

INFORMAL MEETING OF THE CITY COUNCIL HELD SUNDAY,
FEBRUARY 12, 1978, AT 6:00 O'CLOCK P.M.

Council President Pro Tempore Fargnoli calls the meeting to order and informs the members this is an informal City Council Meeting open to discussion due to the impending snow storm.

The following members are present: Acting Council President Fargnoli and Councilmen Addison, Almagno, Bradshaw, Councilwoman Brassil, Councilmen Cirelli, Flynn, Garan, Glavin, Gorodetsky, Johnson, Lynch, Mansolillo, Merola, Pearlman, Petrosinelli, Stravato, Tomasso, Turchetta and Xavier - 20.

Absent: Council President Haxton, Councilmen Ahern, Cola, Henries and Salvatore. -5.

Councilman Pearlman I agree, this is not an official meeting of the City Council because of our City Charter Section 3.11.

We felt we were in a midst of an emergency and an informal meeting of the City Council, as a whole, is called to make recommendation to the Council as a whole and to the Mayor; if handled conservatively it will be good.

We have all been receiving dozens of phone calls and meeting people on the streets. We have received insults as well as compliments. It is interesting when touring the neighborhoods.

I urge that the City Clerk be requested to keep notes and print the minutes of this informal meeting.

COUNCILMAN PEARLMAN makes a motion to that effect, which is seconded by Councilman Johnson.

I have a number of constructive suggestions to outline for discussion and throw them in for discussion.

1. I think during future snow storms of this type, or any emergency, that a special committee should be set up with the Mayor's Office, called an Emergency Session Committee. It will be helpful if they work on recommendations.

2. One of my constituents recommended a snow alert plan, whereby the use of sirens of Civilian Defense (three times sounded) then every car off the road or they be penalized.

3. Work out a better communication system with the Department of Public Works and the City Council.

COUNCILMAN LYNCH: I agree with Councilman Pearlman's remarks. This should be a constructive meeting. We all know the problems we run into in our wards and those present here denote our interest. I have never felt so helpless as during this storm emergency. He hit it right - the fact of communication.

I suggest that we get a number to call. This we need with either the Public Works Department or the Police Department, whoever controls the storm and removal of snow. It is quite disappointing to receive calls as we have had.

problems of people running out of oil, sick people and heart diseases.

For us to call the numbers we have, which are regular numbers, places us in the same position as every other citizen of Providence. We have the people in our respective wards turning to us, calling for assistance and we are faced with a busy signal or a line that is not answered.

This storm is not behind us yet, there is possibly another storm. We must look ahead to the future to afford the citizens of our City the protection they deserve. Communication is a major point to be discussed.

COUNCILMAN CIRELLI: I agree with Councilmen Lynch and Pearlman. I think the problem is a direct line of communication which we do not have.

I made a survey of the 6th Ward and twenty-five streets in my area, probably more, have not been touched. I think some of the people working on the streets do not know where they are.

I would personally like to get involved with the snow plowing in the 6th Ward but I cannot get a line of communication. The big equipment is run by out of State drivers who do not know the area. We need a direct and good line of communication to work together and get involved in our own Wards. Most Councilmen are willing to work.

COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: The thing is the frustration of it all. It was a situation where you made a phone call and got a busy signal anywhere.

The feeling is you are a Councilman and should be able to accomplish something, to serve some type of a common good. The people call us and ask what we can do as a Councilman, and we can do nothing. I think about the Civil Defense Budget, we almost cut that out of the budget. I would like to know just what they did accomplish. I heard about the equipment stored, where was it? It wasn't in the City of Providence.

We are all feeling the same problems. We must coordinate a program. Either a Committee, or numbers to call. I want a number that no one knows but the Councilmen. We have to communicate.

Put a Committee working with Civil Defense, because if that department is going to sit in this budget, let it start paying its way.

COUNCILMAN GORODETSKY: I have a lot of information. Since the storm started, I have been on the street, in this building and the Police Station. I didn't see one other Councilman there. I know Councilman Stravato was there, someone told me. I didn't see one other meeting or trying to meet with the Mayor. I didn't see anyone in the Police Station.

