

Boulevard plowing: the council takes up the Winter Street Maintenance Policy

The council adopted the Infrastructure & Facilities Committee’s amendment 11–0 at 2:42:47 of the [meeting recording](#). What follows is a verbatim transcript of the item, 2:20:27 to 2:43:10, with the lead-in that brought it to the floor.¹

ITEM AS CALLED	
Resolution from Infrastructure and Facilities approving amendment to the City of Wausau Winter Street Maintenance Policy	
COMMITTEE VOTE	MOTION / SECOND
Infrastructure & Facilities, October 8, 2026: 5–0	Alder Slonski / Alder Lukens
TAKEN OUT OF ORDER	COUNCIL VOTE
Suspension of the rules (Neal / Slonski), 11–0	11–0 at 2:42:47
SPEAKERS	
Mayor Diny (presiding); Alders Neal, Larson, Slonski, Lukens, Trueblood, Wiskowski and Hoenecke; Public Works Director Lindman; City Clerk	

Timestamps link to that moment in the recording. A dash marks a cut-off or an interruption. Fillers (“um,” “uh”) are omitted; words, false starts and repetitions are otherwise kept. Two short asides heard in only one of the three transcription passes are marked *[one pass]*.

How the item came up

2:20:27

Voting is now open. Motion passed, 10 to 1. *(previous item)*

CLERK

MAYOR DINY Okay, so I'm going to jump ahead. There's four items left, but two of those items require staff only. We have some citizens waiting here on the snowplow ordinance. So that's under suspension of the rules, under 6B, filing — because that passed in INF last week Thursday, and it didn't hit — so it didn't hit the six-day rule. So we would take a vote. Motion to suspend the rules, from Neal. Second from Slonski. Voting is now open.

2:22:18
CLERK

Motion passed, 11 to 0.

MAYOR DINY Okay, so we're going to skip the first item and we're going to go to the resolution from Infrastructure and Facilities approving amendment to the City of Wausau Winter Street Maintenance Policy, that passed INF 5 to 0. Motion from Slonski, second from Lukens. *(pause)* Not seeing them. *[one pass]* ... Okay, Mr. Neal. Why don't I have them? *[one pass]*

Discussion

2:23:19
ALDER NEAL

Thank you. Well, yes, there have been several meetings, for a long time, on this issue. I have to commend the many citizens — not just the handful that are here tonight, but beyond that, a large number of people have participated and been part of what I think is a very compelling and well-researched and rationalized petition. So, again, I commend them on that. I do support the request as being very fair and grounded in history. So I hope everybody else who has not been to some of these meetings realizes that this is something that we should all support.

MAYOR DINY Mr. Larson.

2:24:09
ALDER LARSON

Thank you, Mr. Mayor. I do sort of have a problem with the language in the ordinance, that it says “plowing whenever it is safe to do so.” You know, and while that statement makes a lot of sense, it also can bring us right back to where we were. You know, if somebody in the DPW says, “Well, we don't feel it's safe to do, we're not going to do it,” and therefore all this would be for nothing. So I don't feel comfortable with that language. I will support this, but I'm asking for some kind of language change, so that there's more of a direct order to get this done. Thank you.

MAYOR DINY Ms. Slonski.

2:25:00

ALDER SLONSKI

Thank you, Mr. Mayor. I wanted to address that. I've heard from several people that they're unhappy with the proposed language of the amendment, which is to permit the snowplows to flow — or to drive counter to the flow of traffic when it would otherwise be safe to do so. And they have asked for more directive language, that they shall do it or they must do it. And I've explained to them, you know, my concerns with putting that kind of language into an ordinance, because so many things, I think, could happen that I can't foresee. But there's bound to be — but there's bound to be a time when it doesn't make sense to drive counter to the flow of traffic, and I definitely wouldn't want to put our plow drivers in the position of having to do it anyway, right? So I wanted to be able to give them some discretion.

And I just want to note that Alder Larson is right. There has been a distressing erosion of trust between, particularly, these neighborhoods and DPW, and I hope that we can rebuild that trust. But it's going to take some time, and it's going to take, you know, DPW showing the communities that they care for them. I think they do that every time they come out and every time that they clear our streets, and they're out there in all kinds of weather and all times of the day and night. But we do need to rebuild that community trust.

