

COMMUNICATION 131041

Received From: Pascal Meunier, Director of Protective Services
Addressed To: Committee of the Whole
Date: March 10th, 2020
Topic: 2019-2024 Fire Master Plan

SUMMARY

The Ocean Wave Fire Company (OWFC) 2019-2024 Master Fire Plan supports the Fire Department's ongoing efforts to increase fire safety and fire prevention through education and prevention mechanisms and to provide high quality, efficient, and effective emergency response such that life safety outcomes are improved for all residents across the Town.

BACKGROUND

To facilitate successful sustained and continuous improvement, this plan has been prepared with the active participation of the OWFC's firefighters and officers. Staff is confident that the recommendations are supported, can be implemented and will result in a continuation of our tradition of service excellence.

This Master Fire Plan provides strategic direction for the OWFC and outlines the critical initiatives that the OWFC will implement over the next five years in order to achieve its strategic objectives. The Plan is meant to offer a foundational and adaptable toolkit such that OWFC has the means to navigate through ongoing challenges and capitalize on opportunities. It is meant to be a living document that is continuously evolving and improving as new information is gathered and analyzed.

DISCUSSION

The Fire Master Plan is essentially a strategic plan for the Fire Department. Historically, Fire Master Plans identified fire hazards in the community and provided recommendations regarding an appropriate suppression response. Today, Fire Departments are expected to respond to a variety of emergency situations including medical incidents, hazardous materials incidents and rescue operations including farm and motor vehicle accidents.

Further, fire prevention and public education are considered to be of primary importance in preventing fires in the first place. With early detection, improved building design, code compliance, automatic suppression (sprinklers) and escape planning, the loss of life and property due to fires can be significantly reduced.

Thus, the Fire Master Plan needs to provide a comprehensive community hazard and risk assessment as well as document specific objectives, plans, required financial support, and human resource issues as required. A Fire Master Plan provides a framework for annual operational plans and typically covers a planning period of five (5) years.

The scope of the Fire Master Plan project included:

- Review of the Fire Department's operations.
- Development of a comprehensive Fire Services Master Plan including recommendations for service level standards, staffing, apparatus requirements, station facility requirements and location, fire prevention, inspection and public education.
- Provision of strategic priorities complete with action plans.

The key components of the Study included:

1. Assessing the impacts of existing conditions and future growth patterns and projecting the anticipated fire and emergency service needs as well as non-growth-related needs;
2. Developing a comprehensive community risk assessment as the basis for determining the appropriate level of emergency response deployment to meet the Town's legislative responsibilities;
3. Identifying options for optimization of the "Three Lines of Defence" as described by the Office of the Fire Marshal;
4. Reviewing current legislation, best practices and industry standards;
5. Assessing the station, staffing and apparatus implications of NFPA standards and that of the Ontario Fire Marshal's public fire safety guidelines;
6. Considering the growth in population and development over the next 10 years and the potential impact to service delivery, and operations of the Fire Department;
7. Considering all areas of the provision of service including staffing, station location, facilities, vehicles and apparatus (new and replacement cycles), vehicle and apparatus maintenance, other equipment, administration, training, mechanical, fire prevention, emergency planning and public education and efficient utilization of municipal resources. This included a trend analysis of issues and best practices on the delivery of emergency services and community risk assessment using current provincial and national guidelines and standards;
8. Providing recommendations and approximate financial implications and an implementation plan including a timetable; and
9. Considering the effects of mutual aid and fire service agreements with neighbouring municipalities as part of the total plan.

The Methodology used to Develop the Fire Master Plan

A great strategic plan is more than the production of a report. For the document to truly 'live and breathe', it needs to be inspiring and there needs to be "buy in" by both fire fighters, departmental leadership, Council and the community.

A key objective is to build enthusiasm for a positive future (vision) and a shared sense of purpose (mission). It is also critical to define expected behaviours (how we do things) by defining shared values.

Thus, the process to develop the Fire Master Plan was designed to:

- Be inclusive, consultative and collaborative;

- Involve Firefighters, Senior Municipal Leadership as well as Department Officers in its evolution. The objective was to build consensus and 'buy in' so there was enthusiasm, commitment and energy in the implementation of the plan;
- Not only to lead to a robust Plan, but also assist firefighters, Council and the community to better understand and support the Department's role and priorities;
- Be more than a technical review of operations. The process was designed to address cultural, morale, and other 'hidden' issues that can have a profound effect on organizational performance.

In addition to incorporating perspectives and aspirations of the firefighters and officers, the process incorporated external information including directions, guidelines, standards and recognized 'best practices'.

The process of developing the Fire Master Plan was led by a Steering Committee consisting of the Department's senior officers as well as firefighter representatives.

The community hazard and risk assessment was developed from key planning information including demographics, call nature and volume, previous studies, current mission, vision, values, known hazards, and historic and current Department budgets.

To understand the strengths, opportunities, and challenges faced by the Department, key stakeholders including firefighters, officers and senior Town administrative staff were invited to attend a series of interviews and focus groups.