I do not come on critical, just truth. The reason I said it, is I didn't see you in the City Hall, or with the Mayor or the Police Station with high level officers. I agree

with what you said, the right people were not making policy in the right way. I attended a staff meeting, I worked in, I tried to be around to be where the plans were being made I didn't see any Councilmen, I was looking. I did not ask anyone to have one street done. I did not agree with some of the things that have been said. I don't think any Councilman should have a street plowed before a citizen. Bob Harootunian of Civil Defense Office was there and working close every minute. The Fire Department was fantastic.

I felt all alone. There was no one around to push the Mayor. I had some personal discussion with the Mayor, I found out information about the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Wards. The fire stations couldn't get out of their doors, but this Administration and the State political staff were fluttering back and forth. That is a waste of time for our Mayor.

As far as what should have happened, the Committee idea is a fantastic one. In a disaster like this, a private number doesn't matter if a fairly good plan was devised. This was not the Mayor's plan, it was the Police Department's plan. We should work with the top level.

I agree that we should have a Committee, be in on the plans as to how it gets done. As for any Mayor who refuses the input of a Council, is not much of a Mayor. That is why I have always been so sorry that members of the Council cannot get along with the Administration.

COUNCILMAN CIRELLI: Do you think if me, Councilmen Xavier, Flynn and Glavin made suggestions, he would listen to us?

COUNCILMAN GORODETSKY: That is a difficult question for me to answer. I think he would listen, but I don't know if he would buy it or not, but a group or a Committee of the Council is different.

COUNCILMAN STRAVATO: I am happy to see we are here as a group of public servants and not political. I agree with Councilman Pearlman, that the Committee should consist of the entire City Council and members of the Mayor's Office and the Mayor.

I was critical of the snow removal in the beginning, until I realized the disaster. I was told about a special number in the Public Works Department, I called and you were told by Skippy that no one was to use that number other than people from the Mayor's Office. I said as long as I was a City Official and there was a time of crisis I would use the number.

I disagree with Sandy as far as where to be, you should be in your Wards. Representative Ferrazano and myself worked hours delivering medication to hospitals, etc. I think in every Ward, every Councilman is a public servant. I don't look to myself as a politician. We coordinated the snow

removal from the Hartford Avenue fire station; Councilman Almagno was with us also.

ACTING COUNCIL PRESIDENT FARGNOLI: You couldn't do it in the 5th Ward.

COUNCILMAN STRAVATO: We didn't get permission. We knew it was being coordinated in the fire station and as City Officials we felt it our duty to respond and we worked as many as 30 straight hours without sleep. We took these out of State Workers by Blocks and opened up the fire lanes. I would say 99% of the streets in the 7th Ward have been done, only because we worked as a team and stayed with the drivers, worked with them. I think it is the duty of every Councilman and Senator and Representative to give their fullest. My business was closed. We did it by blocks (He speaks of the problems he encountered).

After fire lanes are opened, then open the other streets in the blocks, or emergency streets. If everyone did this, the Wards would be in better shape. If the storm had hit at a time in the middle of the night, we would not have been in this crisis. I would say 99% of our streets in my Ward are opened one lane.

COUNCILMAN ADDISON: We have heard about what individuals have done, but we have to have a plan and I believe we have to a number. I will not elaborate, because everyone is talking about what they did, but we were all involved.

I had that number at the Public Works Department, but I was told they were not coordinating the plan. We are here primarily to discuss a plan and I think it is important that every Councilman is highly involved because we are getting the calls. Let's get a plan with all the Councilmen involved.

COUNCILMAN MEROLA: I have to agree with Councilman Stravato and Councilman Gorodetsky a little. Up until Wednesday morning, there was no equipment in the 13th Ward, only trucks. I was down to see the Mayor and told him of the situation and he said if you can get the equipment, get it. I used private equipment and the City Will pay. I would like to see, instead of the Public Works Department, every area have a station with a foreman or supervisor, where everyone reports. Check on all the equipment. We used the Italo-American Club for a headquarters.

If they set up a station in every Ward where the Councilman can get to, he can see they are doing their job and the plan on the streets, see the ones that should be open first.

