



By: [Ryan J. Stanton](#) AnnArbor.com Staff

# Hiring someone to plow your street just got easier for Washtenaw County residents, businesses

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Twisting roads through the Pittsfield Village condominiums make snow removal a challenge.

Melanie Maxwell | AnnArbor.com

Residents and business owners throughout Washtenaw County are starting to wonder whether they should make arrangements to have private contractors plow their streets this winter.

With the [Washtenaw County Road Commission](#) cutting back on snow removal services, agency leaders say they've received a number of inquiries from homeowners associations and business parks asking about their ability to hire contractors to plow their streets.

In response, the Road Commission has announced changes in regulations for snow plowing done by private contractors on public roads.

From now on, the agency will waive the permit application fee for contractors performing snow removal services in residential subdivisions and business parks. The new policy states contractors must show proof of insurance and pay a \$500 security deposit per subdivision or business park - plus \$100 per mile.

Agency officials said those security deposits will be fully refunded in the spring if no damage is found during inspection of the roadways.

"This has come about by various neighborhoods - mostly commercial business parks - that have contacted us in reaction to the new standard of 4 inches," said **Steve Puuri**, Road Commission managing director.

Puuri was referring to the [Road Commission's new policy](#) that the agency won't send crews out on overtime to plow subdivision streets unless 4 or more inches of snow falls. The change is an attempt to cut costs in light of shrinking revenues.

The Road Commission's governing board approved the agency's [2010 budget](#) on Dec. 15. It shows a 5 percent reduction in projected Michigan Transportation Fund revenues. Total expenditures for 2010 are estimated to be \$43.3 million, compared to [\\$44.5 million for 2009](#).

While the projected expenditures show only a \$1.2 million decrease, that number is less than it would have been due to \$3.1 million worth of projects that are being deferred to 2010, officials said. The 2010 budget and 2009 projected final budget are now available on the agency's Web site.



One of two new snow plow trucks purchased by the Washtenaw County Road Commission this year.

Puuri said if enough neighborhoods and business parks hire private contractors to provide enhanced snow removal services, that could potentially save the Road Commission money this winter.

But right now, having a private contractor on standby is mostly an insurance policy for business parks and residential neighborhoods in case publicly provided snow removal services don't come fast enough.

That's been the case for several years at the Avis Farms South business park off South State Road in Pittsfield Township. CitiMortgage, one of the park's tenants, contracts with A&H Lawn Care of Saline for clearance of the public roadways through the park.

**Dennis Butler**, facilities manager for CitiMortgage, said it's nothing against the county - he realizes the Road Commission has to prioritize which roads to plow first. But just in case the county's crews don't come in time, the financial institution needs a backup plan, he said.

"Reliability is a big factor. We have to have redundancy on everything," Butler said.

Meanwhile, the city of Ann Arbor has been working with residents in the Pittsfield Village subdivision off Washtenaw Avenue on a plan to enhance snow removal services there.

City Council Member **Christopher Taylor**, D-3rd Ward, said city officials recently reached an agreement in which the city will reimburse the condominium association for the costs of hiring a private contractor to plow the streets when 4 or more inches of snow falls.

It's a deal that makes sense, Taylor said, particularly because of the subdivision's unique layout. With its narrow, winding streets with parked cars and lack of driveways and lawn extensions, city trucks have a hard time getting in to adequately clear the streets. In the past, the city's crews have had to dump snow onto sidewalks previously cleared by the condominium association's contractor.

"I know that snow removal has been a longstanding frustration for folks in the village," Taylor said. "I'm very excited that the city and the condominium association are working together on this. I think it shows flexibility on everyone's part because what we all really want is for the residents to receive the best service possible."

Anyone with questions on the Road Commission's policy on private contractor snow plowing is encouraged to contact Matt MacDonell, the agency's permits and subdivision supervisor, at (734) 327-6688 or [macdonellm@wcroads.org](mailto:macdonellm@wcroads.org).

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Your Voice 

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 22 Comments:

How about lowering your property tax for a service you can no longer provide that you have in the past? This is just a start, next will be having to hiring private police to monitor you streets and contract someone to respond to emergency calls. All this for an increase in your property tax. Of course it's going to save money, they may even make money and spend it on some self deserving art project.



