



# CITY OF CONCORD

*New Hampshire's Main Street™*

## REPORT TO MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

**Date:** September 24, 2024  
**To:** Mayor and City Council  
**From:** Earle M. Chesley, P.E., General Services Director  
**Subject:** Winter Operations Staff Retention and Recruitment Stipend

### **Recommendation:**

Approve the report and set for public hearing to be conducted at the November 12, 2024, City Council meeting to raise and appropriate \$400,000 for the purpose of a winter retention and recruitment stipend for City staff directly related to the performance of winter operations.

### **Background:**

Under the direction of the General Services Department, General Services staff, including voluntary personnel from the Parks and Recreation Department and Community Development Department, perform winter operations on city-maintained public streets, sidewalks, and airport to maintain effective movement of people, goods and services with minimal interruption while concurrently providing continued emergency services during winter weather.

General Services continues to experience reduced staffing levels for positions which require a Commercial Drivers License (CDL) due to employee resignations. With the current market, General Services is unable to effectively recruit candidates who hold a CDL. Consequently, General Services recruits employees, and pays for their training to secure a CDL. It takes approximately three to four months for a new employee to secure their CDL at a cost of about \$5,500. It takes another two to three months to train these employees for winter operations. The average retention for a Laborer/Truck Driver position that is required to have a CDL is less than five years.

There are presently eleven vacant positions that require a CDL operator's license; four are permanent positions, seven are winter operator positions. While training continues for recently

hired staff, GSD has available 45 CDL staffers from the Department and other City personnel with sufficient training to perform winter operations at this time.

For the past five years, Concord has experienced plowable accumulations of snowfall on the following dates:

November 22, 2023	2.7 inches
December 11, 2022	1.5 inches
December 25, 2021	2.1 inches
December 5, 2020	4.5 inches
December 1, 2019	5.2 inches

The shortfall for winter operations is not unique to Concord. The New Hampshire Department of Transportation is providing a winter stipend of \$5000 for their operators for the fourth consecutive year.

The General Services Winter Operations Policy is published on the city's website at [www.concordnh.gov/winteroperations](http://www.concordnh.gov/winteroperations). The policy establishes the priority of operations, staffing and equipment levels, street and sidewalk plow routes.

General Services directs a continuous snow removal operation utilizing two shifts of personnel that work up to sixteen-hour shifts before, during, and after a winter event. During the main shift, while there is winter precipitation, twenty-four pieces of equipment are deployed on city streets, and three pieces of equipment are deployed to maintain sidewalks in our downtown area. Immediately following this shift, the department staffs a swing shift where twenty pieces of equipment are deployed on City streets. Following the storm, up to eight sidewalk plows are deployed to address city sidewalks beyond the downtown area on a priority basis, with the first priority directed at the designated safe walk-to-school routes for the community's elementary schools.

To execute this effort, sixty-seven City full-time and temporary staff should be available to operate and maintain equipment, and approximately fifteen City full-time or temporary staff operating as wingers in six-wheel trucks. Typically, General Services will haul accumulated snow from the downtown area about seven nights per winter. This work is not performed on either Friday or Saturday night in order not to disrupt late evening business activity. Additionally, General Services removes snow from narrow streets as snow volumes accumulate and impinge upon the travel way.

To assure effective winter operations, it is imperative to have a full complement of employees.

### **Discussion:**

General Services strongly recommends a winter weekly three hundred dollars (\$300) stipend to City staff available and related to winter operations for city streets, sidewalks, and airport. Generally, these stipends will be provided to staff with commercial driver's licenses addressing winter operations. Further, General Services recommends a winter weekly stipend of one hundred fifty dollars (\$150) for staff supporting the performance of winter operations (wingers). The stipend would be paid for the seventeen-week winter season from December 1, 2024, through March 29, 2025.

The Director, Deputy Director, and Division Heads are not eligible for the stipend.

This stipend is critical to remain competitive, retain current employees, and attract new staff needed to provide the level of service Concord has historically enjoyed. Should staffing levels not return and be maintained through the winter, significant delays will occur in implementing the City's Winter Operations Policy, adversely impacting vehicular traffic during and immediately after the storm, including pedestrian traffic to our community's elementary schools.

Last winter, the City implemented the Winter Operations Staff Retention and Recruitment Stipend through a supplemental appropriation. The program successfully retained staffing levels associated with winter operations and significantly reduced staff erosion. Only one supervisory staffer with a CDL resigned during the winter. Winter operations were successfully performed for the community.

The total cost of the stipends is \$400,000.

Cc Brian LeBrun, Deputy City Manager/Finance

Jennifer Johnston, Director of Human Resources and Labor Relations