COUNCILWOMAN BRASSIL: We missed the whole point. The first thing here is to establish priority. The residential areas have priority over the City. If people in my area had a fire, no one would have gotten out. We didn't have any equipment until 3:00 o'clock A.M. Saturday. The people were frightened. Priorities have to be established. The residents

take priority over the City. Establish priorities first.

If the equipment had been called out at 2:00 o'clock when the storm started, this would not have been so bad, they were not called out until 6:00 o'clock P.M. traffic was already clogged.

Saturday morning at 3:00 in the morning is the first time our Ward saw a plow.

ACTING COUNCIL PRESIDENT FARGNOLI: As of 2:00 o'clock this afternoon, 15% of the 5th Ward was cleaned and this comes from communication. At 2:00 o'clock communication sent the 5th Ward snow plow to the Fourth Ward because it received a request for 3 streets. Myself and Councilman Lynch received 150 calls from people who had run out of oil. One of the drivers on the bulldozer told me "Whatever Fagnoli wants, don't give it to him".

COUNCILMAN GLAVIN: I think the meeting is going along pretty good. We have had constructive ideas, Councilman Stravato is a close friend of mine, but he got carried away. I think it is being redundant for all of us to stand here and say what we have done or not done in our Wards. That is not why we are here. Councilman Gorodetsky made a statement that when he came down to City Hall he didn't see a Councilman here, and went to the Police Station and didn't see a Councilman.

Tuesday, at the time of the storm, realizing the disaster, I took a walk down and went to the Mayor's Office and the first thing I got was, "who are you" I told him who I was and told him I wanted to speak to someone on snow removal. I waited and no one asked me to come in to the office. Fifteen minutes later, someone came out and didn't identify himself and I told him why I was down and asked what the City planned to do with reference to my ward in particular and his words were "we are in a disaster right now and we are doing the best we can".

I didn't want to come on too strong, but I said, couldn't you give me a better explanation as to the intent to fight this and he said they gave us equipment broken and they would do the best they could. I didn't ask to see the Mayor, but I expected to be called in. Councilman Pearlman made good suggestions. I think that some type of warning system should be implemented that would give us adequate warning that we have an impending storm coming and get the people out of the City.

We heard suggestions from Councilwoman Brassil about too much time in the City, absolutely. We talked to the Acting Chief of Police, but he did not give answers, he was co-operative. Most streets of the City, except for downtown had not been touched and we still couldn't tell our constituents how the City was fighting the storm.

I would like to have seen the Mayor and the Commissioner of Public Safety here tonight. I think we have to all be involved in a time of disaster. We must get together and get

working on this now as we do have an impending storm coming. We should start getting plans of attack in operation right now. If the Commissioner is in the building, ask him to come in here now, he was requested to be here.

COUNCILMAN GORODETSKY: By law it is not for us to design a snow removal plan. We have to have the Mayor listen to what we say, because by law, it is his duty to remove the snow.

COUNCILMAN XAVIER: By the law - who is Ronnie Glantz by the law. Because businessmen didn't want to close the City until 6:00 o'clock P.M. the City went along with it. Who is he to put a parking ban on, he is an Acting City Solicitor.

COUNCILMAN GORODETSKY: We can devise a snow removal plan and make the Mayor aware of the fact, we cannot do it effectively by asking the Commissioner up here to us, we have to be able to sit down with the Executive Branch in the formulation of the plan.

COUNCILMAN FLYNN: About one year ago I spoke to John Mancone, Councilman Cirelli and I asked him if we could go out with the inspectors in each Ward to coordinate the situation to try to get together. At the next Council Meeting I will introduce a Resolution for the Committee on Public Works, which I am Chairman of to investigate the snow storm of February 6, 1978 as to the following:

1. When were city employees called back.
2. How many pieces of equipment were dispatched at the beginning of the storm.
3. Is there a comprehensive plan for the entire City.
4. Does the Civil Defense Office have a plan filed with the State Civil Defense Office.

We want to know what happened and what will happen.

