



## COUNTY OF DANE

Department of Administration  
Room 425 City-County Building  
210 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.  
Madison, WI 53703-3342

Shelby Slaven  
Director of Administration

Phone: (608) 266-4941  
Fax: (608) 266-4425 TTY WI Relay 711

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To: Dane County Board Supervisors

From: Nick Bubb  
Assistant Director

Subject: Snow Removal – Cost Analysis

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At the October 27, 2025, meeting of the Public Works and Transportation Committee, the Committee requested an analysis of the County's decision to continue using two local businesses for snow removal services. The Committee was interested in whether there could be any cost savings by having county employees do this work instead of hiring the local businesses. This memo summarizes the analysis and research that was conducted on that topic.

The Department of Administration does not believe that having County employees do this work would result in any savings.

### **Background information**

2025 Resolution 159 approved a one-year extension to the current agreement with Deluca and Hartman to provide snow removal services for several county buildings. The extension now expires on September 30, 2026. Under the agreement, Deluca and Hartman provides snow removal services for the following county buildings: Sheriff's Office Southeast Precinct, Fen Oak, and the Dane County Job Center. The extension provided a new "not to exceed" threshold of \$90,000

2025 Resolution 160 similarly approved a one-year extension to the current agreement with Winter Services to provide snow removal services for a different set of county buildings. The extension now expires on September 30, 2026. Under the agreement, Winter Services provides snow removal for the Dane County Medical Examiner's Office, the County Detox Center, the Ferris Center, Saddlebrook, and the Juvenile Shelter. The extension provided a new "not to exceed" threshold of \$90,000.

While both extensions provided a new, not-to-exceed threshold, it is important to point out that the contract specifies rates for snow removal and the County only pays for the services rendered. For the last three years, the County has paid less than the "not to exceed" threshold. That information is summarized in the table below. The information for 2025 is not yet complete, as there are outstanding invoices to be processed. Deluca and Hartman did not provide snow removal services for winter 2023-24.

Invoices Paid				Not to Exceed			
Year	Winter Services	Deluca and Hartman	Total Spent	Winter Services	Deluca and Hartman		
2025	\$ 17,360	\$ 69,980	\$ <b>87,340</b>	\$ 90,000	\$ 90,000		
2024	\$ 50,920	\$ 44,767	\$ <b>95,687</b>	\$ 90,000	\$ 90,000		
2023	\$ 86,483	n/a	\$ <b>86,483</b>	\$ 95,000	n/a		

### Options using County Employees / Feasibility

Facilities Management has contracted with small businesses to remove snow at county facilities for many years. In response to the Committee's request, the Department of Administration looked at a number of ways for how the County could assume that responsibility instead of using a local business. The most feasible way to assume this responsibility would be to add permanent, full-time staff.

To reach this conclusion, the Department of Administration explored several ideas. Our goals in evaluating these options were to continue offering the same level of service to the existing buildings and to do so in a way that does not compromise other county operations. Other potential ways of offering this service outside of adding FTE were not feasible or offered less service to county buildings. We asked the following questions:

*Could other County Departments clear the snow from these buildings?*

No. When a snow removal event occurs, Facilities Management needs the snow removed from the areas around the buildings immediately. It is not possible for staff from Land and Water or from the Highway Department to be able to remove snow from those areas. While those Departments have staff that are capable of removing snow during an event, those Departments are first removing the snow from their areas. Facilities Management cannot wait for the other employees to finish before removing snow from additional areas. For example, if a snow event occurs late in the afternoon during business hours, snow needs to be removed from the Job Center immediately in order for our employees and the public to be able to safely access the building. This example holds true for all of the buildings receiving services from Deluca and Hartman or Winter Services. Waiting for another Department to finish its responsibilities would limit the amount of service being offered to these buildings and could create safety concerns for our employees and members of the public.

*Could other County employees (who have a different job) volunteer to clear snow?*

No. There is not a process to ask for and coordinate available volunteers for this work. The County's experience with a related process was slow and cumbersome. In a snow event, Facilities Management needs to be able to quickly respond to the current conditions. There simply is not time to send out a volunteer request, wait for the results of the volunteer request, and assign out volunteers. Further, there is always the possibility that we may not have sufficient number of volunteers in order to respond to the needs. Ensuring that the volunteer pool would be adequately trained and certified in the proper equipment is another logistical difficulty. Other county Departments would also have to be willing to send their staff out for this responsibility and working across county departments to fulfill this need is difficult.

