

## Items to Consider When Comparing Proposals

Getting rid of the snow and ice that comes down every year in the Madison area is a huge challenge for business owners, property managers, and office building supervisors, but one that they don't always put a lot of time into. Most just go with the company that offers what looks like the lowest bids, or for the really unlucky few, try to shovel or plow it themselves.

Given that you're counting on your snow removal method to keep employees, customers, or residents safe and your business operating doesn't it make sense to look beyond the figure at the bottom? The best, or cheapest, snow and ice removal price doesn't do a lot for you if the professional shows up with his plow four hours late. Below are some details to pay attention to as you look through different bids:

### APPLES TO APPLES

#### **Snow removal pricing.**

Obviously, the first thing you want to look at is the overall price. Don't just stop there, make sure you know whether you are paying by the hour, the inch, or some other measurement. Some contractors consistently and purposefully leave some details out so the price seems cheap while other proposals are so confusing it's near impossible to find out what your fees will actually be.

#### *Items to consider*

- Are they opening the drives and lots only and then charging you for cleanup fees the next day that should have been included in the initial plowing? Are the "cleaning up" by request only or whenever they feel like generating another invoice?
  - *The only clean up fees ever charged should be from special requests to move snow piles, clean up drifts, around recently moved vehicles, city plow ins, or from clients who do not salt and the melt or pack needs to be cleaned up.*
- Do they repair lawn damage from plows the following spring free of charge?
  - ***We believe this should be included in all snow & ice contracts.***
- Are they pricing per push? What is a "push", what quantity of snow will be moved in a "push", how many times will they come during an average 1-3" event?
  - *Contractors bidding this way so the price will seem cheap. Avoid contracts that have such vague language. You will pay more in the end.*
- Are they including underground parking, private roads, fire hydrants pods, bus stops?
  - *Unfortunately these are often additional hidden fees.*
    - ***Our pricing is simple, and all inclusive.***

### **Ice Control pricing.**

Salt pricing is probably the biggest variable in snow and ice control contracting. Contractors can't control salt pricing or availability. What they should be doing however is providing a flat rate regardless of the amount of ice being melted or environmental circumstances.

#### *Items to consider*

- Are you are paying for salt by the bag, by the ton, or by the application?
  - *Salting both sidewalks and lots should be priced by the application. Contractors who propose a flat fee plus the cost of salt are simply adding a variable and placing all the risk on the customer.*
    - ***Our pricing is flat rate, no matter what the current price of salt is or how much we had to use.***
- What is the quality of salt the contractor is using?
  - *The lower the quality of salt, the more that is required to melt the ice. Do you really want your pricing to vary by current price, availability, the employee spreading it, and quality?*
    - ***Greenscapes uses only high quality bagged salt. With melting temperatures to -15 degrees. We will never use rock salt on your sidewalks.***
- How secure is your contractors salt supply? It happens all too often that that contractors or a local supplier runs out of salt. Contractors who only buy from a single source are now cut off from other suppliers as they supply their main customers.
  - *Will they run out? Do they depend on a few local suppliers only? Will they raise their price? If your contractor runs out and you request emergency service from another contractor expect to pay three times the cost and be serviced only after all other accounts.*
    - ***We maintain our own bulk salt supply in our own salt shed. Not only do we not run out, we often are supplying other contractors halfway through the season.***

A lot of snow removal companies like to brag about how low their prices are, how their snow removal contracts are flexible, and the hours you'll save by not shoveling on your own. What they don't tell you is you'll be paying extra if it snows more than you anticipated, on a weekend, or in any other way that inconveniences them. Don't forget to peek at the fine print in your snow and ice removal agreement.