

Winter puts big hit on salt budget

Written by KRISTYN HALBIG ZIEHM
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<http://www.ozaukeepress.com/images/022014/saltSM.png>

With more rain, snow forecast, city searches for money to keep streets clear

With forecasts for freezing rain and more snow in the next week, Port Washington officials are trying to figure out how they will find the money to salt the city streets.



Ald. Dave Larson, chairman of the Finance and License Committee, said Tuesday that the city has already spent 97% of its 2014 budget for salt and 65% of its street department overtime budget.

The city budgeted \$65,000 for salt, and with freezing rain predicted for Thursday, Feb. 20, “that will probably clean us out,” he said.

The overtime budget for the year is \$25,000, he added, and as of Feb. 1, \$16,300 had been spent.

“We’re certainly going to have to spend the money,” Larson said.

The culprit, he said, is a long, snowy winter in which small snowstorms are the norm rather than blizzards that drop a lot of snow at one time.

“Who would have predicted that we’d have 1-inch snows every other day and we’d have to drop salt every other day?” Larson asked.

“Remember, when we budget for this, it’s a guess.”

In December, he noted, the city exceeded its salt budget, spending about \$30,000. The city

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was able to make up that money because several projects came in under budget.

The city will have to scrutinize its spending this year to try and make up the shortfall as well, Larson said.

“We really don’t have a choice,” he said.

Image information: PORT WASHINGTON STREET Department workers have been a familiar sight plowing and salting Franklin Street and other roads in the city this winter. Frequent snowfalls this winter have taxed the city’s budget for salt and overtime.

Photo by Sam Arendt