



Memorandum

TO: Mayor Matherly and City Council Members

FROM: Jeff Jacobson, Public Works Director 

SUBJECT: Snow Plowing/ Removal Update

DATE: February 25, 2019

After several weeks of successful operation of the rented RPM 220 Snow Blower attachment, a night crew was hired February 11, 2019. It was quite a challenge to hire 15 temporary operators from the union dispatch hall. In fact, there was a shortage of journeyman operators so 5 apprentice operators were hired to work on the night shift. This was made possible through a Letter of Agreement with Operators Local 302. The apprentices are paid a lower hourly wage based on the number of hours completed in the apprentice program. In order to hire apprentices, the City agreed to pay \$2 an hour into the training fund that supports the apprentice program. The LOA also noted that the hiring of so many apprentices is an exception due to this year's hiring needs and scarcity of journeyman operators. In the future, Public Works will utilize up to two apprentices on an as needed basis.

This is a Win/Win situation, currently the City has well trained apprentices to fill our temp operator slots needed to staff both day and night shift snow operation crews and these apprentices are gaining valuable real-world experience in the Fairbanks area. I still have very serious concerns about the City's ability to attract and retain journeyman operators/mechanics with our lower wages and benefit package. When new health insurance contribution rates increase in July, all Public Works staff will see their take home pay decrease, which may result in an exodus of seasoned employees.

The day shift has begun the second round of removing and hauling from residential neighborhoods starting in Rickert, Gateway and Bjerremark. This week, the crew is working in Island Homes, Arctic Park and Walden Estates. The Downtown Core, First Avenue through Fifth Avenue Barnette to Noble, had snow removed twice in February, bringing the total snow removal operations to three times so far this year in that area of the City.

The Kodiak factory mechanics returned again to repair the two Kodiak Snow Blowers SL-10 and SL11. So far the repairs had held.