

CITY OF GARDNER
Department of Public Works



Highway
Water
Sewer
Forestry
Parks/Playgrounds
Cemeteries

Dane E. Arnold, Director
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Mayor Michael J. Nicholson and City Council Members
City Hall
95 Pleasant Street
Gardner, MA 01440

RE: Winter 2023-2024

November 6, 2023

Dear Mayor Nicholson and City Council Members:

In July, I wrote a letter regarding the staffing levels and salaries of the Department of Public Works. I stressed the importance of increasing the DPW's salaries to try and encourage new hires with commercial drivers and hydraulic licenses to come work for the City. We have not hired one applicant with such licenses in years. Out of the 25 existing positions in the DPW, 6 have been vacant for months and, in some cases, years. By the winter of this year, we will also be losing two (2) long-term employees with CDL's and Hydraulic licenses to retirement. That will mean once again 1/3 of our positions are vacant. The low staffing level is directly related to the low salaries of the DPW employees.

For the winter of 2023-2024 there will be streets that WILL NOT have a plow truck covering the neighborhood. If the City receives a long-term snow event, snow may remain in the streets for many hours or even days depending on the duration of the storm before we will be able to remove it. With the shortage of staff, the drivers will do their best, but may not be able to complete plowing the city. After working 30-40 hours straight, they will have to go home to sleep and recover. The snow will remain on the streets. This will also mean sidewalks will not be cleared for days after a storm depending on the amount and duration of the storm.

The City was also unable to hire contractors to plow our parking lots or streets because our rates are too low and not competitive with other communities and the State. As of now, parking lots will not be cleared during snow events until after the streets are cleared. This includes City Hall, Police parking lot, Senior Center, all public parking areas, and the library.

Sincerely,

Dane E. Arnold, Director
Department of Public Works
pc: Highway Foreman