

CTHOA snow clearance: thoughts from the board

CTHOA members meeting; Thurs Feb 23, 2023

Purpose of This Discussion

- Not here today to make a decision
- Explain why board wanted to review the process
- We have the draft questionnaire ready
- Before everyone gets their say via the questionnaire
 - Provide context and background so members can make considered and informed responses
 - Seek extra input and ideas

Our Declarations & Bylaws

- Never use the word snow
- Require maintaining a safe environment. E.g. “keep in good order, condition and repair all of the Common Areas”

City Rules

8-2-13. - Duty to Keep Sidewalks Clear of Snow.

- (a) No private owner [...] shall fail to keep all public sidewalks and walkways abutting the premises [...] clear of snow, ice, and sleet[...]. Such persons are jointly and severally liable for such responsibility, criminally and administratively. Such persons shall **remove any accumulation after any snowfall or snowdrift** as promptly as reasonably possible and **no later than twenty-four hours after the snowfall or the formation of the snowdrift.**

The Board's interpretation.

As an association we:

- **Must** clear the trail feeder paths on South side, paths in and around parks, pathway along 55th St.
- Have no requirements or restrictions on clearing the pathways in front of people's houses
- These are two completely independent issues

How Often It Snows

- 10 years of weather logs
- Not rigorously analysed statistics, but **is** based on written records
- ~20 snow falls per year
- ~15 have some accumulation
- ~10 where if you search around you can find a spot with 3" somewhere

If you let the contractor decide, we are guessing it is likely 10 visits/year.

Calendar year	Contractor call-outs
2022	8
2021	2
2020	4
2019	5
2018	3
2017	2

Current Process

Conceptually trivial: Get Contractor to clear snow when $>3''$

- Board measures snow depth
 - When and when to measure?
 - North & South sides often vastly different
- Discuss and agree among board
- Call/Email contractor and arrange when they can come
 - Contractor is busy and difficult to contact on snowy days
- Email membership
- If < 3 inches
 - Assess forecasts
 - Monitor changing conditions throughout day

Motivations for Change

Costs - snow removal was 36% of our total 2022 expenditures. (\$150-200 per house covering both the HOA outlots and the private paths that we currently clear.)

Does nothing to clear private driveways or internal paths. Everyone still needs to clear snow.

Does nothing to clear paths when snow is less than three inches. People away from home still need to arrange clearance.

Onerous on board

- Very frequently takes a couple of hours
- Other board tasks can be planned for, done in evenings or at weekends. Snow just happens and board members need to drop everything to deal with it immediately. Typically early morning when folk are trying to deal with their own driveway snow, get children fed and off to school, get to work themselves.
- For daytime accumulation we typically measure depth before work in morning, after work in evening and during lunch break but we cannot watch it all day

Current system completely fails for prolonged, slowly accumulating, day-time snowfall

Some members have no public pathways at all, but are still paying for snow clearance.

Options - Many ideas have been mooted

- As now, but
 - increase threshold to 5" so we do it all less often
 - better formalize process to lessen effort
 - let the contractor self-manage when to come
 - contractor offers various cheaper service level options
 - contractor offers various more expensive service level options
 - a member volunteer coordinates instead of the board
 - target statutory compliance. I.e., always wait 24hrs after snow
 - members may optionally pay contractor to do their driveways
- Cease the service. Contractor does HOA outlots and members organise their own private paths
- Change contractor to one that will do annual flat rate fee
- Buy snow blowers and do clearance ourselves
- Hand shovels and do clearance ourselves

Many Different Options Offered by our Current Contractor

Several potential increases in service - higher cost

- Let them self-manage when to come.
- 2" trigger threshold
- Private driveways (\$60-200 depending on depth, 10% group discount?)

Several potential decreases in service - lower cost

- Set any trigger threshold we like ≥ 2 "
- Use quad-bike snow plough instead of snow blowers. (~15% cheaper)
- Put us at the end of their list, later in the day (~5% cheaper)

Will **not** offer flat annual fee

Snow Blowers

- Buy two high-end domestic or small commercial snow blowers
 - Two provides redundancy. No one can commit to be in town all Winter
 - Each is housed and maintained by a volunteer 'keeper'
 - The 'keeper' clears the street after any significant accumulation or manages a rota of volunteers who takes turns to do so
 - Estimated to typically take ≤ 1 hr
 - Whoever does the entire street may also do their own drive & internal paths
 - Snowblower is not available for everyone
 - Annual professional service organized by 'keeper' and paid for by HOA
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- High-end domestic blowers ~\$1000
 - Small commercial blowers ~\$2000
 - Best electric blowers ~\$1500 and probably need at least two battery sets
 - Requested quotes for annual service from two local companies. No replies, but guessing \$150.
 - Insurance - to be investigated
 - This was proposed at the 2019 members' meeting, but insufficient volunteers to make it work.

Special Request From Our Contractor

Those adjacent to spur paths - Please thoroughly trim your shrubs back before Winter. Overhanging branches make clearing the paths difficult.

Discussion

- Questionnaire is at a final draft stage. To be sent out soon.
- Anyone need further description on any of the proposals?
- Anyone wish to speak to any of the proposals?
- Other proposals not already mentioned?
- General comments?