

Eric D. Batista
City Manager



City of Worcester

October 21, 2025

Attachment for Item #10.7 C

TO THE WORCESTER CITY COUNCIL

COUNCILORS:

The attached communication relative to a proposed increase in rates for private winter equipment and update regarding winter storm preparation, as received from John K. Westerling, Commissioner of the Department of Public Works, is forwarded for the consideration of your Honorable Body.

The Department of Public Works (DPW) has taken steps to help ensure that we are prepared and well positioned to respond to winter storms. These steps include but are not limited to increased recruitment efforts to hire personnel, rebuilding the Vaisala Wester Station System, rebuilding the brine system, proactively filling and maintain salt sheds, and replacing aging plow trucks. The following memo provides more details regarding DPW's efforts and information regarding the new snowplow equipment that has been received and on order. Those pieces of equipment are integral to our snow plowing and our day-to-day operations. We are grateful for the continued support of your Honorable Body and these investments in our fleet.

DPW also recommends increased contractor rates for our partners that provide private plows and sanders, which are critical to the success of our winter storm operations. The recommended rates will help us stay competitive in the marketplace and help to ensure that we have the necessary equipment to keep Worcester's roads safe throughout the winter.

My Administration has been exploring all avenues to prepare for winter storms and we will continue to make every effort to keep the community safe during inclement weather.

Respectfully submitted,

Eric D. Batista
City Manager



The City of Worcester

Department of Public Works

John K. Westerling, Commissioner
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To: Eric D. Batista, City Manager

From: John K. Westerling, Commissioner

Date: October 21, 2025

Re: Winter Preparedness and Proposed Increase in Rates for Private Winter Equipment

This memorandum details the steps the Department of Public Works (DPW) is taking to help ensure that we are prepared and well positioned to handle snow and ice storms this winter. I am also providing the proposed rates for private winter equipment (i.e., plows and sanders) for your consideration.

DPW is taking the following steps to prepare for snow and ice storms this winter:

- Filling our Snow Plowing Assignment roster, which includes Inspectors, Supervisors, Winter Operations Coordinators, Inside Supervisors, and more. Many of those positions are currently being “bid” by Union personnel.
- Rebuilding the municipality’s Vaisala weather station system, which was not operational last Winter. That system provides critical information during storms to help DPW make important decisions on pretreatment, plowing, etc. It provides a live video feed, road temperature, ambient air temperature, humidity, wind speed and direction, and other measurements. This technology is used by the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) and other municipalities. We are restoring the four existing stations as well as adding two new stations and two monitoring points.
- Rebuilding the brine system to allow for blending with magnesium chloride and proper pretreatment. Blending will produce a much more effective solution to be used for pretreatment as well as during storms. We are also outfitting our five new plow trucks with brine tanks to be able to apply brine.
- Reinforcing broken structural members in our salt sheds to help ensure the sheds survive the winter and support our vital operations. We worked with an engineer to evaluate the structures and make recommendations. The work is being done by DPW employees that will save the municipality tens of thousands of dollars.

- We have three contracts in place with three different vendors for the supply of salt. This will help ensure we have salt on hand when it is necessary. We are also proactively filling our salt sheds using last winter's salt contract, which has saved the municipality \$7,500 when filling only one of our sheds.
- Engaging with our partners from last winter that provided private plows and sanders during storms to bring them back on our team for this year. We are also emailing contractors that did not work with us last year in an attempt to bring in more help. We are also placing an ad on the radio asking for private contractors to join our team. Finally, we are positioning our variable message boards on streets advertising that we are hiring private plows.
- Transitioning from preparing our vehicle fleet from leaf collection operations to winter operations.

The municipality has allocated funding to replace aging plow trucks, which we greatly appreciate. Those investments have allowed DPW to purchase the following pieces of equipment over the last 18 months:

Quantity	Description	Status
3	5-ton dump trucks w/ plows and sanders	Received
5	6500 Dup trucks w/ plows, sanders, & brine tanks	Received
21	Power wagons w/ plows	Received
7	5-ton dump trucks w/ plows and sanders	Expected Spring 2026
6	Power wagons w/ plows	Expected December 2025
2	Loaders w/ plows	Expected December 2025

Private plow contractors make up approximately 90% of the municipality's winter fleet. Maintaining a sufficient number of private contractors is critical to our winter operations so that we can ensure safe travel for motorists and emergency vehicles throughout the city.