I would not support changing the language to the amendment to be more directive, for the reasons that I've just given — that I think we need to allow the snowplow drivers and their supervisors the discretion to decide when it makes sense to do so and when it makes sense to not do so. But in this way we're giving them the permission structure, that they can do it and not have to worry that they're going to get cited or have any points taken against their CDL licenses. Thank you.

MAYOR DINY

Thank you. Alder Lukens.

2:27:25

ALDER LUKENS

Thank you, Mr. Mayor. So I agree as well that, you know, having the language as it is — I spoke with both Alder Slonski, I spoke with the city attorney about it, because there's a lot of unease about, you know, are we going to end up in the same position, with the language being, you know, that it may permit the plowing to the center median, and to drive — the plows to drive counterflow on two-way — on two-way streets with a center median boulevard.

I also want to mention that I know there has been concern among DPW snowplow drivers about their CDL licenses, and so I had asked for a legal opinion from the city attorney's office. And that legal opinion was that, you know, it's per statute that snowplow drivers are able — it is legal to

drive counterflow to the traffic, on the left side, or counterflow to traffic on a two-way street, while they are in municipal operations. So not, you know, not if they're just driving. So I know it's a tricky situation. According to the legal opinion of Attorney Bonino, it should be okay. They should be okay with their CDLs unless they do, you know, violate something else in the process. So if they violated something else, yeah, that definitely can make a difference or threaten their CDL. But for this, if they're following that, it shouldn't.

So I have been asked by residents to ask for more stringent language, and I understand the point of both the city attorney and Alder Slonski. I guess it's a tough situation right now, because I agree with Alder Larson: the biggest thing is residents want to be able to trust that we're going to go back to what was done for 50-plus years. That's what they want. And so that it's not, you know — as it's stated, it's left up — it gives the snowplow drivers discretion. What is not wanted is discretion for one to say "I'm going to do it," or another to say "I'm not going to do it." If there is some safety — you know, some specific safety concern or something like that — that's understandable. But usually — that's the request and the expectation. And I — I thank the Infrastructure Committee, all of the members; they did vote in approval of this. So I guess that's my concern too. And I see you're up here, so I'm going to let you speak.

MAYOR DINY

Mr. Lindman.

2:31:17

DIRECTOR LINDMAN

Yeah. I think — I understand why some of the residents have mistrust. I'm very sure that we're going to earn their trust back in a very short period of time. I understand the intent of everything that's happening. The Department of Public Works — I think what came out of this is some very good clarity about, you know, what we can do and, clearly, what we cannot do. And it's opened up a few doors for us, I think, as well. And it's also established something in writing that protects our drivers, which is, I think, first and foremost, right? They're our most important asset within the city. And so, yes.

But I think trying to put specific language into a policy kind of turns it more into an operating procedure, which should be left up, I think, to us. I think the language is very clear for us on what we'd like to do. Let the residents at least give us the opportunity to show them that, you know, that is the intent, and we understand what that is.

I would like to say that there are times when we will not be plowing to the center. And I can stand up — if we get two or three inches of snow and we don't have a full plow crew out, that we only have trucks out doing sanding

and salting, they may be running through the neighborhoods with a very small part of snow and putting down material in front of the stop signs, and pushing snow, you know, to the outside. But I think when we have full plow events in, we may be running counterflow to traffic if it's safe; we may not be. But the intent would be to plow to the center boulevards as, you know, as we can. If they get full of snow — if we have a high, heavy snow year — we may end up towards the end of the year plowing back to the outside. I know it's happened in the past, but it's been pretty rare. So we understand the intent, and so hopefully the language you can all support, and they'll have trust in us as well. So, okay.

2:33:37

ALDER LUKENS

Oops — thank you. And, I mean, everything that I've heard from residents are — of course they understand that some things, you know, some things may happen; like, they don't want anyone to risk safety and things like that. But that they just really wanted a basic return to what it was, because of the difficulty with, you know, not being able to clear it all the way to the curb, and the narrowness of the streets, and the safety in that way. So, thank you.

MAYOR DINY

Thank you. Alder Trueblood.

2:34:14

ALDER TRUEBLOOD

Mr. Lindman, if I may.

