

Dec/Jan Snow Event Debrief for Council

January 5, 2026, updated 01/07/26

It took a few days to realize how serious this event was, so it was Tuesday last week before I was able to get out and see what was happening. I have been super grateful to have Justin as a teammate through the last ten days – he has been supportive and an outspoken advocate for getting what they need to maintain their operations as best they can. We've coordinated many operations using group texts, emails and phone calls – it's been a lot to keep track of and I've put in some very long days. I'm pleased to see this community working so well together. City staff has also been wonderfully flexible and helpful. Everyone is exhausted but they keep on keeping on!

***Two things have been made very clear: we need to stop talking about emergency preparedness planning and start doing it and we need to do a comprehensive roads assessment. I will make these a priority over the next few months.**

*The heavy snowfall quickly presented a situation where plow trucks were no longer useful and we are critically short of heavy equipment in town, resulting in a backup of operations to clear roads or driveways.

*GBC requested that we try to get assistance from DOT/FAA by requesting the use of a loader that was not being used. We received authorization for DOT personnel to use their equipment to assist, but only for 5 days, only when they were caught up, and we couldn't put them into OT. Jeff was able to help a little one day, but otherwise they have been clearing the runway and state roads. I bumped up the request to Senator Murkowski's office resulting in some movement Sunday and this morning. Kathy reports some promising progress. If we can lease this piece of equipment, it will greatly enhance snow removal efforts. Ultimately it turned out that the equipment could not be made available to us.

*The priority for road clearing is to keep main roads open, provide access for fuel deliveries (first for the generators so we can keep power on and then to residents) and to keep first responders and key City personnel plowed. The community has been very supportive and cooperative which is appreciated.

*The contract for roads will likely run out of funds in a month or so due to this event. We will need to address that.

* Kathy has done some preliminary research into what it takes if we get to a point where we need to make a disaster declaration. Hopefully that won't happen but it's good to know what the steps are ahead of time. She will update us on that process tonight.

Mayor Sally McLaughlin