COUNCILMAN MANSOLILLO: I rise out of dire concern of Councilman Flynn's remarks. I appreciate that each member is concerned with the quality of life in their neighborhood. I have heard from Councilman Flynn that we are not be be political, yet Councilman Flynn calls the Providence Journal and says Councilman Mansolillo's street is plowed. That I call despicable behavior. Indeed my street, or portion was plowed. As I understand, because a city communication truck was stuck and yet a member of this Council, a brother of mine, chooses to use that and then say it is not political. I am the one that is not political. I don't stoop to that. Thank you.

COUNCILMAN BRADSHAW: I would like to report briefly that my badge came in handy. I circulated around my ward. A man told me his idea; main arteries first; fire protection takes precedence over everything.

I would like to compliment the students and especially Brown University who did a spectacular job, they went to the Red Cross Building and distributed food for the rescue centers. They stayed until the job was done.

I would like to compliment the men who handled the pay-loaders. We have a situation facing the City which could be chaotic.

We should either get the Commissioner of Public Safety or the Mayor up here to set up rules in case of another storm. Do not conclude this meeting without major plans.

ACTING CITY SOLICITOR GLANTZ: Councilman Cirelli asked me whether a Councilman could travel with Inspectors within the various Wards. The teams in the Wards are now under the jurisdiction of the Army Corps of Engineers. As of 6:00 o'clock tonight they assume 100% of the cause. We are under their jurisdiction. There is no objection from the Corps that any Councilman that desires to do that, will get transportation to his Inspector.

COUNCILMAN PEARLMAN: What can be done about the \$25.00 towing charge. We are receiving complaints about closing the City tomorrow to business.

ACTING CITY SOLICITOR GLANTZ: We towed, as of ten minutes ago, 3,000 vehicles into lots. The fine, or the charge is \$25.00. To waive it, the City Council has to decide whether the City picks up the cost or the person pays.

The reason it went from \$15.00 to \$25.00 is because they could not get relief crews. We met with Rhode Island Public Transit Authority and Governor Garrahy and there are buses coming for people in the downtown business district, essential personnel and hospitals. The Chamber does not want to concentrate on retail business at this time. We hope to open the City Tuesday.

There are 16 teams and more coming. With the teams there is a police officer and an Inspector of the City and Army Inspectors who get a map of the ward. The Army looks at a map. They have a list. If the Councilmen want to travel with the Inspector, they can. The list is called in by citizens or inspectors. The City and Army Corps of Engineers.

COUNCILMAN LYNCH: Sandy made a statement before that the removal of snow is an administrative function and the Council cannot get into it directly, I say you should. The fact is that our constituents don't turn to the Mayor's Office they turn to their Councilmen. While we are not charged with the removal of snow, we wind up with the calls.

Acting City Solicitor Glantz gives the following telephone numbers to call: 421-2489, 272-2012 and 421-7343.

Under federal law, their primary function is to establish routes of travel for emergency vehicles. After the Army gets out, it is cleaning up the streets. They hired private vehicles to widen the streets and remove the snow. They are first just opened. They go where they are told to go by an Inspector. The Inspector is in the car with the equipment.

COUNCILMAN STRAVATO moves that leaders of the City Council meet with the Mayor's Office and the responsible people make a decision. This motion is seconded by Councilman Addison.

COUNCILMAN GORODETSKY: I feel all the members of the Council should meet in the Mayor's Office to discuss what role we can play to assist in case of another disaster.

On motion of Councilman Pearlman, seconded by Councilman Bradshaw, this informal meeting votes that Mayor Cianci join us tonight, it has to be done now and it is difficult to get together; if after the meeting tonight, further action has to be taken, then a sub-committee can be set up to work things out.

COUNCILMAN TOMASSO: Carolyn had the most important statement I have heard. One of the prime things, is the word "priority". I am concerned when I come to Downtown Providence and see the streets clean of snow. We should establish priority. Is Downtown Providence that important that we forsake the neighborhoods. Under the circumstances there is total discouragement of carrying on business in the City. What about the stranded people in the neighborhoods. There should be fair allocation in every Ward of the equipment coming into the City. Every Ward should have the same amount of equipment and the Councilmen should have a say as to where the equipment will come.