DIRECTOR LINDMAN

Yes.

ALDER TRUEBLOOD

One of the concerns expressed repeatedly was that there was no notification.

DIRECTOR LINDMAN

Yep.

ALDER TRUEBLOOD

And during our last meeting, we did request that some sort of policy or statement be put together that would ensure that didn't happen again. Do you know if that's in the works?

DIRECTOR LINDMAN

I mean — well, we've thought about it. I'm —

ALDER TRUEBLOOD

Okay.

DIRECTOR LINDMAN

— but I'm not exactly sure what that would look like, right? Like, you know, is it just for this type of plowing? You know, like, what type of plowing, right? Like, I mean, when it's an operating procedure, right? Those are —

ALDER TRUEBLOOD	Sure. And I think it's a major change.
DIRECTOR LINDMAN	Correct.
ALDER TRUEBLOOD	And so, as has been pointed out, this was how it was done for years and years, and suddenly there's a change.
DIRECTOR LINDMAN	Mm-hmm.
2:35:08 ALDER TRUEBLOOD	So I do think that is definitely a legitimate concern, that some sort of notification would have been warranted. So we don't address that in this policy, but as the policy states, our goal is just to give — we don't want to micromanage. We want to give as broad as possible. The other thing that was discussed was DPW meeting with residents to walk through the process, and ride-alongs — and I forget who mentioned that — ride-alongs were mentioned as possible ways to see how things <i>[go]</i> , because it looks a lot different from the cab of that truck than it does down on the ground. So I do think there are some legitimate concerns as far as trust with DPW and how to rebuild that.
DIRECTOR LINDMAN	Mm-hmm.
ALDER TRUEBLOOD	But again, as we said in the resolution and in this statement, we do trust — we hire the best people we can, and we trust our Department of Public Works, and we hope that this resolves the issue. And I do agree with Alder Slonski that we want to give you the tools you need without tying your hands.
DIRECTOR LINDMAN	I appreciate that.
MAYOR DINY	Thank you. Alder Wiskowski.
2:36:31 ALDER WISKOWSKI	No, I withdrew that. Everyone's already discovered my points.
MAYOR DINY	Okay. Alder Neal.
2:36:36 ALDER NEAL	Thank you. Well, I'm a little concerned about what the director said about — sometimes, when there's two or three inches, we might have the trucks whipping around and doing this and going there and dropping material on intersections, and at that time they may just, like, go to the outside. And I'm like, why? You know, if it's going to be a route, make it a route. And the

route for these neighborhoods is thus. It's on that chart. There's the route. The extenuating circumstance has to be pretty extreme for me to say, "Okay, discretion is fine," for the department to make a decision like that. But to just say, "We're going to have trucks whipping around, and in that case, well, we can just push it on the outside because we feel like it" — no. From the get-go, the idea here is to make routes. And in those neighborhoods, you're going counter. Okay? Unless something really big happens that you can't. What that is, I can't even imagine what it is. But I don't want to see us in the future — in this winter — all of a sudden we're fielding complaints: "Well, they said they would do it, but now they're not doing it." "They did it last week, but they're not doing it this week." I mean, we cannot have that kind of situation. We really have to be, like, in the 90-something percentile of following what we're asking to be done here.

2:38:04

DIRECTOR LINDMAN

And I think I was pretty clear with that, Tom.

ALDER NEAL

All right. It didn't sound that clear to me.

DIRECTOR LINDMAN

So, I mean, like I said, you know, there are times when we go through the city and we don't have a full plow route, and it's just sanders and salters, right? And so when the sanders and salters are out in the neighborhoods, they drop their blades and they drive on the right side of the street so they can drop salt in front of the stop signs, in the intersections. That's what they do. So if there's a small amount of snow or something and they're cleaning things up with the trucks, because that's the way they plow, they're going to plow to the right, and they're going to plow to the outside. When we have a full plow route — and that's the way it's always been done. I live in that neighborhood. I live in the Southeast Side. I know how it's been done. I've lived there for 11 years, so I know how it's been done. So I'm not saying that we're, you know, being wishy-washy about this. I'm setting expectations that you can't tell us to plow to the center no matter what. And that's just not how it works. But I can tell you that — I will say probably 90 percent, or even better, of the times it will be plowed to the center.

