

CITY OF MADISON
INTER-DEPARTMENTAL
CORRESPONDENCE

DATE: December 21, 2007

TO: President and Members, Madison Common Council
Interested Parties

FROM: Mayor Dave Cieslewicz

SUBJECT: **Downtown Madison snow-related issues**

In the wake of this month's heavy snow and related cleanup efforts, there has been much discussion about things the City might consider doing differently. I want to emphasize my appreciation for the hard work and long hours put in by City workers and Streets Superintendent Al Schumacher these past few weeks. Because it is important for policy makers to give them the tools to do their job, I have been meeting with a group of City managers (the "snow team") to carefully analyze the issues and arrive at answers.

This initial memo is focused on downtown-related snow issues, but we are taking a citywide approach to this analysis, and more proposals will be developed for other areas of the City. Within the downtown Madison area, there are several unique issues that demand attention. These issues are primarily related to the problems that arise when vehicles parked on downtown streets are not moved in compliance with snow emergency rules. As a result, plows have been forced to navigate around numerous parked vehicles, resulting in narrow streets, snowed-in vehicles and reduced parking.

My staff has been meeting over the past couple of weeks with City staff to review these issues. Alders Satya Rhodes-Conway, Brenda Konkel, Mike Verveer, Marsha Rummel and Eli Judge have also been taking part in these discussions, and have offered a number of constructive ideas that I believe are worthy of support. Based upon these discussions, there appears to be consensus on a number of proposals, which the Alders and I are eager for the Council to put in place as soon as possible:

1. Extend the free parking program at City-owned parking ramps. Currently, free parking in City ramps is allowed during snow emergencies, from 1:00am – 7:00am. To make this a more attractive option for downtown vehicle owners, this program would be offered from 9:00pm – 7:00am.
2. Allow free parking at parking lots operated by the City Parks Division during snow emergencies. For many downtown residents, these lots are more conveniently located than parking ramps. Lots currently identified for this initiative are located at the Tenney Park boat launch (east side of the Yahara River); Burr Jones Park (at East Washington Ave. and First Street) and the Olbrich Beach parking lot.
3. Expand notification efforts when a snow emergency is called. Work with the University, downtown neighborhood associations, business organizations and others to help notify

downtown on street parkers when a snow emergency has been called. Other notification options will be explored as well (e.g., text messaging, etc.)

4. Make the Clean Streets/Clean Lakes parking regulations year-round. These regulations prohibit parking in certain downtown neighborhoods for four hours, one day per week. They are currently in effect from May 1- November 15. Extending them year-round will help ensure that at least one day per week, vehicles are not parked on certain downtown streets and will be easier to plow.

In addition to these issues, two other proposals have been discussed. They do not have the same level of consensus as the previous proposals, but I support them and would like to move them forward:

1. Increase fines for snow emergency violations. The \$30 fine for this violation is not providing an effective deterrent. I support increasing this fine to \$60, the maximum allowed under state statute.
2. Creating a new "snowbound street" ordinance. Under current law, 48 hours notice is required before an illegally parked vehicle can be towed. This ordinance would allow for towing within 24 hours if the Fire Marshall declared a street "snowbound" to the point where emergency vehicles could not safely pass.

It should be emphasized that this is only the first step in the City's response to this issue. There are a variety of issues that have been raised related to snow removal outside of the downtown area, and I will continue to work with City staff and alders to review those issues and propose solutions where needed.

Note that some of these proposals will require Council approval, and others will require some time to be administratively put in place. They will not be in place for this weekend's weather.