



THE CORPORATION OF THE CITY OF VERNON REPORT TO COUNCIL

SUBMITTED BY: David Lind, Director of Vernon
Fire Rescue Services

COUNCIL MEETING: REG COW I/C
COUNCIL MEETING DATE: August 15, 2022
REPORT DATE: July 18, 2022
FILE: 7380-00

SUBJECT: REQUEST FOR NEW FULL TIME EQUIVALENT DEPUTY CHIEF POSITION

PURPOSE:

To seek Council support for the funding of a new Full Time Equivalent (FTE) Deputy Chief position for the 2023 budget.

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Council support, in principle, the creation of a full time Deputy Chief position for a cost of approximately \$184,000, to be funded through taxation;

AND FURTHER, that Council direct Administration to bring forward a Service Level Adjustment for the addition of a Deputy Chief position, during the 2023 Budget process, as described in the memorandum titled "Request for Full Time Equivalent Deputy Chief Position" dated July 18, 2022, respectfully submitted by the Director of Fire Rescue Service.

ALTERNATIVES & IMPLICATIONS:

THAT Council not support, in principle, the creation of a full time Deputy Chief position for a cost of approximately \$184,000, to be funded through taxation;

AND FURTHER, that Council not direct Administration to bring forward a Service Level Adjustment for the addition of a Deputy Chief position, during the 2023 Budget process, as described in the memorandum titled "Request for Full Time Equivalent Deputy Chief Position" dated July 18, 2022, respectfully submitted by the Director of Fire Rescue Service.

Note: This option does not address the need for increased management, response and on-call capacity within Fire Services and the Emergency Program.

ANALYSIS:

A. Committee Recommendations:

N/A

B. Rationale:

1. Like most communities in British Columbia (BC), the City of Vernon (CoV) is experiencing an increasing frequency of longer term and high impact emergencies. In years without a local emergency there is

mounting pressure to activate emergency programs in support of other communities experiencing crisis. The Province of British Columbia has recently restated a need for the CoV to provide host Emergency Support Services (ESS) to other communities on an ongoing basis.

As the scope and scale of emergencies increases, so has the Province's level of expectation of local governments. Four (4), Auditor General, Local Government Audits of Emergency Programs (Sidney - 2018, Capital Regional District - 2018, Mission – 2019, Fraser Valley Regional District – 2019) identify deficiencies in the emergency management processes and practices. The City of Vernon emergency program contains some of these same gaps. One of these gaps is found in the CoV's emergency plan's focus on response. There needs to be additional attention paid to risk mitigation/prevention and recovery in order to fully meet the expectations of a contemporary emergency plan.

Through the latter part of 1900's large scale, destructive wildfires had occurred in BC about once a decade, in the early part of this century the frequency increased to a couple per decade, and now large-scale wildfires occur almost every year.

Other types of hazards such as destructive flooding and wide spread health emergencies have also been on the rise. Since the inception of the Emergency Program Act in 1996 there had been only two (2) Provincial states of emergency declared prior to 2017. The Provincial declarations have increased as outlined below:

- 2017 (Wildfires),
- 2018 (Wildfires),
- 2020 (Pandemic),
- 2021 (wildfire); and
- 2021 (flooding/atmospheric river).

Events such as heat domes, wildfires, the drug epidemic, COVID 19, flooding, etc. are placing additional pressures on frontline emergency services and their respective management teams.

2. Since 2019, Vernon Fire Rescue Services (VFRS) has recognized the need to better prepare the community for fires in the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) and the management team has implemented several new strategies to reduce risk and increase resilience within the community. Much of this work has been accomplished through applications for grant funding and the management of projects. The grant management process is complex and time consuming, additional management capacity is needed to sustain the work. In addition to the management of multiple emergency program grants, VFRS has successfully received funding for WUI risk reduction projects through the Community Resiliency Investment Program (CRIP) in the following amounts:
 - 2019 - \$58,000
 - 2020 - \$150,000
 - 2021 - \$150,000
 - 2021 - \$89,000
 - 2022 - \$150,000
3. VFRS operates in a complex and bargained environment. Core services are provided by members of the International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF) through a Collective Agreement (CA) which requires consistent attention.

The Vernon Volunteer Fire Fighters Association (VVFA) employees provide support services to the department. Most of these employees have full-time careers and as such their training, meetings and responses typically occur outside of normal business hours. Being present and readily available to this force increases demand on manager's time. When there have been competing priorities, this program has not always received the attention deserved. In general, the industry experiences high turn over rates of auxiliary fire fighters and there is an ongoing need for recruitment, training and oversight to maintain

the program. As we work towards establishing an industry recognized, year-round response from Station 3, located at Predator Ridge, additional management capacity is a key enabler.