2:39:17

ALDER NEAL

That's — that's all I'm asking for.

DIRECTOR LINDMAN

Okay.

ALDER NEAL	I understand. But, you know, when I think about, let's say, a three-inch snowfall — because you made that number reference — we're talking — these are not streets where the plow goes down one half and then down the other half, so it's kind of, you know, shared by both sides of the street. This is like the full street being pushed in. And three inches of snow, when you talk about a full street, that becomes, you know, what, eight or nine inches of snow <i>[in somebody's driveway]</i> .
DIRECTOR LINDMAN	It's half of a normal street. It's half of a normal street —
ALDER NEAL	Well, it's all the street.
DIRECTOR LINDMAN	— like in others. Yeah.
ALDER NEAL	All right. So I'm just saying that I understand. I just don't want to be here fielding complaints about inconsistency. That's all.
DIRECTOR LINDMAN	I don't either, Tom.
ALDER NEAL	Okay.
DIRECTOR LINDMAN	I don't either.
ALDER NEAL	All right. Thank you.
DIRECTOR LINDMAN	Yeah.
MAYOR DINY	Alder Hoenecke.
2:40:10 ALDER HOENECKE	Super brief, Mr. Chair. Thank you. I just want to re-emphasize and just agree with what Alder Slonski had brought up, and by extension Alder Trueblood: that I think right now, I think we're all in agreement that we support what we are passing, and I think it is absolutely understandable that we are in a position now where I think we just need to — we need to trust that things are going to be done the way that they should be done. When we were talking about this in Facilities and Infrastructure, the biggest concerns that were brought up: we don't think it's legal to do it; worried about the time, and maybe the distance, and the cost. Both of those have been put to the wayside by the council. We know it's legal to do so, and the only concern now is whether or not it's safe. I think the truth is, I trust that DPW will do the right thing in this, given the nature of what was discussed, and the reasons for having changed the policy — no notice

or otherwise — but having changed the policy have all been put to rest, right, in changing it from what it had been. So I think we’ve addressed the concerns. I think in good faith we’ve come to a resolution, and now it’s on us to trust that things are done the correct way. Because I would agree, we cannot get to the point where we are defining SOPs for departments. That’s just not — we don’t need to hire people like yourself to do the job that you do if we’re going to sit down and, as a council, make a decision on SOPs. That just makes no sense. So I appreciate you being up here. I appreciate you speaking on behalf of your staff. Please thank them for all the hard work they do. Thank them for their amicable, you know, ways in which they’ve engaged with us in terms of working through this issue, and we look forward to you taking the opportunity to rebuild some of that community trust that I think we’ve addressed tonight. So thank you.

Vote

2:42:09

MAYOR DINY

Seeing no further questions, we are ready to vote.

CLERK

Voting is now open.

2:42:18

ALDER HOENECKE

Mr. Chair, point of clarification. Are we voting to suspend the rules right now, or are we voting on the —

MAYOR DINY

We suspended the rules.

ALDER HOENECKE

Okay, because the current item says “suspend rules,” so.

CLERK

Sorry about that. *[one pass]*

2:42:47

CLERK

The motion did pass, 11 to 0.

MAYOR DINY

All right.

ALDER LARSON

Mr. Chair.

MAYOR DINY

Mr. Larson.

2:43:04

ALDER LARSON

I would then, with this passage of this ordinance, I'll remove my request for Committee of the Whole meeting.

End of item.

NOTES

¹ **How this transcript was made.** Audio was taken from the city's YouTube recording (no captions existed yet) and transcribed three ways independently: Whisper large-v3-turbo run locally, and Gemini 4 Argon and Gemini 3.8 Flash via OpenRouter, the latter two also asked to identify speakers. The three were reconciled word by word; where they differed, the majority reading was used. Timestamps are Whisper's, which are precise to about a second. Speaker labels come from the chair's recognitions and from the two Gemini passes; none was in doubt except the short interjections in the Trueblood–Lindman and Neal–Lindman exchanges, which follow the Gemini 4 reading. Bracketed words are inaudible or clipped on the recording and are supplied from context. Prepared October 14, 2026.

Prepared October 14, 2026 from the City of Wausau's recording of the meeting.