

TOWN OF BLACK MOUNTAIN BOARD OF ALDERMEN
REQUEST FOR BOARD ACTION
Meeting Date: January 11, 2009

SUBJECT: Discussion of Town's Emergency Response Protocol/Storms of Dec 18-19 and Dec 25, 2009

AGENDA INFORMATION

Agenda Location: New Business
Item Number: 8-A
Department: All Operating Departments
Contact: Marcy Onieal, Town Manager
Presenter: Rick Shreve, Finance Director (overseeing sanitation contract)
Kevin Pressley, Police Chief
Steve Jones, Fire Chief
Jim Orr, Recreation & Parks Director
Bob Watts, Public Works Director

BRIEF SUMMARY: The snow and ice storms of December 18-19 and December 25, 2009 dumped 8-24 inches of wet, heavy snow & ice throughout WNC, amid widespread power outages and followed by the coldest temperatures experienced in this region in nearly two decades. While all operating departments deployed all available personnel and equipment round-the-clock during initial storm response, town staff and elected officials were barraged by considerable citizen complaint. While most citizens were quite understanding and appreciative of the Town's efforts after gaining a better understanding of the situation, there clearly is a disconnect between current public expectation and the level of service the Town has historically provided under similar circumstances. The purpose of this discussion is for staff to have an opportunity to educate the Board and public as to what is possible under current staffing and funding levels, to evaluate the response to the most recent event, and to receive direction from the Board as to priority and level of service desired.

MOTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION: N/A

FUNDING SOURCE: Some costs, for emergency response and debris removal, may be reimbursed by FEMA, if Buncombe County qualifies for disaster declaration (snow removal costs are ineligible except as necessary for emergency response).

ATTACHMENTS: Narrative prepared by Public Works Director Bob Watts; Detailed reports of staffing and equipment use by each department are not attached, but will be available upon completion.

MANAGER'S COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS: The Town is neither adequately equipped, nor staffed, to handle road & debris clearing from events of this magnitude at a rate or quality of service expected by some of the Town's citizens, particularly those residing in steep-slope or planned unit developments, without additional financial resources. It is difficult to justify the ongoing annual expenditure necessary to support a comprehensive/immediate snow removal response, especially for once-every-two-decade events. That said, our staff is actively evaluating overall response to the most recent event and planning for improvements in preparation, equipment/staff deployment, communications and public response regardless of type event, so as to improve future operations – whether routine or emergency – within and among each of our operating departments. It is extremely important that the Board clearly define the level of service expected, and then work closely with the manager and staff to provide the resources necessary to attain the desired response.