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City's misplaced priorities leaving residents and businesses buried this winter

Statement of Alderman Tony Zielinski February 18, 2019

The administration of Mayor Tom Barrett has seemingly left Milwaukee residents to fend for themselves this winter as poorly plowed streets have led to snarled traffic and clogged neighborhoods.

Just last week our Department of Public Works operations director told the Public Works Committee that this winter's poorly handled and glacial snow plowing and removal can be attributed to a staffing shortage of drivers, antiquated trucks and equipment, inexperienced drivers, and stagnant wages that make driver positions less attractive to workers.

For a city that averages nearly 50 inches of snow every winter, this is not only irresponsible but it's also inexcusable!

So with this winter's higher-than-usual snow totals, Mayor Barrett and his administration's lack of foresight and preparation is giving us all headaches. Local news outlets have even shown neighbors taking matters into their own hands in Bay View (my aldermanic district) using their own snow blowers to clear side streets!

Many neighborhood streets have been narrowed to the point where there's barely enough room for one lane of traffic.

Council members have even raised the question of whether we can enforce our own ordinance regarding clearing of sidewalks because DPW cannot keep up with clearing the sidewalks (corners and cuts at intersections, bridges, etc.) it is responsible for. This is uncharted territory and again, inexcusable.

Why haven't the Mayor and DPW made plans to update and replace our aging fleet? Why hasn't there been an emphasis on hiring and staffing of these vital positions that keep Milwaukee "open for business" when we have heavier snowfalls?

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When will we hear the Mayor and DPW explain a strategy for getting the city's fleet and staffing where it needs to be so the city can handle this critically important basic role (of plowing streets)?

We have a terrific and dedicated group of city workers who are out there doing the job, but for goodness sake, they could use a little help with a few extra bodies.

The city bonded for \$49 million for the streetcar and we can't keep a reliable fleet for snow plows out on the streets? To me that is financially reckless behavior on the part of this administration.

Our city priorities are seriously out of order and it's time for Mayor Barrett to explain how he's going to fix them before Milwaukee is totally buried under snow.

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