



sanitation

Kathryn Garcia Commissioner

Testimony of Kathryn Garcia, Commissioner

Oversight Hearing on the New York City Department of Sanitation Snow Plans for the 2016-2017 Snow Season and Intro. No. 1023 Before the New York City Council Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste

Friday, October 28, 2016 1:00 P.M.
City Hall – Council Chambers

Good afternoon Chair Reynoso and members of the Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste. I am Kathryn Garcia, Commissioner for the New York City Department of Sanitation. With me here today is First Deputy Commissioner Dennis Diggins. I'd like to thank Chair Reynoso and the members of the Committee for this opportunity to discuss with you the Department's Draft Snow Plans and our preparedness for the upcoming snow season.

Our Draft Snow Plans detail the Department's snow-fighting procedures from the onset of precipitation to snow clearing operations after every snowstorm. The Plans identify how we will allocate personnel and equipment resources in each borough and district, the coordination of services among agencies, and customer service protocols. They also outline the continuation of policies and programs that the Department has previously introduced, including the expansion of snow-sectoring to all fifty-nine (59) community districts, and initiatives we will implement to enhance our response and effectiveness this winter. We will consider all comments and recommendations received by elected officials on our draft Plans, and then we will publish the Final Borough Snow Plans on the Department's website by November 15th.

Last January, the City experienced a historic blizzard that covered our streets and sidewalks with more than two feet of snow. At each of the City's three National Weather Service monitoring stations – Central Park, JFK Airport and LaGuardia Airport – the blizzard set new records for snowfall accumulations, and amateur spotters in parts of Queens measured accumulations of up to 34 inches. I am immensely proud of the dedication and determination with which our employees took on the task of fighting this storm and digging out our City.

In the days, weeks, and months after the blizzard, we took the time to review our response and identify our successes as well as opportunities to continue to improve our

planning, preparedness, and response. The Department has made several changes for the 2016-2017 snow season, and I will take a few minutes to highlight several of these changes.

We invested \$21 million in capital funds to purchase additional snow equipment to more effectively remove snow from narrow streets, especially during storms with accumulations over 12 inches. These investments include:

- Purchasing 21 new front-end loaders that will be used instead of the mid-sized front-end loaders we currently utilize during salt loading operations. Larger loaders will allow the Department to decrease turnaround on salt loading and lower queue lines. In addition to increasing overall efficiency for salt-loading, using large front-end loaders for salt operations frees up the medium-sized loaders for other uses, such as plowing dead end streets. The Department can then deploy those in streets during heavy snowfalls to ensure standard plows and V-plows remain usable when large amounts of snow have accumulated;
- Purchasing 40 new skid steer plows to further mechanize the clearing of crosswalks and bus stops to more quickly clear pedestrian infrastructure.
- Purchasing 80 additional small salt spreaders, called haulsters, that together with our other equipment, will allow the Department to eliminate the use of outside contractors that had been supplementing our plowing operations on smaller, narrow street segments. Shifting these operations to the Department will improve snow clearing on smaller streets that are more difficult to efficiently clear during a storm, and greatly improve snow operations;

In total, the Department now has a total of 689 large and small salt spreaders in our snow-fighting fleet. This is an increase of 56 percent over the spreader fleet in place when I was appointed Commissioner in 2014. This expanded fleet not only makes us better prepared to respond more effectively to large snow storms but also improves our ability to respond to ice storms and other types of frozen precipitation where plows alone are ineffective.

This year, the Department has also expanded its successful Snow Sectoring initiative citywide. This initiative replaces the “Primary, Secondary, Tertiary” priority classifications for City streets with new critical, sector, and haulster routes. In a heavy storm with significant expected accumulation, the Department will begin plowing of all three types of routes at the same time, providing more timely service for many residents. This approach was first tested during the 2013-2014 snow season, and it has improved the efficiency of snow fighting operations by dramatically reducing redundant travel miles.

The increased number of small salt spreaders, combined with the expansion of the Snow Sectoring initiative, has allowed the Department to terminate the Tertiary Plowing Contracts previously used in large snow storms. These streets will now be plowed by

Department employees and will receive the same high level of service that we have come to expect for all City streets.

This fall, the Department has conducted a comprehensive snow training program during September and October for all Sanitation Workers and Supervisors. Held on Sundays for the past several weeks, this full-day training program combined a classroom module on proper techniques and procedures with a real-world driving training, with workers operating plows and spreaders on sector routes.

Additionally, the Department, in partnership with the Department of Information and Technology, will continue to improve PlowNYC and other GPS systems by upgrading the back-end dataset systems that process and map the GPS signals received from snow equipment. As a result of this updated technology, Department snow plow data will be made available in near real-time during snow events, with plow locations will be updated several times per hour. Employing this frequent automation will allow us to identify challenges in neighborhoods where conditions are detrimental so we can reallocate resources to those areas that need them the most.

