



sanitation

Kathryn Garcia
Commissioner

Testimony of Kathryn Garcia, Commissioner

Oversight Hearing on the New York City Department of Sanitation Borough Based Snow Plans for the 2015-2016 Snow Season and Intro Nos. 9 and 714 Before the New York City Council Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste

Thursday, November 12, 2015 1:00 P.M.
250 Broadway – 16th Floor

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 Dennis Diggins, First Deputy Commissioner of Operations. I would like to thank Chair Reynoso and the members of the Committee for this opportunity today to discuss the Department's Draft Borough-based Snow Plans and our preparedness for the 2015-2016 winter season that officially began on Monday. I will also separately address each of the two bills under consideration today by this Committee, after which I will be happy to answer your questions and address any comments.

Since last year's snow season, the Department reviewed its own internal operations, strategies and policies in order to improve its future performance during snow events. The Draft Snow Plans detail the Department's snow-fighting procedures from the onset of precipitation to clearing operations after a major snowfall. The Plans include the allocation of personnel and equipment resources, inter-agency coordination of services, and customer service protocols. They also outline the continuation of policies and programs that we began implementing last year, as well as any new initiatives that we are implementing to enhance our response and effectiveness for this upcoming snow season. We will consider all comments and recommendations received by the elected officials on our draft Plans, and we will shortly publish the Final Borough Snow Plans on the Department's website.

As you know, last year the Department initiated a sectoring snow pilot that eliminates the differentiation between secondary and tertiary streets, and instead creates critical and sector routes. Critical routes include highways and major thoroughfares, plus schools, hospitals, firehouses, police precincts and ambulance depots. Sector routes are designed to be compact and continuous and minimize overlap. Building on our positive experiences we have achieved to date, we will continue to expand sector routing throughout the City as we continue to develop and test new routes by removing duplicative travel mileage to improve our response time. To illustrate the improvements and efficiencies accomplished under this pilot, sector routing in Community Board 1 on Staten Island created efficiencies equivalent to adding 10 more spreaders for the entire borough.

In keeping with our traditional snow fighting procedures, during the early stage of a snow event we deploy salt spreaders to reduce the accumulation of snow and prevent the formation of icy

conditions on more than 19,000 roadway lane miles across the five boroughs. We begin plowing operations once the snow accumulation exceeds two inches. Plowing and de-icing operations continue until all of the City's traffic lanes are passable. Depending on the amount of snow that accumulates, Sanitation Workers may begin piling, hauling and clearing operations, as other crews resume refuse collection operations.

An unavoidable consequence of winter precipitation is that any amount of snowfall or icy precipitation can disrupt normal traffic patterns and public transportation and the disruption may last for extended periods of time. Department workers make every effort to clear snow and ice from the City's highways and streets as expeditiously as possible, but it can be a lengthy process, particularly when persistent or heavy snowfall occurs, combined with falling temperatures and high winds. 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 accumulation. We ask the public to be patient so that Department workers, who are performing under these tough conditions, can safely complete their tasks timely and effectively.

Once the snow season is over and we move into Spring, we begin detailed planning and preparation for winter weather conditions in the City for the next snow season. This is an annual, established practice for the Department and consists of:

- Reviewing all of the City's snow-plowing routes – which number approximately 3,000, and adjusting them as necessary;
- Reviewing personnel, prepping fleet, maximizing inventory levels, and assessing equipment needs, and identifying additional temporary sites for storing road de-icing materials, and locations for melting snow;
- Undertaking preventative maintenance on all snow equipment and upgrading them as necessary;
- Meeting with local community boards;
- Conducting refresher courses in spreading and plowing operations, and equipment training;
- Performing snow drill exercises; and
- Coordinating services with other agencies.

For the 2015-16 snow season, we began our planning with a view toward maximizing our efficiency and response this winter. We reviewed our internal operations, strategies and policies to identify what measures we could undertake to enhance our performance, organization and supervision. We also evaluated our strategies for communicating with the general public and with other city agencies, including the MTA, Port Authority and the TBTA to enhance the inter-agency coordination of services during snow emergencies.

