

**Minutes of the Special
Meeting of the 2021 Council of the
City of Linden, held Tuesday,
February 10, 2021**

Notice of this special meeting stating the date, place and time, has been disseminated as required under the Open Public Meetings Act, Chapter 231, P.L. 1975." Electronic notice was provided on February 5, 2021 to The Local Source and Star Ledger, noting that the meeting would be conducted through the Ring Central Program and containing information on how to access the meeting. The same information was posted on the City's website, Linden TV, the bulletin board, and the front door of City Hall. Copies of the Agenda, are also posted on the City's website and Linden TV for the public. The purpose of the meeting is as follows:

- 1) Snow Removal
- 2) Emergency Operations Procedure

Official Action will not be taken and portions of the meeting may be held in Executive Session.

The meeting was called to order at 6:05 p.m.

The Clerk rendered the opening prayer, after which the members of the Governing Body and the persons

A roll call showed the following members were present:

ROLL CALL

Councilwoman	Lisa Ormon
Councilman	Barry Javick
Councilwoman	Monique Caldwell
Councilman	John F. Roman (6:26 pm)
Councilman	Ralph Strano
Councilman	Garnett Blaine
Councilman	Armando Medina
Councilwoman	Gretchen Hickey
Council President	Michele Yamakaitis
Mayor	Derek Armstead

President Yamakaitis asked Mayor Armstead to make an opening statement.

Mayor Armstead stated that he had asked for this meeting as he was trying to get all of the Council in one room, so that there could be an open and candid discussion on how to improve snow removal. He noted that there was room for improvement.

President Yamakaitis opened the floor for discussion.

Mr. Strano noted that it was incumbent on him, as the most senior member of Council to speak. He stated that he has seen lots of these large snow storms. Public Works used to have between 120 to 130 employees, they now have 80. Some of those are administrative employees. This means that there are less boots on the ground. In addition, the City has seen the retirement of more senior personnel and as a result we have more employees, who are green, when it comes to snow plowing. Learning how to plow snow, is on the job training. Snow conditions sometimes need to be address over a week. There is always room for improvement. A snow storm dropping 2 feet of snow is not usual. Mr. Strano also spoke about employees, who do snow removal, being out due to the pandemic. He talked about some of the complaints, that were received, and the reasons. Next, he discussed the need to get a handle on people throwing snow, after the streets were plowed, back on to the street, making a huge mess. He pointed out that social media should be used for positive messages and not to complain. He added the dealing with the large snow fall was made more difficult due to the City using up all of the salt and brine they had available.

Mr. Venditto noted that the City almost ran out of salt, but we were able to grab some extra from Union County. He then explained how brine works. Salt is used as needed. He informed Council that we are receiving a salt delivery, so we will soon be restocked. He then explained plowing operations and the prep work for a snow storm. Crews where brought in early, and waited. He noted that four plow operators were out due to COVID. The crews were sent out at 11:00 pm, and worked a sixteen hour

shift. The on-call trucking company, which provides backup, got called in by the NJDOT, and were not available to the City. The plowing operations problems wasn't the big streets, but the small one. This storm also had a unique problem in that it started on Sunday and continued to Tuesday. He continued detailing the equipment failures, that occur, noting that most were minor. The operation wasn't perfect. He informed council that the last big storm was in 2016 and 33 members of the current crew were not here for that storm.

Mayor Armstead stated that Nick Pantina was out with Jerry Bishop to observe the plowing operations. Mr. Pantina thought that some areas were given more attention than others. He also spoke about the lack of curb to curb plowing. (Mr. Roman arrived) He spoke about the need for supervisors to be on the road directing those who lack training, so they the direction they need. He provided examples of items like there being no cars on the street, and yet it wasn't plowed curb to curb. The Mayor stated that he wanted boots on the street to teach new plow operators how to plow.

Mr. Venditto noted that he was out on the streets. He stated that he and Mr. Martinez were rotating being on the road, with someone being out every hour. They covered every ward.

Mayor Armstead stated that we need to focus on training. He then spoke about instances where cars were blocking streets and the plows could not get down them.

Mr. Venditto stated that he appreciated the Mayor's input.

Mrs. Caldwell stated that Mr. Venditto had spoken about the backup vendor responding to NJDOT, and asked how we could obtain other vendors as backup.

Mr. Venditto explained the efforts that were made.

Mrs. Caldwell stated that the City should try and plan ahead and have extra vendors to help out.