At this time Mayor Cianci is escorted into the Chambers by the Majority and Minority Leaders.

MAYOR CIANCI: Thank you for the opportunity to come to the Council Chambers and discuss the seriousness of the disaster. I will inform of the experiences over the past week.

For what happened Monday afternoon, we had a snow emergency declared and asked businesses to empty out. 3:00 to 4:00 o'clock that afternoon we had something like 4,000 automobiles stranded in the City inoperable. In addition the reasons why they didn't exit is for some reason, the highways, Routes 146, 95, 295 and 195 were not passable. We took aerial photographs taken of the City and they will show all these cars attempting to make exits and were diverted on their own to other routes in the City 85% were from outside of the City of Providence. We had sandtrucks to cover the City of Providence and plows, because of the traffic congestion, the trucks got caught in the congestion.

After that the Governor declared a State of Emergency.

The troops that came in here, the Corps of Engineers, had one mission, to clear off the Interstate highways.

Mr. Lynch's task was to work with the State Civil Defense and the Governor's Office in getting the priorities and equipment. They were told what was needed by the Public Works Department and my staff, the type of equipment, payloaders and bulldozers. That is what we needed for the snow.

On Wednesday Lynch was called and on Thursday he was, we had not received any plan for the State of Rhode Island. On Friday Lynch was removed and a Captain Hefferman was sent to replace him. He was transferred by the Federal Government

from this position to another location.

The State for two days, did not have a plan of priorities.

As to what occurred on Friday evening. I had a meeting with Hefferman, at that point the City of Providence had eight payloaders assigned to us, prior to Friday.

Those eight payloaders were deployed. One payloader was to tow trucks. We didn't get equipment in our City until Saturday morning, the kinds necessary to clean the streets in the City.

In addition to that, the City of Woonsocket, not half as big as our City, received the same pieces of equipment before we did. Central Falls, one square mile, had five pieces. The Town of Westerly had in the same vicinity.

As the Federal Office was contracting with private firms, they came as far away as Buffalo and Syracuse. They were operating from the priorities as set by the State Civil Defense and the Governor's Office. I spoke to the Governor and he offered his assistance the day the storm started.

In the interceding days, until Friday, the only pieces of equipment we had was 8 payloaders. There were jeeps, smaller pieces that didn't help us to remove this kind of snow.

As of the meeting with Hefferman, we started to get equipment. We now have probably 60 pieces of the kind I am talking about. The first federal assistance that we had other than that was from a unit that was clearing Routes 95 and 195. I met with Col. Ayres and he said he wanted to put 3 payloaders into Providence and they had equipment. This distinction is important to make. The troops had one mission. The federal contracting officer does not work for the troops. They were out on 195 and 95. The federal contracting office was to contract equipment based on priorities and needs as assessed by the Governor's Office. When they did locate the equipment, they would say, where do you want it to go and the Governor's staff assigned it. We received 8 payloaders and bulldozers together.

If you check, you will see a number of these items came in went to Warwick, Westerly, Central Falls and Woonsocket. They had to contract every man for us. I cannot say that Providence should have the highest priority because of the hospitals and the highest percentage of elderly and the essential services rendered, we should have priority. We should discuss for one more minute, where the equipment is now. I took a trip over the City, one of the biggest problems right now is the 5th Ward.

There are 13 working teams, with them is a policeman, we are operating on Channel 2, exclusively utilized for this operation. Thirteen policemen, one for each group.

United integrity is important. They have a plan of what they are to do and a map of what they are supposed to be doing.

The City Inspector is in charge of the team. Last evening I got the controversial C.B.'s, that unit was put into service in the Broad Street and Eddy Street area. (He explains where they are going).

We have a fuel truck that goes around. We have received calls and they say use the payloader that is sitting, but that is men that are being shipped in and they must come in and sign up before going out and being detailed.

The major problem now is trying to clean up around the Marriott and that area. The federal government is not in the business of widening the streets, just plowing and making roads passible. They will extend and widen essential streets that are for rescue, fire or hospitals.

