

March 10th, 2026
Town Council
Public Hearing
Ordinance 2025-02

AN ORDINANCE AMENDING AND REENACTING TOWN CODE § 14-5 (DISPOSITION OF SNOW, ICE, ETC.) TO MODERNIZE COMPLIANCE WINDOWS, ESTABLISH CIVIL PENALTIES, AND PROVIDE EQUITABLE EXCEPTIONS FOR VULNERABLE POPULATIONS.

WHEREAS, the response to Winter Storm Fern in early 2026 highlighted significant deficiencies in the Town's existing sidewalk clearing ordinance, which had remained largely unchanged since 1981; and

WHEREAS, the previous 6-hour removal window proved physically impossible for a majority of the community during extreme weather events involving frozen precipitation and sub-zero temperatures; and

WHEREAS, the Town Council finds that transitioning from a Class 4 Misdemeanor to a civil penalty model is a more appropriate enforcement mechanism for municipal code compliance; and

WHEREAS, the Town desires to establish a more equitable framework that includes flexibility for the Town Manager during emergencies and waivers for elderly residents and those with disabilities; and

WHEREAS, a public hearing was held on March 10, 2026, to receive community input on these modernized standards; and

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED by the Town Council of the Town of Warrenton, Virginia, that Town Code § 14-5 is hereby amended and reenacted as follows:

Sec. 14-5. Removal of snow and ice.

(a) Removal Required. Every occupant, owner, or other person in charge of any occupied property in the Town which has a sidewalk or footway of stone, brick, gravel, cinder, wood, or other substance, when such sidewalk is publicly owned or maintained, shall have all snow and ice removed within twenty-four (24) hours after such snow or ice ceases falling. For accumulations of more than six (6) inches, the removal window shall be extended to forty-eight (48) hours after precipitation ceases. When a property is unoccupied, this duty falls upon the owner or the agent of the owner.

(b) When Removal Not Required. These requirements shall not apply when snow or ice cannot be removed without injury to the sidewalk or footway. In such events, the sidewalk must be covered within the applicable 24 or 48-hour period with sand, salt, or another substance to render it safe for travel.

(c) Exceptions. This section shall not apply to the following:

1. Age and/or Disability: When the person in charge of a property is sixty-five (65) years of age or older, or suffers from a physical or mental disability, and has made reasonable efforts to find alternative clearing assistance.
2. Government Closure: If weather conditions cause the closure of the Town of Warrenton Government, the compliance window shall be extended by an additional twenty-four (24) hours.

(d) Enforcement and Abatement. The Department of Public Works shall be responsible for enforcement. If a person fails to abate the condition after reasonable notice, the Department of Public Works may clear the sidewalk and collect the costs from the owner or occupant in the same manner as local taxes.

(e) Modifications. The Town Manager, Director of Public Works, or Emergency Management Coordinator may further modify or extend compliance periods during a declaration of local emergency based on weather severity.

(f) Prohibited Deposits. It shall be unlawful to deposit snow, ice, or slush from private premises onto a public street, roadway, or sidewalk in a manner that obstructs vehicles or pedestrians.

(g) Penalty. Any person who violates or fails to comply with this section shall be subject to a \$100.00 civil penalty if the violation is not immediately corrected upon notice.

AND BE IT FURTHER ORDAINED, by the Town Council of the Town of Warrenton, that this ordinance shall take effect immediately upon adoption.

Votes:

Ayes:

Nays:

Absent from Meeting:

For Information:

Town Attorney

ATTEST: _____

Town Recorder