**walker101**

Posted 17 hours ago

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Revenue from property taxes has gone down due to reduced assessed home values and the loss of major property tax payers like Pfizer. At the same time, operating costs have gone up, particularly for employee health care. Less money in and more money out means a reduction in services. A further reduction in the tax rolls might very well mean bring-your-own police and fire departments. People cloud the issue with a lot of complaints about the new city hall building, but very little of that comes out of the operating budget. It's just simple math.



**Mike D.**

Posted 17 hours ago

[\(Flag this Post\)](#)

When is Al Gore and the Global warming gang going to solve this problem for us? I like the warmer temps!



**xmo**

Posted 17 hours ago

[\(Flag this Post\)](#)

Soon our tax dollars will just be used to shuffle paperwork round and round and round.



**The Picker**

Posted 16 hours ago

[\(Flag this Post\)](#)

I'm glad to see that I'm not the only one who notices the slippery slope in allowing our governments to ignore services by hiring our own. The gap between the rich and poor will widen. I realize that many are not willing or able to have their taxes increased, but this is the downside.

It started with public education and now it's snow removal. Some have already mentioned police protection. That's not far behind, especially in Ypsilanti Township, where deputies have been cut. Firefighters will be next followed by water and waste services.

Let's just understand what we're doing when we vote down millages.



**Ignatz**

Posted 16 hours ago

[\(Flag this Post\)](#)

I wonder how much consideration was given to purchasing slightly used snow plows instead of new ones.



**kman8479**

Posted 16 hours ago

[\(Flag this Post\)](#)

We need a paradigm shift on government services.

Why can't police and fire personell be cross trained to operate snow plows?

Why can't road maintenance be outsourced to a private sector company....we do it with trash, cable TV, etc.

Picker...you are correct about tax dollars for shuffling paper. However, at local levels you better have a hard hat on, gun in a holster, or hose in hand OR you are dead weight.



**InsideTheHall**

Posted 16 hours ago

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hasn't anybody been to nyc in the winter? there, they just bolt a plow onto the front of garbage trucks on snowy days and let them double-duty, unless, of course, here in ann arbor... "we're not going to pick up trash unless it's piled over four feet high."



**a2guy1974**

Posted 15 hours ago

[\(Flag this Post\)](#)

Its common in NY STATE to have garbage trucks equipped with snow plows. Maybe AA could just plow the trash instead of picking it up. If its over 4" or more of course... Extra parking spaces when there are dumpsters around!!



**cibachrome**

Posted 14 hours ago

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I'm curious about the details concerning the trash truck/plow deal in New York. Do they plow while piking up trash or do they plow while not picking up trash? It seems to me that both can't be done a the same time efficiently, so they must be done exclusive to each other. Given that, wouldn't it be the same cost in man-hours? I can see savings in not having two types of vehicles. That however, must be offset in added wear and tear. Do the trash trucks also have the ability to haul/spread salt and sand? Please forgive my ignorance.



**Ignatz**

Posted 13 hours ago

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@Ignatz, here's a photo to give you an idea:

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/bursaw/3122150898/>

It's also notable that NYC hires emergency laborers to clear snow and ice in the case of storms that overwhelm their permanent staff:

<http://www.nyc.gov/html/dsny/html/pr2009/122109.shtml>



**Edward Vielmetti**  
AnnArbor.com Staff

Posted 13 hours ago

[\(Flag this Post\)](#)

Wow--I lived in A2 for 31 years and moved 2 yrs alo to NY-western NY that is. It's only Dec and they're already talking about cutting snow removal there? After the taxes you are asked to pay to live there? Please.

And don't even go getting NY into all this. Our taxes here aren't any better. The difference is that these people KNOW HOW TO REMOVE snow like you wouldn't believe. The trucks are 50% bigger, they work in teams. Michigan doesn't have a clue how to get rid of snow--and now you'll be paying extra.

Do you think these contractors want to put up all that money to have the city come back and say there is damage, but cannot prove who did that damage. Ridiculous-are you really going to put up with this?



**rrt911**

Posted 13 hours ago

[\(Flag this Post\)](#)

Mr. Vielmetti,  
Thanks for the info. The truck is what I imagined it to be.  
I do like the idea of emergency workers.