This year new policies and improvements include:

- Expanding our snow sectoring routing pilot to all districts in Manhattan, Queens and Staten Island, and in one district each in the Bronx and Brooklyn;
- Purchasing 79 additional salt spreading vehicles;
- Training more than 7,700 Department employees on defensive driving as part of Vision Zero; and
- Eliminating tertiary street contracts the Department previously utilized for Brooklyn and parts of Queens and instead using internal resources to perform the same work due to the efficiencies achieved by sectoring. We will continue to use private contracts, at least for this snow season, for areas in the Bronx, Queens East and Staten Island.

The Department's snow budget for current FY 16 is funded for \$77.5 million. To date in the current fiscal year the Department has hired 492 new Sanitation Workers who have received snow operations training. At the onset of this new snow season, the Department has adequate staffing with over 6,400 Sanitation Workers available to combat this winter's snow and ice storms. When and if necessary, the Department will temporarily re-deploy Sanitation Workers to other districts to ensure that every district in every borough across the City receives the same level of service.

As we enter the new snow season, the Department has over 300,000 tons of salt, more than we've had in inventory in recent years. I'm also pleased to announce that starting this snow season, the Department will begin utilizing the new Spring Street Salt Shed at the Manhattan 1/2/5 Garage -- which has been highlighted in numerous architectural publications worldwide.

The Department will use a variety of equipment to fight snow, including collection trucks and equipment from our Lot Cleaning and Solid Waste Management divisions. Other city agencies provide an additional 135 plows and operators.

Of course, a plan is only as good as our ability to put it into action, and we're ramping up our snow drills in advance of this winter. On Monday, we will be conducting a full-scale, annual snow drill rehearsal which 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. Conducting a mock drill reinforces the importance of early coordination among the many agencies that provide essential services, from public transportation to emergency response so that we, and the Administration, are ready and able to manage any type of snow event.

Our Draft Snow Plans outline the framework of policies and procedures that fortify our preparedness. The Department is a dynamic 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 that experience.

Intro No. 9

Turning now to the bills, I will address the first bill on today's agenda, Intro No. 9. This bill would require the identification of the number and locations of pedestrian bridges throughout the City,

as well as a plan for the removal of snow and ice from such pedestrian bridges by either DSNY, DOT, or Parks, including resources to be used for such removal. Such information and plan would be required to be incorporated in the report generated by NYC Emergency Management, and must be shared with the Council Members and Community Boards representing the Community District in which any pedestrian bridge is located.

DSNY, DOT, and the Parks Department share responsibility for clearing pedestrian bridges around the City. DSNY, in its required borough based snow plan, already identifies a plan to address pedestrian bridges following a snow event, and the resources available by Community District, and we believe this legislation is duplicative and unnecessary. Specifically, DSNY employs individuals as temporary snow laborers to assist in the clearing of crosswalks, pedestrian curb cuts, catch basins, paths for loading and unloading at bus stops, sidewalks adjacent to vehicular overpasses, and pedestrian bridges.

Intro No. 714

The second bill, Intro No. 714, has two components, which I will address separately. The first part of the bill would exempt or partially exempt seniors and certain persons with disabilities from penalties for failing to remove snow or ice from the areas abutting their properties. This bill would require that the penalty in place for the failure to remove snow and ice, which is currently set at \$100, be reduced by fifty-percent if a person can prove that he or she is at least 65 years old or has a disability that substantially interferes with his or her ability to remove snow and ice, and that the building or lot that is the subject of the violation is his or her primary residence.

While the Department understands the rationale behind the intent of this bill, we cannot afford to loosen requirements on snow removal in the interest of pedestrian safety. The lower fines provided for in this bill could lead to fewer people taking responsibility for ensuring that snow is removed from in front of their property which, in turn, could lead to more people slipping and injuring themselves.

The second part of the legislation would require the Department to establish a program, which may include contracting with not-for-profit organizations, for the removal of snow or ice from crosswalks, curb cuts, bus stops and other city property, and from sidewalks and gutters abutting residential buildings where the primary resident of a building is at least 65 years old, or has a disability that substantially interferes with such person's ability to remove snow and ice. Such disability shall be defined in rules promulgated by DSNY in conjunction with DOHMH and the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities. Additionally, a person falling into this category would be required to register for such program which the bill requires that DSNY develop with the Department of Aging, DOHMH and the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities.