DPW compared our rates from last winter to MassDOT's rates and we believe we must increase our rates to remain competitive. We must position ourselves to be competitive with surrounding municipalities to both retain our contractors from last year and, hopefully, to attract new ones. As such, I recommend the following rate schedule:

Proposed Private Contractor Rates for Winter '25-'26					
Plow Equipment					
Equipment type	FY26 rates	FY26 increase hourly	FY26 % increase	FY25 rate	MassDOT rate
6 Wheel 34,999 GWW	\$ 136.00	\$ 12.00	9.68%	\$ 124.00	\$ 164.48
6 Wheel 34,999 GWR	\$ 141.00	\$ 12.00	9.30%	\$ 129.00	\$ 171.31
6 Wheel 34,999 GWS	\$ 141.00	\$ 12.00	9.30%	\$ 129.00	\$ 180.85
6 Wheel 34,999 GWS+R	\$ 146.00	\$ 12.00	8.96%	\$ 134.00	\$ 187.68
Grader 20-28K	\$ 185.00	\$ -	0.00%	\$ 185.00	NA
Grader over 28,000	\$ 185.00	\$ -	0.00%	\$ 185.00	NA
Loader Cat 920 Equal	\$ 163.00	\$ -	0.00%	\$ 163.00	NA
Loader Cat 930 Equal	\$ 180.00	\$ -	0.00%	\$ 180.00	NA
Loader Cat 944 Equal	\$ 185.00	\$ -	0.00%	\$ 185.00	NA
Loader Cat 950 Equal	\$ 194.00	\$ -	0.00%	\$ 194.00	NA
Loader Cat 966 Equal	\$ 200.00	\$ -	0.00%	\$ 200.00	NA
Over 11,000 GWW6 X6	\$ 130.00	\$ 8.00	6.56%	\$ 122.00	119.51 - 139.52
Over 11,000 GWW6 X6 S	\$ 135.00	\$ 8.00	6.30%	\$ 127.00	135.88 - 155.89
Over 35,000 2 Axle	\$ 150.00	\$ 5.00	3.45%	\$ 145.00	164.48 - 178.77
Over 35,000 2 Axle R	\$ 155.00	\$ 5.00	3.33%	\$ 150.00	171.31 - 185.60
Over 35,000 2 Axle S	\$ 155.00	\$ 5.00	3.33%	\$ 150.00	180.85 - 195.14
Over 35,000 2 Axle S+R	\$ 160.00	\$ 5.00	3.23%	\$ 155.00	187.68 - 201.97
Over 56,000 3 Axle	\$ 171.00	\$ 9.00	5.56%	\$ 162.00	178.77 - 205.59
Over 56,000 3 Axle R	\$ 176.00	\$ 9.00	5.39%	\$ 167.00	185.60 - 212.42
Over 56,000 3 Axle S	\$ 176.00	\$ 9.00	5.39%	\$ 167.00	195.14 - 221.96
Over 56,000 3 Axle S+R	\$ 181.00	\$ 9.00	5.23%	\$ 172.00	201.97 - 228.79
Power Wagon	\$ 115.00	\$ 5.00	4.55%	\$ 110.00	\$ 101.43
Tri axle	\$ 170.00	\$ 8.00	4.94%	\$ 162.00	178.77 - 205.59
Backhoe	\$ 163.00	\$ 11.00	7.24%	\$ 152.00	NA
Backhoe R	\$ 168.00	\$ 10.00	6.33%	\$ 158.00	NA
Other Categories					
Additional equipment	FY26 rates	FY26 increase hourly	FY26 % increase	FY25 rate	MassDOT rate
Sander	\$ 5.00	0	0	\$ 5.00	
Reversible Plow	\$ 5.00	0	0	\$ 5.00	
Sanding/ Salting Operations					
S Sander	\$ 110.00	\$ 10.00	10.00%	\$ 100.00	NA
M Sander	\$ 129.00	\$ 14.00	12.17%	\$ 115.00	NA
L Sander	\$ 160.00	\$ 8.00	5.26%	\$ 152.00	180.85 - 195.14
XL Sander	\$ 180.00	\$ 8.00	4.65%	\$ 172.00	195.14 - 221.96
Extended Season					
Extended Season (Before 12/1 or on or after 4/1)	\$ 10.00	0	0	\$ 10.00	
Year End Bonus					
	FY25			FY24	
Under 56000 GWW Attendance (Fewer than 12 missed hours)	\$ 1,000.00	0	0	\$ 1,000.00	
Over 56000 GWW Attendance (Fewer than 12 missed hours)	\$ 2,000.00	0	0	\$ 2,000.00	

Sincerely,



John K. Westerling
Commissioner of Public Works