Ignatz

Posted 13 hours ago

[\(Flag this Post\)](#)

For the idiots who always bring up GLOBAL WARMING, when ice and snow storms are discussed, please get a clue. I know in your mind the world revolves around what happens in your world, but the term is GLOBAL, not Ann Arbor warming. It is also part of the reason we have larger snowfalls. More precipitation from melting glaciers equals coming back to areas further south in the form of rain and snow. So please do us a favor and shut up unless you have something to say about the issue at hand. As for having police and fire cross trained, you can no be serious. People who do a job as their primary job are more efficient in anything they do.



johnnya2

Posted 13 hours ago

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Is it just me, or does this sound like the biggest rip off yet?  
My taxes have not declined but my services sure are. Now the way this reads, instead of a application fee and proof of insurance. They get a 100 bucks a mile of roadway cleared and a security deposit, which I might add will never be returned by these crooks. Michigan roads are the worst. Ohio pays less in taxes and has better secondary roads than our primary ones. So you know there will be some "damage" found and security deposits will go into the coffers. And I wonder. Are they paying for the roads where they live to be taken care of while letting the rest of us go fend for ourselves?



Bones

Posted 12 hours ago

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Wow amazing, the county wants you to pay a security deposit for damage to their road. How about the county pay for all the mail boxes they knock down from plowing wet snow at 45-55mph. (I know I own a radar gun and clocked one on my country rd marked 35mph doing 52 mph last year). Tax revenue declining, my taxable value on my house went down the last 3 yrs yet my tax bill went up, so don't cry foul that you have less income. What all these subdivisions and business parks need to do is EVERYBODY that lives in these subs and business owners Deduct the cost of hiring out snow removal that was always provided and paid for out of your taxes from EVERYBODY'S tax bill, What are they going to do when EVERYBODY refuses to pay, zero, zilch, nada.



**scooter dog**

Posted 12 hours ago

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It's obvious from other's comments that A2 can do a much better job of snow re doing. City Hall needs to get a task force and start talking to officials in Buffalo, out the details of their city's snow removal service and then put the same in pla trying to reinvent the wheel when others do it so much better?



**SPM**

Posted 11 hours ago

[\(Flag this Post\)](#)

In the mid 70's all garbage trucks were set up to carry snow plows here in Ann Arbor.They were never used because they had a large street dept staff and all certified truck drivers in other dept's were trained to operate snow plows.( this was reserved for major snow falls)  
Also after main roads were plowed they then concentrated on roads where garbage pick-up was scheduled so that the garbage trucks would not get stuck.



**zollar**

Posted 11 hours ago

[\(Flag this Post\)](#)

Notice how they are (even now) requiring \$100 per mile to add to the government take. For "services" that they no longer perform. I can understand the need to require insurance. But the fees are a ridiculous extortion for work that the government does not provide. Stop making the costs higher with the fees, or shut down the entire county operation and let us (for less money) have the private sector plough ALL the roads.



**John Galt**

Posted 11 hours ago

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So in reality...WCRC is getting paid MORE to do less, is that correct? They will maintain less roads...but they will charge anyone else who DOES maintain those same roads.  
Wow. I think I'll try that at work. I think I'll not work next week, but I will charge the person who does my work for the pleasure of doing it.  
What a deal.



**Cash**

Posted 9 hours ago

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I think that there is a misunderstanding here. There is not one penny of property taxes used for plowing. The entire budget comes from gas taxes that have not been changed for ~10 years. In addition, the tax is per gallon not a percentage tax. With more fuel efficient cars we have less consumption, which results in less taxes. Personally, I could care less as I refuse to drive a death-mobile, and instead drive a full sized 4WD SUV and have no issue getting through the worst of roads. To each their own.



**Thick Candy Shell**

Posted 1 hour ago

[\(Flag this Post\)](#)

@Inside The Hall... under your plan, when would you like the emergency workers to perform these duties? When they are supposed to be on duty at the fire station? I don't know many plow trucks capable of putting out house fires or equipped with EMS gear. And before you suggest strapping a plow to the front of an Engine, forget about it. Those trucks aren't designed for that. Just curious as to the detail behind your plan...



**Really?**

Posted 31 minutes ago

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