Local Law No. 27 of 2011 already requires that DSNY, or an entity designated by the Commissioner, assist community organizations to establish registries of snow removal volunteers. NYC Service has taken on this role and has taken recent steps to test a framework for connecting and matching volunteers with several local organizations who are working to maintain lists of volunteers to help elderly, sick, and disabled residents by volunteering to do snow removal for them. This winter, NYC Service is targeting two districts with a high concentration of residents in single family homes owned by senior citizens, and is coordinating with several non-profits and organizations in those areas to identify seniors in need. The legislation under consideration today shifts the emphasis of a volunteer program under Local Law 27 to a permanent contractual program and defeats the spirit and intent of the original law. As a result, we believe this part of the legislation is unnecessary because it duplicates existing

provisions of the Administrative Code.

In closing, I want to assure you that snow-fighting is a core agency 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 over 6,400 Sanitation Workers on staff 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 this week ushers in the official 2015-16 snow season, I appreciate this opportunity to engage this Committee and members of the Council in the present review process of our Draft Borough Snow Plans, and look forward to your input, comments and suggestions.

Once again, thank you for this opportunity to testify this morning. My staff and I will be happy to answer your questions.



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Center for Independence of the Disabled, NY

November 12, 2015

Exempting or Partially Exempting Seniors and Certain People with Disabilities from penalties for failing to remove snow or ice from sidewalks, crosswalks, curbs and other locations

Lourdes I. Rosa-Carrasquillo, Esq.
Director of Advocacy

New York City Council's Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management



A United Way Agency

Re:

I would like to thank the Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management for allowing me to testify.

It is very exciting to see that so many bills are being presented this session that will help the lives of people with disabilities. Int. 0714-2015 seems to be a fair consideration of the difficulties people with disabilities deal with during the winter.

However, I am concerned about the term "certain persons with disabilities." CIDNY understands that the bill states that the disability must substantially interfere with such person's ability to comply with this code. However, there are people with disabilities who may have substantial difficulty complying with this code for reasons other than physical or sensory disabilities. We understand that the term disability will be defined by rules promulgated in conjunction with the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOH) and the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities (MOPD). Will there be an opportunity for the community to give input as to disabilities that should be considered as people who cannot comply fully because of substantial limitations?

This is a very important bill and support of the bill can only occur with the clear understanding of what the definitions are. CIDNY supports the principle behind the bill, but we want to ensure that the definition of "substantial limitations" is truly reflective of the issues faced by people with disabilities who may not be able to comply with this code.

Also, it should be made cleared that people with disabilities are not being exempted but rather partially exempted as the language in the bill only states "shall be mitigated by fifty percent."

For more than 35 years, CIDNY has provided assistance to people with all kinds of disabilities, most of whom live independently in the community. We are part of the Independent Living Centers movement – a national network of grassroots, community-based, cross disability organizations that enhance opportunities for people with disabilities to direct their own lives. In 2014, CIDNY provided assistance and resources to over 15,000 New Yorkers with disabilities, their families and service providers.

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Appearance Card

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

in favor in opposition

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Name: Molly Krakowski (PLEASE PRINT)

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I represent: JASA

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Name: DENNIS DEGGINS - DSNY (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: First Dep. Comm. of Operation

I represent: DSNY

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Name: MONICA BARTLEY (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: 1251 DeKalb Ave #6E Brooklyn NY 11221

I represent: CENTER FOR INDEPENDENCE OF THE DISABLED NY

Address: 841 BROADWAY # 301, NY, NY 10003

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Name: **(PLEASE PRINT)** Paula Gavin

Address: 253 BROADWAY (8th FLOOR)

I represent: NYC SERVICE

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Name: Matt Drury

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I represent: Dir. of Gov. Relations - NYC

Address: PARKS

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Name: Lori Ardito

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I represent: DOT First Dep Com.

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