

For Information Only

Emergency Services Optimization Plan Update

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Type:	Presentations

Resolution

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Finance Implications

There are no financial implications at this time associated with this report.

Background

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with information about the work undertaken to date on Motion CS2015-17. This motion directed staff to develop a plan describing how to optimize Fire and Paramedic services in Greater Sudbury. A report recommending directions for Council's consideration is scheduled for the April 26, 2017 City Council meeting.

Previously, Council received a report produced by IBI Consulting that analyzed issues and opportunities regarding the evolution of Fire and Paramedic services. The IBI report contained 31 recommendations.

These recommendations were outlined in the Emergency Services Strategic and Tactical Plans that were endorsed by Council in 2014 and set the course for the delivery of fire, paramedic and emergency management services to the community. These plans identified the need to optimize resources to achieve a "One City, One Service" approach to the delivery of fire and paramedic services in the City of Greater Sudbury.

Motion CS2015-17, passed by Council in August, 2015 states:

"That the City of Greater Sudbury direct staff to bring a report back to a Community Services Committee meeting in the spring of 2016 regarding the optimization of fire services, stations and man power / service levels."

In February 2016, Council amended the original motion to include Paramedic services and directed staff to prepare a report on the optimization of fire and paramedic services, stations and service levels. The timing of this report was changed to the first quarter of 2017 following an update to Council in September 2016.

Councillors received briefings from staff in July/August 2016 and a briefing in December 2016. A series of personal meetings with Councillors occurred in January/February 2017 about the status of staff's work on this file. Consistent with the project plan, public meetings were held in February and March in anticipation of the April 26 report to Council.

Analysis

Guiding Principles

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The analysis staff will present for Council's consideration reflects five guiding principles that reflect the continuous focus on services, risk and cost. These are:

- Establish service levels that guide decisions about planning and delivering fire and paramedic services to achieve a consistent level of service and response throughout the city.
- Design and implement plans, including financing plans, that reflect a long-term perspective
- Design the services so that they reflect all known community needs and risks
- Minimize risks by ensuring staff are trained and available to serve when and where they're needed
- Protect the City of Greater Sudbury's economy and reputation

Staff will present a series of recommendations for Council's consideration that reflect these principles. The goal is to make our community safer.

Methodology

Staff completed an evidence-based analysis. It included:

- Collection and analysis of geographic data through Geographic Information Support (GIS) and Mapping;
- Reviewing the age, condition, maintenance, and life cycle of existing stations, equipment, and vehicles;
- Reviewing relevant legislation, regulations and industry best practices to assess Greater Sudbury's compliance;
- Consultation with the Fire Underwriter's Survey (FUS) to update the community's Public Fire Protection Classification and Dwelling Protection Grade ratings;
- Establishment of a Community Risk Profile to assess hazards in the community;
- Analysis of station location based on expectations of FUS, major stakeholders, Council, and the public, with a focus on improving overall response coverage and compliance with legislative requirements, standards, and best practices;
- Comparison and best practice review of fire and paramedic service delivery in Greater Sudbury and other municipalities;
- Establishment of a preliminary Enterprise Risk Assessment in conjunction with the Auditor General's office;
- Analysis of response time data, incident attendance and training attendance for all staff groups;
- Consultation with Union groups for Paramedics, Career Firefighters, and Volunteer Firefighters;
- Financial analysis, including tax policies; and
- Comprehensive review of past, current, and future operating and capital costs to maintain – and fully fund – current service levels to the community.

The analysis identified a variety of issues related to the current emergency service delivery model, particularly related to fire response. The proposed plan includes a series of choices that will be recommended to Council. The issues include:

- Clear understanding of service level expectations: the Establishing and Regulating By-law is the by-law municipal councils approve to define the service level of fire service it wants for the community. Service levels for paramedics are defined by a combination of Council policy and provincial legislation. Generally, the focus of service level decisions reflects three aspects of performance: service scope (i.e. "What services will be provided?"), service response (i.e. "What resources will be deployed when a call for service is made?") and service responsiveness (i.e. "What is the expected response time?"). Issues for Greater Sudbury are that Fire service response and responsiveness are not clearly established and the approved scope of service does not match community needs. Paramedic services have continuously evolved since amalgamation using a performance-based model and generally reflect a service level that is among the best in the province.
- No performance-based standard for Fire Services: Unlike Paramedic services the Fire Service lacks a Performance Based Response Model that many municipalities in Ontario and Canada have in place. A performance-based response standard as determined by Council with the advice of the Fire Chief would allow Council – now and in the future – to continuously assess response capabilities. It would provide benchmarks that would assist in future staffing and service adjustments for Fire Services, just like what happens now with

Paramedic services.