The situation downtown, we have a director, 8 pieces of equipment and a central point was needed to operate. If we are incapable of doing the roads, open the central area first. A central point for Police and Fire Headquarters. We had something downtown to house the many people stranded in the downtown area.

We got a helicopter pad because it was the only way to get into the City or hospitals.

The men in the Public Works Department did a yeoman's job and the Fire Department also. The East Side was totally unprotected because the fire equipment could not move.

We intend, by Tuesday, to have the City open as much as possible. People will come back to work. One of the reasons we would have a traffic tie-up is because the City Streets are not as wide as normal and not down to the pavement. There are 3,000 to 4,000 automobiles in lots throughout the City; the Civic Center Parking Lot, Park'n Lock and all night cars were being brought in.

We will open the City Tuesday, if we can, maybe on a limited basis. All the equipment is being paid for 100% by the federal government.

ACTING COUNCIL PRESIDENT FARGNOLI: Why was the 5th Ward left to be the last, we have two hospitals in the area.

MAYOR CIANCI: I don't think you can say any Ward was not plowed.

ACTING COUNCIL PRESIDENT FARGNOLI: Why was it at 2:00 this afternoon, according to communication, 15% of the 5th Ward was not touched and 2:00 in the afternoon, they took a team of snow removers and sent them to the 4th Ward because a certain person wanted three streets plowed.

MAYOR CIANCI: I will check into that. All of this will be the subject of an investigation as to the distribution of equipment that was given to us. Only 8 pieces of equipment to us, when many other pieces were diverted to other Cities.

COUNCILMAN CIRELLI: Old fashioned winters are here to stay. If the situation happens again in 3 or 4 weeks, in a City of 178,000 people, are we going to be asking for the federal government to take care of the City of Providence or devise a plan. If it happens again, we cannot depend on the federal government.

COUNCILMAN LYNCH: How can you reconcile your comments. You say the State has a responsibility. I agree with Acting Council President Fagnoli that we have two major hospitals, in that respect the charge is to get these areas cleared. How then, do you reconcile that the 5th Ward is in such bad condition.

MAYOR CIANCI: The major arteries are the main concern, there are not enough tow trucks to move cars.

COUNCILWOMAN BRASSIL: They were giving out warnings at 11:00 to 12:00 why didn't you get your own plows out?

MAYOR CIANCI: Some of our trucks were out and the plows were themselves stuck in traffic.

We are trying to get the City back to normal trying to widen the arteries and distribute the automobiles tomorrow and try to have the City open Tuesday.

COUNCILWOMAN BRASSIL: You establish priorities and you feel the City had priority over the residential areas.

MAYOR CIANCI: The equipment we had available, I think was 3 pieces of equipment, we had to keep the fire and central business area and police and fire headquarters cleared. We had requests to set up helicopters here by the National Guard.

COUNCILMAN GLAVIN: The main reason we asked you here was to try to find out a plan now for the City of Providence, for the future.

At this point Mayor Cianci and Councilwoman Brassil have discussion wherein she states:

Stop putting the blame on the State and put it where it belongs, where were the plows?

The Mayor state he has people waiting for him in his office and must get downstairs.

COUNCILMAN PEARLMAN: One of the great concerns of the City Council is the lack of communication. Acting City Solicitor Glantz gave us telephone numbers to call. We want to straighten out the communication problem to prevent any future problems and workout a plan. Have a meeting with a sub-committee if you cannot stay longer.

One of the reasons we asked for you is because they predict a storm Monday night.

MAYOR CIANCI: If we have another storm Monday night, we have enough equipment in the City of Providence to handle it, that is the key.

Ask The Acting Council President Fagnoli to appoint a sub-committee to meet with myself and representatives on a plan and communication for the City Council concerning the emergency and future emergency and assist us to resolve what is happening in the City. I will meet and discuss those items with them.

Thank you very much.

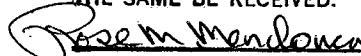
At 8:15 o'clock P.M. the City Council adjourns and all interested members of the City Council go down to the Mayor's Office for further discussion.


City Clerk

IN CITY COUNCIL
MAR 16 1978

READ:

WHEREUPON IT IS ORDERED THAT
THE SAME BE RECEIVED.

 CLERK