The Department's snow budget for Fiscal Year 2017 is \$88.1 million. The Department has adequate staffing, with over 6,400 Sanitation Workers available to manage this winter's snow and ice storms including 369 new Sanitation Workers inducted at a ceremony earlier this week. On November 14th, the Department will begin Night Plow organization by increasing manpower on both night shifts to ensure coverage for snow or winter weather responses as necessary, and will perform a full-scale snow drill rehearsal in mid-November. The annual dress rehearsal involving multiple agencies entails Department personnel loading salt spreaders, attaching plows to the trucks, installing chains to the trucks and spreaders, field testing GPS equipment, testing emergency radio talk groups, and operating equipment along plowing and spreader routes. Performing a mock snow drill reinforces the importance of early coordination among the many agencies that provide essential services, from public transportation to emergency response, so that the Administration is fully prepared to manage any type of snow event.

We also have available at the onset of this snow season more than 375,500 tons of road salt stored at over 41 locations citywide, with contracts in place to deliver an additional 550,000 tons as necessary. This is the highest pre-season salt inventory in recent memory.

Our Draft Snow Plans outline the framework of policies and procedures that fortify our preparedness. The Department is an agency that responds quickly and learns from past experiences. Last winter allowed us to re-examine our snow fighting procedures and future Department practices will benefit from last year's experiences, particularly after Jonas last January which produced record-breaking snowfall. Of course we must be mindful that every storm brings different challenges that impact the speed with which the streets are cleared, including the storm's intensity, temperature, time of day, traffic on the roadways, and overall quantity and accumulation of snowfall. As we have

learned from past storms, different communities may experience different and heavier weather snow bands than neighboring communities which can potentially disrupt normal traffic patterns and public transportation for longer periods of time. We ask the public to be patient so that Department workers, who are performing under tough conditions, can safely complete their tasks timely and effectively.

Intro No. 1023 is also on the agenda for today's hearing. This bill would require the New York City Emergency Management Department to include in its annual snow preparedness and response report a list of bicycle paths and greenways in the City along with a plan for removing snow and ice from these areas. As described in the Department's Draft Snow Plans, once the Department has completed clearing City streets, the Department addresses snow and ice removal from bike lanes on City streets and pedestrian infrastructure like overpasses, bus stops, crosswalks, and step streets. In addition to manual shoveling, the Department uses skid steers and pick-up plows to clear these areas. Greenways, although not clearly defined in Intro. No. 1023, are generally located within parks or parkways and are not the responsibility of the Department of Sanitation. I defer to my fellow agencies regarding any further questions you may have regarding Intro. No. 1023.

In closing, I want to assure you that snow-fighting is core component of our agency's mission, and the Department's workforce understands that their performance is critical to keeping this City functioning 24/7. The Department is a dynamic agency with excellent staffing levels for this snow season, and I'm confident that the Department's workforce can and will respond quickly and effectively to any major snow event. As we approach the official 2016-17 snow season, I look forward to your input and suggested comments on our Draft Snow Plans.

My staff and I are now happy to answer your questions.



**Testimony of James Esposito
Deputy Commissioner for Planning and Preparedness
New York City Department of Emergency Management
Before the New York City Council Sanitation and Solid Waste Committee
October 28, 2016**

Good afternoon Chairperson Reynoso and members of the Committee on Sanitation & Solid Waste Management. I am Jim Esposito, Deputy Commissioner for Planning and Preparedness at New York City Emergency Management.

Local Law 26 of 2011 requires agencies responsible for preparing for and responding to snow emergencies to provide an annual snow preparedness and response report for each snow event of six inches or greater no later than November 15th of each year. As this local law falls into Administrative Code 30, it is the responsibility of New York City Emergency Management to collect and collate this information and publish the report, which we do so on our website as well as providing direct to Council. The report gets no more than 20 site views each year from our website.

We rely on agencies to provide us the required information for this report. Referring to the legislation at hand, if the Department of Transportation and the Department of Parks and Recreation have lists of bicycle paths and greenways for which the City is responsible, it can be added to the annual report.

However please note that this legislation also calls for plans for removal of snow and ice from bicycle paths and greenways – and resources used for such removal – to be added into the annual report. NYC Emergency Management does not publish other agencies' operational plans on our website and we do not put them into our reports. Therefore, this part of the legislation would need to be re-directed to the relevant agencies and removed from our code.

Thank you for permitting me to testify today. Along with the administration's subject matter experts from DOT and Parks, we are prepared to take your questions.

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Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 10/28/16

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: KATHRYN GARCIA

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I represent: DSNY Commissioner

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Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1023 Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

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Name: Jim Esposito, Deputy Commissioner for

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