- Right-sizing buildings, equipment and fleet: no matter what the service level is, both IBI's and staff's analyses conclude the City of Greater Sudbury currently has too many stations and some are in the wrong location. Many need major repairs to sustain their usefulness and address long-standing issues related to changes in health and safety legislation and to properly accommodate both Fire and Paramedic staff. Similarly, the number of fleet (fire trucks) vehicles and the volume of equipment do not match community requirements.
- Managing community risk: Progressive communities choose to proactively identify, understand and assess the potential effects of risks they have that could be addressed by fire and paramedic services to help them plan and deliver the service. In collaboration with the Auditor General, staff produced a risk assessment and compared it against Fire and Paramedic services' ability to respond if any of those risks became real problems. An issue for Greater Sudbury is the service levels available from the current response model do not meet all community risks, particularly related to water and ice rescue, hazardous material response, medical tiered response, technical rescue, and others. This risk assessment was reported to Council in February via the Emergency Services Committee.
- Staffing models: The current staffing model means that some staff cannot attend consistently at incidents and training. In addition, the City's current staffing model presents increased risk of higher costs in the long term due to financing requirements associated with presumptive legislation and potential post-traumatic stress disorder liabilities for emergency services workers. Staff's analysis reviews the staffing model to ensure effective response at the lowest possible long-term cost for the whole community.
- Costs: Like all goods and services, Fire and Paramedic Services costs will increase over the next ten years. Choices are available to define the level and timing of those cost changes. Depending on the service level decisions Council makes, the level and timing of investments in buildings, equipment and on efforts to address community risks are separate, but related issues for Council to address.
- Funding model: Funding for Fire and Paramedic services is not consistent. At amalgamation a policy choice was made to establish a unique approach to charging taxes for a small number of services, including Fire services. This requires some residents to pay proportionately more property taxes, leaving a relatively lower share to be paid by other residents. Generally, this means residents in the former city of Sudbury pay more property taxes for Fire services and residents outside of the former city of Sudbury pay a relatively lower share. The basis for this policy was that service levels were generally perceived to be lower outside the former city of Sudbury, so property tax levels should be adjusted to reflect that. With more consistent service levels across the whole city, it is reasonable to consider whether this allocation method, known as area rating, should change.

Public Engagement

Staff provided a series of information sessions across the community to discuss the proposed plan with interested stakeholders. Prior to these sessions meetings were also held with affected bargaining units (i.e. SPFFA, CUPE and CLAC). Separate sessions were held for interested employees to learn about the proposed plan. Information has been available on the city's website and regularly updated since the project started.

Eight public sessions were held between February 27 and March 17, 2017. These sessions were attended by members of the general public with audience sizes ranging from approximately 75 people to over 250 people at each session. A noteworthy feature of the public session audiences has been the consistent, large contingent of volunteer firefighters attending them. The feedback from these sessions will be incorporated into the full Emergency Services Optimization Plan, scheduled for review by Council on April 26, 2017.

Staff also conducted outreach via one-on-one interviews with local media outlets, website and social media content.

Next Steps

Staff will present a series of recommendations to optimize the City's emergency services at the April 26, 2017 Council meeting. This meeting will take the form of a presentation and a comprehensive report that will provide staff's full analysis and supporting data. The recommendations are designed to provide a series of separate, but related decisions to shape the future of Fire and Paramedic Services.

Specifically, the recommendations will seek decisions about:

- The desired level of service for Fire and Paramedic services within the context of legislation, policies, and procedures;
- Station locations and equipment requirements, based on the desired service level
- Implementation timing, understanding that any funding decisions for plan elements would be presented as a Business Case for Council's consideration in future annual budgets
- Costs and funding plans, including a review of the City's area rating taxation model, implemented at amalgamation.

Although general direction may be set at the April 26 meeting, it is important for this direction to be provided so that appropriate next steps can be taken. Specific decisions related to implementation steps that require financial commitments are expected to be brought forward each year during the budget process.

Conclusion

Council directed staff to produce plans that optimize the delivery of emergency services in Greater Sudbury. Staff have been working to ensure that the appropriate analysis is undertaken with the appropriate level of rigour and due diligence.

The proposed plan to optimize the service includes a number of separate but related elements that would be expected to be phased in over several years. Staff concluded the plan could be successfully implemented over 7-10 years; however, it is important to note that these decisions and their associated timelines will ultimately be Council's decision.

Bibliography

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