Further, other County Departments who have a responsibility to clear snow have difficulties ensuring that a sufficient number of staff are able to report to duty to attend to their own snow responsibilities.

*Are there existing staff that could perform this work?*

No. Facilities Management has staff that are able to clear snow now, but that responsibility is limited to the downtown campus (the City-County Building, the Public Safety Building, and the Courthouse) and the Northport campus. To assume the responsibility for clearing snow at additional buildings covered by external vendors, Facilities Management would need additional staff.

*Could the County perform this work with LTEs?*

No. The use of LTEs to perform this work also has logistical difficulties. When a snow event occurs, the County would need to notify the pool of potential LTEs and ensure that an adequate number of LTEs are available to completely remove snow from the areas. Adverse weather events usually do not provide enough notice and other County Departments who have a responsibility in order to clear snow have difficulties ensuring that a sufficient number of staff are able to report to duty. It may not be possible to recruit a sufficient number of LTEs. Further, ensuring that this group of LTEs is adequately trained and certified in the proper equipment is another logistical difficulty.

### **Staffing Analysis**

*How many permanent, full-time staff would be needed?*

Since the County does not currently perform this function for facilities under both snow removal contracts, Facilities Management would need two teams of three Mechanical Repair Workers, for a total of 6.0 FTE.

Mechanical Repair Workers are the classification of employees that Facilities Management uses to clear snow at the downtown buildings (City-County Building, Public Safety Building, and the Courthouse) and for the Northport campus.

The full cost of adding a 1.0 FTE Mechanical Repair worker is \$113,500. This rate includes all of the roll up costs (FICA, WRS, etc.) and the County's health insurance. To add six, the County would need to add \$681,000 of General-Purpose Revenue annually.

*Could the County add this number of staff given the Hiring Freeze?*

It is unlikely that the County could hire for this many new and additional staff under the hiring freeze.

*Are there any other considerations for the County to assume this responsibility?*

Yes. Since the County asks local businesses to perform this service, Facilities Management does not have the necessary equipment and would need to acquire a total of \$1.3 million in additional capital equipment. Below is a table that shows the equipment that Facilities Management would need to acquire.

<u>Qty</u>	<u>Item</u>	<u>Est. Item Cost</u>	<u>Total</u>
4	F550 Heavy-duty Trucks with dump beds	\$ 120,000	\$ 480,000
4	Heavy-duty plows	\$ 15,000	\$ 60,000
4	Truck-mounted salter/spreader units	\$ 10,000	\$ 40,000
2	F350 Heavy duty trucks with tow package	\$ 80,000	\$ 160,000
2	Equipment hauling trailers	\$ 9,000	\$ 18,000
2	Heavy-duty skid loaders	\$ 90,000	\$ 180,000
2	Skid loader snow buckets	\$ 3,000	\$ 6,000
2	Skid loader power brooms	\$ 10,000	\$ 20,000
4	Snow blowers	\$ 4,000	\$ 16,000
1	Wheel loader	\$ 300,000	\$ 300,000
1	Wheel loader snow pusher	\$ 20,000	\$ 20,000
			<b>\$ 1,300,000</b>

Acquiring this equipment would create additional needs for the County. First, Facilities Management does not have adequate space to store the additional equipment. Second, there is a cost to maintain this equipment and keep it in good working order. The County would likely need to create funding lines for maintenance and repairs. Since we do not own any of this equipment, the current budget would not have adequate funding in order to absorb these costs. Third, and similar to the maintenance costs, the county would need resources in order to

fuel this equipment and the current operating budget does not have adequate funding to absorb these fuel costs. Fourth, the County would also need to be able to acquire and store additional quantities of salt currently provided by the contractors. The current operating budget does not have resources for this need either. We do not have a budget estimate for these needs, but these costs would be substantial.

### **Summary**

The County would not save resources by using County employees to provide these snow removal services. Between the last two years, the County spent roughly \$91,600 per year over both contracts. To assume this level of service, the county would need two teams of three people, costing an additional \$681,000. Even if there was some way of making this work with just one additional staff person, it still would not be cost effective: A single additional FTE costs \$113,000.

Overall, it is inefficient for maintenance staff to travel around the county plowing parking lots and clearing sidewalks. Contracting out for this service means that these locations have snow removed when it needs to be removed.

Lastly, by using these local businesses, the County only pays for snow removal when it is necessary. By staffing this responsibility with additional permanent County employees, the County would be swapping a variable cost with a fixed cost. The County would be responsible for paying for the cost of the equipment and the labor of the additional staff, even if no snow fell.