

## Hawkins: response to snow excellent

By Chris Sykes Staff Writer, Orange Transcript

The city weathered its first winter storm last weekend but Mayor Eldridge Hawkins Jr. and other city officials said they plowed through it successfully.

As much as 10 inches of snow fell Orange on Saturday and Sunday morning. Hawkins and Arlene Kemp, the city's public works director, said the situation had been well handled. Hawkins credited her with galvanizing the department's employees to plow and salt the streets to make sure that safe passage would be possible once the storm moved ahead.

"All of the streets were salted and the snow was cleared," Hawkins said. "Despite the fact that we don't store our own salt supplies here in the city, we have worked out a deal where the city of East Orange has agreed to hold half of what we do have and make it available to us as needed when situations like this occur. There is a fee that we are charged for that amenity, but the alternative was not having any salt on hand and ready to spread when an emergency happened."

Hawkins continued that city officials are making plans to have an outside contractor come in when necessary and handle salting and plowing duties. Meanwhile, said Hawkins, Orange will continue to "sort of" share services with East Orange, until a better arrangement can be made.

After she was appointed as the department's acting director in June, Hawkins said Kemp had formulated a plan to handle winter storms.

During a City Council meeting in the summer, Kemp had to justify requests for potential funding increases for salt within the 2010 municipal budget. She also had to explain to council members how her vision for the department and its services are dramatically different from her predecessors.

Kemp told council members she was trying to address all the problems she inherited when she took over the department, such as like the lack of an adequate storage facility for salt supplies. She also said she wanted the city to take an active approach to serving the city through negotiations with other municipalities and city departments.