

Master Fire Planning Committee

Minutes

Thursday, April 13, 2017

Station 4 – 427 Merritt Street: Training Room at 4:30 p.m.

Attendance:

Councillor Sandie Bellows
Councillor Jennifer Stevens
Shelley Chemnitz, Commissioner of Corporate Services
Bryan Shynal, Commissioner of Operations
Kristine Douglas, Director of Financial Management Services
Ryan Madill, President St. Catharines Professional Firefighter's Association
Fire Chief Dave Wood
Deputy Fire Chief Monique Belair
Heather Salter, Director of Legal and Clerks Services/City Solicitor
Maggie Riopelle, Executive Research Assistant

Absent:

Councillor Bill Phillips
Mike Vail, Vice President St. Catharines Professional Firefighter's Association

Staff Liaison:

Fire Chief Dave Wood

1. Call meeting to order (Chair) S. Chemnitz

4:41 pm

2. Additions/Deletions to the Agenda

None.

3. Motion to approve the agenda

Motion:

That the Master Fire Planning Committee approve the agenda as presented.

Moved: Councillor Stevens

Carried.

4. Motion to adopt the minutes of the previous meeting

Motion:

That the Master Fire Planning Committee adopt the minutes of the meeting of February 23, 2017.

Moved: Chief Wood

Carried.

5. Business arising from the minutes

None.

6. Declarations of Interest

None.

7. Review of Draft Master Fire Plan and Discuss Recommendations

Discussion ensued about the current draft Master Fire Plan (draft dated April 7, 2017). Additional information is being added to various sections as required. Appendices will be added to the next revised draft.

Committee received a chart to provide their priorities for the draft recommendations by ranking each recommendation as a high, medium or low priority. Some of the recommendations have been designated a priority level of "ongoing monitoring and review required", these recommendations do not require a priority ranking by Committee. Consensus was that Committee required more time to review the draft plan and provide their individual rankings for each recommendation.

Consensus was that all recommendations will be included in the plan as all would improve the Fire Service. Committee will prioritize the recommendations and propose an implementation schedule and Council will determine how to move forward.

Deputy Belair noted that the Underwriter's Survey has been completed and that St. Catharines Fire Services received praise for being a progressive department. Deputy Belair hopes to provide the Underwriter's Survey report to Council at the same time as the Master Fire Plan and is working to expedite the Underwriter's report.

Recommendations Review

Discussion ensued surrounding recommendations requiring clarification and/or revisions.

Establishing & Regulating By-law (E&R By-law) – Recommendation #1

An E&R By-law is a by-law endorsed by Council that sets out the services provided to the community by the Fire Department and the level of each service that is to be provided. For example, hazmat is a core service. There are 3 levels of service that could be provided by St. Catharines Fire Services: awareness level, mission critical and technician level. The level of service would be determined by Council and funding would be allocated to meet training and equipment requirements for the determined level of service.

St. Catharines Fire Services does not currently have an E&R By-law. The addition of an E&R By-law endorsed by Council is the only outstanding recommendation from the Office of the Fire Marshal and Emergency Management (OFMEM) audit. St. Catharines Fire Services Management has prepared a draft E&R By-law, which will be moved forward once core services are determined by the Master Fire Plan.

Departmental Records Management – Recommendation #4

Firehouse software has been purchased by St. Catharines Fire Services and is being implemented. Firehouse is the top software program used by Fire Services. Recommendation is to integrate Firehouse software with other corporate software programs to ensure connectivity and retention requirements are being met.

Corporate Emergency Management Planning – Recommendation # 5

The City of St. Catharines does not currently have a designated Corporate Emergency Management Coordinator (CEMC). Chief Wood assumes this role in addition to his responsibilities as Fire Chief. This is problematic as the Fire Chief also assumes the role of Operations Coordinator in the event of a large scale emergency and it is virtually impossible for someone to perform the duties of the CEMC and the Operations Coordinator simultaneously. Similarly, a Deputy Fire Chief cannot complete the requirements of the CEMC position in addition to their regular duties. The scope of work required for the CEMC position to meet all legislative requirements including overseeing ongoing training of numerous corporate staff to various and running an annual emergency scenario requires a dedicated position within the City of St. Catharines.

Chief Wood noted that the City of St. Catharines had a dedicated CEMC in the past. This position was replaced with a Deputy Fire Chief position as the Fire Department could not function effectively with 1 Deputy overseeing 4 Divisions (Suppression, Communications, Training and Fire Prevention). Deputy Belair noted that the province recommends municipalities have a separate CEMC from the Fire Chief as demonstrated by the CEMC positions at comparator municipalities in the draft Master Fire Plan.