Mr. Strano spoke about he cleanup, after the storm and the Mayor's comment about not plowing curb to curb. He noted the difficulty in plowing tight streets, and that also don't want to have accidents. He discussed plowing operation in this type of storm. 2 feet of snow cannot be plowed with small pieces of equipment (bombardiers) , but that equipment is need to clean crosswalks and handicapped ramps.

Mr. Venditto stated that the company that manufactured the bombardiers is out of business. He spoke about another company and what that company's equipment could do, adding that the equipment is not cheap. He went on to discuss the clearing of handicapped ramps and cross walks. He stated that he believed that the guys learned a lot that will be applied to follow-up storms.

President Yamakaitis requested that Mr. Strano have the DPW Committee, at its next meeting, to look at the equipment issues.

Mr. Medina stated that when the snow was falling, he did not make any calls, as this was the first big storm in a while. He then spoke about the lack of plowing on snow emergency routes, where it could have been done curb to curb, as there were no cars on those streets. He added that he thought, overall, that they did a great job.

Mr. Strano thanked all who participated in the snow removal efforts and stated that they did a yeoman's job.

Mr. Venditto thanked Chief Hart, Lt. Gunther and Sgt Olivera for their help in clearing the streets of cars.

Mrs. Hickey stated that Traffic, Police and Fire did a good job, with this difficult storm. She pointed out that her street wasn't plowed. She called Dave Martinez amazing. She discussed how the calling of the storm and the total snow fall was difficult. She gave a shout out to "Shane Gulet" and spoke about how respectful and helpful he was helping neighbors. She agreed with the Mayor, regarding the cars on the streets. She felt that many of the neighbors are not as considerate as they were in the past. She thanked all for their efforts. Mrs. Hickey suggested that if snow was removed from the streets, in the 9th and 10th ward, that it could possibly be placed in the park behind McManus. She thanked Jerry Bishop for his efforts. She concluded by pointing out that you can never make everyone happy.

Mr. Venditto responded that if we could use properties, such as parks and schools, as snow depositories, it would help. He stated that he would discuss it further with the Mayor.

Mr. Bishop noted that he and Director Pantina were out for hours. The guys were moving and were up for hours. Need to get together for snow events, as a community. A little more cooperation would help a lot.

Mr. Blaine commended DPW on the serious job they had. They were there, and came right away when they were called. He stated his agreement, with Mr. Bishop that it is a community event. Residents shouldn't throw snow in the streets. He spoke about brining, and that all streets should be brined, or none.

Mr. Medina try not to get to comfortable, and spoke about a builder who buried a fire hydrant.

Mrs. Caldwell spoke about hew appreciation for Mr. Bishop and Mr. Pantina for being there.

Mrs. Ormon agreed with Mrs. Hickey that all worked hard and did their absolute best. We need to have a proactive plan for addressing snow removal on Academy Terrace. They are apartment dwellers and don't have driveways. We need to address the problem and need a plan of action.

Mr. Venditto we were doing it piece by piece and ran out of time. He noted other streets, like University Terrace that also need to be addressed.

Mrs. Ormon stated that we need a plan of action so that we don't have to go back 2 or 3 later. We need to train and teach.

Mr. Pantina thanked the Mayor and Council for setting this meeting up. He then talked about the issues that were encountered in plowing. This was the biggest storm in a while. He noted the efforts of Clark and to get the word out. He discussed the issue of residents throwing snow back into the street. He noted some towns do alternate side of the street parking, in snow emergencies to vacillate plowing.

Mr. Roman thanked DPW. He noted the number of hours they worked. He noted streets in the 6th ward that are difficult to navigate. He added that dead end streets are a problem, pointing out there are 10 of them in the 6th Ward alone. He asked to be involved in planning for that.

Mr. Javick thanked all involved, stating that all involved put out a great effort. He spoke about the need to get cars off of the streets.

Mayor Armstead thanked all of the members of Council for attending. DPW did a great job, but we need to look at other things. He suggested looking at ordinances, from other towns, to see how they handle it. We need to address one ward, one street at a time. He asked the Council members to come forward with any ideas they have, so they can be looked into.

President Yamakaitis thanked all for the work they did.

President Yamakaitis asked for public comment.

There were none.

There being no further business to come before the governing body, Mrs. Caldwell moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Mrs. Ormon and was unanimously ordered approved by a roll call vote. The meeting was adjourned at 7:16 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joseph C. Bodek
City Clerk