is a list of roads covering five miles on the West End of town for which Messrs. Lizotte and Rollet proposed snow windrows be pushed back onto both sidewalks to allow a larger width of passage. What the Board of Safety will ultimately decide, he said, is to not enforce the Sidewalk Ordinance in that area. Mayor Bingham said his recommendation is to keep those sidewalks open and not allow on-street parking at all in that area.

Commissioner Cook commended the City's snow removal work and read the City Ordinance aloud. He said there have been cases that suggest that the Town removing snow from a sidewalk would constitute an affirmative act and it would follow that moving snow onto a sidewalk would constitute an affirmative act, thus shifting liability back to the Town. He pointed out that some cities like Boston do alternate side of the road parking, allowing time to clean up the snow, if you have a place to put it.

Mr. Rollett said there isn't enough time between storms to remove the snow.

Commissioner Cook continued, saying State Representative Cook will look into getting permission to use John Minetto State Park.

Mr. Lizotte said that where to put the snow is not the issue.

Chief Field pointed out that we're already accepting some liability now because if a fire truck can't get somewhere, there's liability also.

Commissioner Potter asked for clarification that some streets are so narrow that even pushing back one side of the road and leaving the sidewalk alone is still not going to be enough.

Mr. Lizotte said the other issue is that the snow cannot go over the banks, it rolls up and comes right back down. There's no place to put it and it needs to be removed.

Mayor Bingham said there is no money to remove snow, other than what we already removed.

Mr. Lizotte described the number of manhours and trucks currently used to remove snow, and the Board compared using our snow loader with the use of contractors.

Chief Maniago said his concern is the clearing of the roads during the storms and it's important that Street Dept. personnel not work too many hours removing snow in order to be available to clear the roads when new storms come.

Superintendent Leone said there are 300 students that walk every day. If the City pushes snow over the sidewalks, we will be *required* to accommodate these students if sidewalks aren't available, and noted that additional busses cost about \$250 - \$300 a day.

Mayor Bingham assured the Board that implementing a No Parking restriction in the area identified for pushing back windrows would be enough to allow fire truck passage, and restricting parking to only one side of the street throughout the City could be done at a minimal cost. This would allow the Street Department to work on improving line of sight, as well as not having to accommodate walkers going to school and not compounding a liability problem for people who normally walk on sidewalks.

He said this is the most inexpensive route which could be reevaluated if necessary.

Commissioner Cook asked for clarification on where these residents will park. Mayor Bingham said they can be accommodated either at the municipal lot by the library, or the plaza can be contacted. It might be a temporary inconvenience, he said, but in the grand scheme of things, it just makes sense to try this and then reevaluate after next week's storms. He added that there is no overnight parking on City streets anyway.

Mayor Bingham stated his recommendation is that throughout the entire City to only allow parking on even sides of the street except where it's not applicable by signage or otherwise. All normal parking restrictions will apply except where parking exists on odd sides of the street there will be no parking whatsoever. Secondly, he recommended no parking at all on the following streets until such a time when the ban is lifted, with more streets to be added via City Website notification:

Washington Ave	Hoffman St.	Funston Ave
Beechwood Ave.	Smith St.	Maplewood Ave.
Chestnut Ave.	Iowa St.	Hawthorne Terr.
Central Ave.	Holly Pl.	Eggleston St.

Culvert St.

Workman Ave.

French St.

Apple St.

Roosevelt Ave.

This will be effective February 5, 2011 after the overnight parking ban, he said, and clarified that active parking will be allowed for those attending their vehicles.

Chief Maniago noted that this is enforceable under "Snow Emergency Parking Ban." Mayor Bingham said there is a fine involved and the vehicle may be towed at the owner's expense. He requested City residents, specifically in these areas, move snow onto their lawn and property so that it won't compound the snow packing against the existing windows.

Commissioner Potter made a motion to allow parking on the even side of the street City-wide and no parking at all on streets listed above with more streets to be added. Commissioner Benedetto seconded the motion. Commissioner Cook added that signage will have to be followed. The motion was unanimously approved.

ADJOURNMENT

On a motion by Commissioner Benedetto, seconded by Commissioner Potter, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn at 2:40p.m.

ATTEST: JOSEPH L. QUARTIERO, CMC
CITY CLERK

Respectfully Submitted,
Carol L. Anderson, CCTC

Assistant City Clerk

Attachment 1:

	City Of Torrington
PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT	140 Main Street • City Hall
Gerald C. Rollett, P.E.	Torrington, CT 06790-5245
Public Works Director	(860) 489-2232 • Fax: (860) 489-2550

MEMORANDUM

DATE: February 3, 2011
TO: Mayor Ryan J. Bingham
& Board of Public Safety
FROM: Gerald C. Rollett, Director of Public Works
Robert Lizotte, Superintendent of Streets
RE: Emergency Request for:
City Wide Parking Restriction and
Use of Sidewalks for Snow Storage

To allow for passage of emergency vehicles and due to the extreme winter conditions and record breaking snowfalls, we are requesting the implementation of one-side street parking restrictions and authorization to push back snow from narrow streets onto sidewalks. These requests specifically include:

- One-Side Street Parking Restriction to be city-wide and allow for parking on the even numbered side of the street only unless otherwise signed. Any vehicle parked on the odd numbered side of the street will be ticketed and towed at owner's expense.

- Pushing of snow windrows onto sidewalks along streets that have been reduced in width to the extent that adequate room does not exist for emergency vehicle passage. Any driveway filled in due to this action will be cleared of snow. This work will start at the following streets and may be expanded if warranted. The Torrington Police Department will be notified of any sidewalk used for snow storage to avoid issuance of tickets for failure to clear snow from sidewalks.

Washington Ave.	Hoffman St.	Funston Ave.
Beechwood Ave.	Smith St.	Maplewood Ave.
Chestnut Ave.	Iowa St.	Hawthorn Ter.
Central Ave.	Holly Pl.	Eggleston St.
Culvert St.	Workman Ave.	French St.
Apple St.	Roosevelt Ave.	

The parking restriction and use of sidewalks for snow storage will have to remain in effect through the remainder of this snow season.

Thank you for your consideration of this emergency request.