A key part of the process to achieve the above objectives was a series of interviews which focused on five key questions:

- *What is working well today?*
- *What do you see as the key issues facing the Department?*
- *What would you like to see changed?*
- *What would you like to stay the same?*
- *Any other advice or comments?*

Following completion of the background studies and five-question interviews, a Planning Day was held with the firefighters and officers to identify and develop priorities as well as to develop consensus regarding the recommendations of the Plan.

A draft report was subsequently forwarded to the Steering Committee and firefighters for review. Changes and modifications resulted in numerous drafts with the intent that the final draft to be presented to Council would reflect broad consensus and support. There are a number of recommendations that are addressed in this attached plan and that form the basis of the work to be carried out over the five (5) year term of the plan.

Fire Master Plan Recommendations Summary

There are 60 recommendations that are addressed in this plan and that form the basis of the work to be carried out over the five-year term of the plan, including:

1. Fire Station Building Assessment

The OWFC has one station which is located centrally within the Town at 15 Coleman Street. Although constructed almost 25 years ago in 1995, the building has many contemporary features including four (4) double bays, one (1) single bay, administrative offices, and a dedicated training room with excellent kitchen facilities. The building is shared with the Ontario Provincial Police which occupy 40% of the 1,733 sq.m. building. A study should be initiated to investigate potential upgrades required.

2. Current and Proposed Staffing

Over the past several years, there have been numerous changes in roles, responsibilities and staffing levels as the Department has evolved with the changes generally in the Fire Services as well as responding to the population growth and development within the community. In addition, there have been changes in the organization with changes in leadership over the past several years. A challenge for municipalities with volunteer Fire Departments is meeting response time performance targets during business hours, Monday to Friday. Many people who live in Carleton Place work in Ottawa and surrounding area and are not able to leave work to attend calls. With the continuing growth of the municipality as well as the need to improve and to meet the increasing provincial mandates for fire inspection, fire prevention and public education programs, response staffing level targets should be established and monitored to determine if additional firefighters, fire prevention officers or other strategies are required to achieve required on-scene staffing and fire prevention requirements.

3. Dispatch and Radio Communication

OWFC participates in the Lanark County Fire Dispatch and Radio System which are provided by the Smiths Falls Fire Department. There have been reception issue concerns with Lanark County fire communications system. In 2018, concerns were presented to the County's Corporate Services Committee. It was noted that although the County Fire Radio System works well in most areas, there were reception issues in specific areas and buildings. OWFC will continue to monitor and document radio transmission issues, identify known locations where radio transmission may be compromised, continue with training and awareness regarding procedures to minimize impact of radio transmission limitations and investigate options to improve transmission reliability including mobile repeaters and/or additional towers.

The County's radio system utilizes one frequency for dispatch and paging and has another frequency for operations. In practices, crews responding to an incident indicates their response status on the dispatch frequency and when on scene, may request use of the operations/tactical frequency as required. There have been numerous issues reported of excessive radio traffic over the dispatch frequency that can interfere with dispatch priority transmissions. The other issue that has been reported is management of simultaneous issues where the single

operations frequency has to be shared. This is a critical safety issue as prompt transmission and response is required during an emergency response such as a “Mayday” call for a trapped firefighter. This issue will become more acute as emergency response incidents increase with additional growth in the County. OWFC recommends that in collaboration with the Lanark County Fire Departments and Lanark County Officials that OWFC request additional operational (tactical) frequencies be made available for the safe and effective management of simultaneous fire and rescue emergencies.

4. Fire Training Centre

To safely and effectively train for interior search and rescue as well as suppression activities, a properly engineered facility that can replicate a smoke-filled environment is required. Larger Departments have such facilities and other dedicated facilities have been developed for regional use by smaller and rural Departments. It is a high priority of OWFC to develop a dedicated engineered training facility on lands that are available within the Town. It is recommended that a business case proposal be developed and presented to Council to propose construction of a dedicated fire training facility.

5. Interim Service Priorities

While OWFC continues with the development of the initiatives outlined above, there are a number of service priorities that must be addressed to ensure ongoing efficient and effective fire service for the resident of Carleton Place. These priorities include the following:

- Technological improvements such as I-pads as well as existing or enhanced capability of fire management software be explored to better keep track of performance measures and field documentation including fire inspections.
- Review and create new Operating Guidelines and Policies to ensure compliance with legislation, industry standards and protocols.
- Developing a written protocol regarding access to specialized technical rescue teams including trench, rope, high angle, confined space, hazmat, swift water, water/ice, CBRN and HUSAR.
- Development and implementation of an annual public report that provides an overview of Departmental Activity.

Additional Considerations for Planning

The 2020-2024 Master Fire Plan recognizes and considers the recommendations identified above along with a number of other trends that will have implications for the fire service. There include but are not limited to the following:

- The Town of Carleton Place population has and will continue to grow steadily, increasing the demand for emergency services.
- The Town of Carleton Place will need to consider the appropriate level of service required to manage the anticipated growth.

- The recent extreme weather events around Carleton Place present an increased need for OWFC to be proactive in terms of emergency planning.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There will be no financial implications tied to the receipt of this Master Fire Plan. This Plan will help to inform annual budget requests which will be considered separately through the capital and operating budget process.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

THAT Council receive the 2019-2024 Master Fire Plan.