



TOWN OF HARWINTON

HARWINTON, CONNECTICUT 06791

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January 22, 2024

Dear Resident,

I would like to start by introducing myself. My name is Justin Downes, and I am the new Director of Public Works here in Harwinton. I grew up in Harwinton, and currently reside in Torrington where my wife and I are raising our 3 children. Over the last 20 years, I have worked in the road construction industry, installing watermain, paving, constructing culverts, plowing, doing road maintenance, and the list goes on.

With winter upon us, and 3.5 miles of gravel roads in Harwinton, I have gotten some questions and concerns from residents which I wanted to be sure to address by sharing the philosophy behind how we have been handling the gravel roads this winter.

This fall the Public Works Department cleaned the leaves from the road surface, and roadside ditches. Because leaves deteriorate, we do not want them mixing with the gravel on the roads. As leaves deteriorate they can cause voids, which turn into pot holes. Once cleaned up, we hauled in over 500 yards of gravel to fill holes, wheel tracks, and restore crown to roads. To maintain this surface during the winter months, and to prevent ruts and pot holes come spring, it is important to let the gravel roads freeze and harden completely.

In early winter, before the roads are completely frozen, you will see us using a smaller truck to plow and only a small amount of salt/sand mix to treat the roads. Gravel roads are not like asphalt, they will retain water and continue to make ice even if treated with salt, where an asphalt road will allow water to runoff and the sun and wind will dry them. Leaving a layer of snow on the top of the gravel roads will also help to alleviate some of that, although I do understand that it may for a short time cause the roads to seem difficult to drive on. This idea of leaving a layer of snow on the roads may be different than techniques used in years past, however, if we don't keep a layer of snow, the road will not freeze properly and it does not plow well. It then becomes very taxing on the town's equipment and our drivers, and it results in road disrepair - which is more costly to fix come spring.

Once spring arrives, the Public Works Department will go out and clean up the gravel roads. Using much of the same process that was done in the fall. We will also address any damage to yards that occurred during the winter. It is the hope that by taking care of the roads over the winter as stated above, the amount of work and material needed in the spring is minimal, which will help to save on costs.

Our scenic roads are an important part of Harwinton, and it is important to me that residents are confident in the way they are being maintained. If there are any other questions or more explanation needed, please feel free to contact me by email at Publicworks@harwinton.us or by phone 860-485-3892.

Sincerely,

Justin Downes
Director of Public Works
Town of Harwinton

Cc: Michael R. Criss, First Selectman