4. Building and development within the City is increasing as have the time sensitive demands on VFRS participation in the planning process. Increasingly there are occasions when the need exceeds resourcing and involvement in the building and development process is important as it provides opportunities to address safety considerations prior to construction. The portfolio responsible for this function needs relief of some of the other responsibilities to better address the need.
5. Fire Rescue is managed by two (2) Deputy Chiefs and one (1) Fire Chief. In large, the positions possess interchangeable qualifications and skills with some specialization in each portfolio. During normal operations one of the three (3) positions is available 24 hours a day seven (7) days a week. When all positions are fully staffed each manager commits 1/3 of their off-time hours to on-call. This increases when the Emergency Operations Center requires after hour support or when there is an absence of one or more manager(s).

A full-time Emergency Program Coordinator and a part time Emergency Program Secretary report to the Fire Chief and are responsible for the coordination of the emergency program including ESS. In the absence of the Emergency Program Coordinator the Fire Chief assumes the responsibilities.

During larger complex events, such as a wildfire, there is a need for Fire Rescue managers at both the emergency scene and in the Emergency Operations Center (EOC). Typically, these events occur over longer periods of time with some requiring 24-hour attention. In Vernon's recent history there has most often been one or more of the management positions vacant with recruitment taking six (6) months or longer. When this occurs, the additional responsibilities are transferred to the other position(s). In the case of the Emergency Program Coordinator there is specialized knowledge required and the positions responsibilities cannot be transferred to the Deputy Chiefs. Longer term, this increases liability to the City and can have an impact on the health and wellbeing of those absorbing the additional load. Additional support is needed to provide managers with a reasonable opportunity for a work-life balance, ongoing personal growth and development, and space, time and energy to consider strategic approaches to address the communities evolving needs.

A new Deputy Chief position would be responsible for the emergency program, Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) fire risk reduction, and the Auxiliary Fire Fighter program. The proposed position would:

1. Sustain efforts towards WUI fire risk reduction.
2. Provide more capacity for sustained response to significant events.
3. Improve the effectiveness of the Auxiliary Program.
4. Improve the effectiveness of the Emergency Program.
5. Increase participation in the building and development process.
6. In general, add the additional management capacity needed.
7. Help to reduce the burden of after hours on-call duties.
8. Provide improved resiliency during times of attrition and recruitment.
9. Provide the space and time needed to better consider the communities needs strategically and to influence people and processes for the betterment of the City of Vernon.

C. Attachments:

N/A

D. Council's Strategic Plan 2019 – 2022 Goals/Action Items:

- Review and implement the Fire and Rescue Services Eight (8) Year Strategic Plan (The creation of additional management capacity is not specifically identified within the Strategic Plan. However, in the current environment this is an important element for continued support and implementation.)

- Continue to implement Fire Smart principles in the wildfire interface area and improve communication with residents throughout the year, in addition to emergency events

E. Relevant Policy/Bylaws/Resolutions:

NA

BUDGET/RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

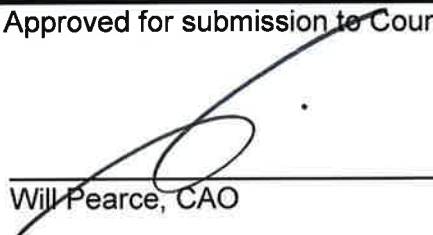
This would be a new FTE funded through taxation. The cost for 2023 would be up to \$184,000

Prepared by:

Approved for submission to Council:

X 

David Lind
Director, Fire Rescue Services


Will Pearce, CAO

Date: 10. AUGUST 2022

REVIEWED WITH

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Corporate Services | <input type="checkbox"/> Operations | <input type="checkbox"/> Current Planning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bylaw Compliance | <input type="checkbox"/> Public Works/Airport | <input type="checkbox"/> Long Range Planning & Sustainability |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Real Estate | <input type="checkbox"/> Facilities | <input type="checkbox"/> Building & Licensing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> RCMP | <input type="checkbox"/> Utilities | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering Development Services |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fire & Rescue Services | <input type="checkbox"/> Recreation Services | <input type="checkbox"/> Infrastructure Management |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Human Resources | <input type="checkbox"/> Parks | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Financial Services | | <input type="checkbox"/> Economic Development & Tourism |
| <input type="checkbox"/> COMMITTEE: | | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER: Emergency Program | | |

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