

From the Mayor...

February 7, 2014

A nice warm summer day with a cold beverage and a dip in the lake is not what I'll be writing about today. In fact, you all know where I am going with this. Winter weather in Northern Indiana is our topic today. And just so you don't feel like that dip in the lake is too far off, the groundhog saw his shadow last Sunday, so it looks like we're in for at least six more weeks.

The recent spate of brutally cold temperatures, combined with wave after wave of significant snow, has created a hardship for many. To put this winter into perspective, here are just a few tidbits from the National Weather Service. January's average monthly temperature locally was seventeen degrees. That was almost eight degrees colder than normal. Fifty inches of snow has fallen so far this winter in Warsaw. That's more than the combined total of the past two winters, with two months of winter still to go. And don't forget those wind chill warnings in excess of twenty below.

Our Public Works Department uses National Weather Forecast data and timelines to develop a plan for each winter event. Temperature, wind speeds, time of day, and expected precipitation are all variables that dictate timing and method of treatment.

For example, when some form of precipitation is forecast at or below the freezing point, the roads are often pre-treated with a beet juice/brine solution that lowers the freezing point to make snow removal easier. Once the storm hits, all employees are called in for long hours of snow removal. Emergency routes are cleared first, then side streets, and finally the alleys. The city has around 110 miles of roads to maintain (not including alleys).

Wind and blowing obviously complicates the process. Our citizens can speed up the process by moving their cars from parking spaces on the roadway while the snow is being removed. Even though we don't have an odd or even system to free up parking lanes for snow removal, there is a 48-hour maximum for cars parked on the street. If you are tagged, you then have 72 hours to dig out and move the car.

After the snow has been removed, the roads are salted and/or sanded, if necessary. Within the downtown, snow piles have to be loaded and removed. It is also critical to keep the storm drains clear, as melting snow conveys into the storm sewers.

While the main responsibility of road maintenance is on the Department of Public Works, other city departments often assist when long hours create a strain on employee resources and equipment. During this most recent 13-inch snowfall, our Wastewater Utility, Parks Department, Cemetery Department, and City Hall maintenance staff shared their resources to assist snow removal on city streets, as well as clearing and keeping the runway open at the airport. Police and Fire personnel assisted with traffic control for downtown snow removal.

I couldn't be prouder of the teamwork that our department heads display for the mutual benefit of our city. Our city employees work many long hours to provide safe roads. They do a stellar job!

Please help us by clearing your sidewalks and driveways. Call us if have a concern but please be patient with the process. Remember, as soon as the roads are clear, our employees have trash routes to run.