

Addressing the Winter Salt Shortage and Town Preparations

In recent months, various media sources, including *The Bee*, have reported extensively on this winter's salt shortage. While multiple factors have contributed to the issue, one of the primary causes stems from a state mandate requiring municipalities to purchase salt exclusively from a New York-based supplier. Unfortunately, this provider was unable to meet the high demand, leaving many municipalities with limited purchasing options.

Despite Highway Superintendent James Dussing securing a salt reserve for the season nearly a year in advance, the contracted supplier was unable to fulfill its obligation to the Town.

Historically, the Town has reserved up to 6,000 tons of salt for the winter season, with the majority stored at the mine in Mt. Morris and delivered weekly as needed. Prior to the shortage, salt was priced at approximately \$45 per ton, meaning a single round of road treatment cost around \$6,000. However, due to the shortage, the Town has been forced to procure salt from out-of-state providers at a significantly increased cost of \$110 per ton, substantially impacting the budget required to maintain safe road conditions. Fortunately, the Town has set aside emergency funds to ensure that our salt reserves remain sufficient.

As the Town continues to expand, the demand for road maintenance has increased significantly compared to two decades ago. Recognizing this growing need, Superintendent Dussing advocated for the construction of a larger salt storage facility, nearly tripling the Town's storage capacity. This proactive approach ensured that while many other municipalities faced severe shortages, our Town maintained several thousand tons of salt in reserve. Additionally, the Town still utilizes the original 1,500-ton salt barn, which serves as equipment storage in the winter and topsoil storage in the summer. Given the recent challenges with suppliers, discussions with Superintendent Dussing indicate that filling both storage facilities before winter is a prudent strategy to guarantee an adequate salt supply. While this approach requires upfront investment, ensuring road safety remains a top priority.

Our Town is also among the few municipalities equipped with brine systems in its snow removal trucks. The use of Magic-O, a specialized brine solution, helps keep salt adhered to the road surface, thereby reducing the overall amount of salt required for deicing operations.

The dedication of our Highway Department remains unmatched in Erie County. While some municipalities struggle to clear roads by the evening, our crews ensure that roads are passable by 6:00 AM, demonstrating their commitment to public safety and efficiency.

Last week, in response to the worsening salt shortage, both the State and County declared a State of Emergency, allowing salt imports from alternative suppliers. As a result, our Town recently received a shipment from Chile, a significant international salt supplier that transports materials via barge from South America to New York.

Additionally, as property tax bills are now due next Monday, residents will notice that although property assessments have increased, I have appropriately adjusted the tax rate to mitigate the impact. As a result, most residents will see little to no increase in their tax payments compared to

last year. The County and School Districts have also adjusted their rates in response to reassessments.

We remain committed to ensuring the safety of our roads and the responsible management of taxpayer funds, and we appreciate the continued support of our residents as we navigate this challenging winter season.