

Orange in line for emergency snow aid

Hawkins administration applies for \$145,000 to cover winter storm costs

By Chris Sykes
Staff Writer

Orange's government is expected to receive reimbursement for its expenses during the post-Christmas storm that dumped more than two feet of snow on the municipality.

President Barack Obama approved federal aid for 13 New Jersey counties considered the hardest hit by the weather. Orange was eligible to apply for funding to recoup the cost of removal efforts in the aftermath of the Dec. 26-27 snowstorm.

Mayor Eldridge Hawkins Jr. said city officials have applied for about \$145,000 from the state, which received the funds from the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

"Our summary of costs included overtime, \$52,318; vehicle costs, \$38,592; outside contractors-Shauger Group, \$7,313; DPW, \$7,670 for salting, sand, brine and gas; and damaged property: \$39,790," said Hawkins. "I am pleased that New Jersey will be receiving funds to offset the cost of a previous snow emergency. This money once distributed to municipalities like Orange will help replenish the coffers so we have additional financial resources for future snow storms."

With Gov. Chris Christie and Lt. Gov. Kim Guadagno out of state,

Senate President Stephen Sweeney declared a state of emergency as more than two feet of snow fell throughout much of New Jersey. Hawkins said the declaration gave him the power as mayor and the city's emergency management supervisor to hire the Shauger Group of East Orange to plow the streets and remove the snow even though the City Council had voted against providing a season-long contract.

Sweeney's disaster declaration covered Bergen, Burlington, Cape May, Essex, Hudson, Mercer, Middlesex, Monmouth, Morris, Ocean, Passaic, Somerset and Union counties. The state also will be eligible for aid under the declaration announced on Feb. 4 by Christie after another storm hit New Jersey and left more than a foot of snow and ice.

Hawkins has been engaged in a protracted battle with the City Council over his desire to privatize Orange's snow removal services by hiring the Shauger Group.

The mayor asked the council to vote in favor of a resolution which would have awarded a \$50,000 contract to Shauger for the winter season. That led to heated exchanges between the mayor and council members and audience members at both meetings where the resolution was on the agenda.



Photo By Barbara Kokkalis

Snow still covered much of a street in the the Valley section below the NJ Transit line two weeks ago after more than a foot of snow fell during the last major storm..