Public Educator – Recommendation #6

The current staffing level in the Fire Prevention Division is unable to meet mandated public education requirements in addition to the legislated requirements. Public Education is recognized in the OFMEM's 3 lines of defence. Public education activities are currently being shared amongst 6 Inspectors in the Fire Prevention Division and are unable to provide public education to the level that it should be because of legislated responsibilities. Deputy Belair noted that more municipalities are adding dedicated public education positions. The recommendation is to hire 1 additional staff member as a dedicated Public Educator. The 2008 Master Fire Plan recommended the hiring of a dedicated Public Educator. A dedicated Public Educator would be able to reach target groups including school age children and seniors and would provide education on fire safety, emergency preparedness and provide information on the services provided by St. Catharines Fire Services and the career guidance for those interested in a career in the fire service.

Question was raised about Suppression personnel conducting fire investigations instead of Fire Prevention personnel. Chief Wood noted that this was explored in the past and the department does not have the resources to do this. In addition, utilizing Suppression personnel in this manner would create other challenges as it would require the removal of Suppression personnel from their complement until the investigation was completed and would lose continuity of the scene. Chief Wood added that many municipalities currently call the OFMEM for all investigations. However, the Fire Prevention and Protection Act (FPPA) is being reopened and municipalities will soon be required to conduct their own fire investigations. By continuing to have Fire Prevention personnel conduct investigations, St. Catharines Fire Services will be ahead of the curve when these changes are implemented.

Suppression Personnel – Recommendation #10

Hire 16 additional Suppression personnel. Both GIS reports indicated response capabilities could increase up to 25% if an aerial truck was staffed full time at Station 1. Station 1 is not currently capable of housing an aerial due to the height of the bay doors and the length of aerial trucks. The 2008 Master Fire Plan recommended hiring 16 Fire Fighters over a 4 year period. This recommendation was not completed as additional personnel were not hired.

Suggestion was made to revise the section on page 55 of the draft Master Fire Plan which reads, "FEMS has increased the number of personnel to ensure all pumps have a four person pump crew, as recommended in 2008, with the exception of the aerial" as additional personnel were not added to the Suppression Division. Instead, pump trucks and aerial trucks are cross staffed at Station 4 and Station 6, meaning that crews at these stations switch between pump and aerial trucks depending on the type of response required. Suggestion

was made to add information to demonstrate how service is lacking as a result of the choice to cross staff apparatus instead of hiring the additional staff recommended in the 2008 Master Fire Plan. An additional suggestion was made to highlight the GIS mapping report results as they pertain to this recommendation in this section of the Master Fire Plan.

Discussion ensued regarding minimum staffing levels. Chief Wood noted that the minimum staffing level is 27 personnel per platoon (27 personnel required per shift). Each platoon currently has 33 or 34 personnel, of which, 27 must be on duty each shift. Vacation, sick time, maternity/paternity leave can result in the overtime to meet minimum staffing levels.

Suggestion was made to explain minimum staffing and the reasoning for it in this section of the Master Fire Plan. Question was raised about what comparator municipalities do when they can't meet minimum staffing levels. Some larger municipalities remove a pump truck from service as they have sufficient staffing and station locations to cover the community. However, if St. Catharines Fire Services removed a truck from service, response times would increase resulting in a lower level of service for the community.

Deputy Belair noted that any change in service must be reported to the Underwriter's Survey as it can impact the rating for St. Catharines and thereby rates for homeowner's insurance within the city. Question was raised about the specific dollar impacts that the Underwriter's Survey has on homeowner's insurance. Deputy Belair said it would depend on the rating. Suggestion was made to contact comparator municipalities where their rating has changed as a result of changes in core services to provide a comprehensive analysis of the costs versus savings in tax dollars and homeowner's insurance associated with the recommendations in the Master Fire Plan.

Suggestion was made to revise verbiage on pg. 56, "...enables firefighters to perform limited rescue and suppression activities simultaneously but is not in accordance with NFPA 1710" as "performing limited rescue" does not explain the improvements to the depth of response and does not illustrate that there will be an additional truck available to service the community.

Initial Response Performance Measure – Recommendation # 11

This recommendation is to change initial response time from 5 minutes to the NFPA 1710 Standard of 6 minutes and 20 seconds, thereby following the industry standard. Question was raised regarding the choice to include this in the Master Fire Plan instead of writing a report to Council. Chief Wood indicated that it is being included in the Master Fire Plan process to provide Council with a comprehensive report that demonstrates the reasoning behind the recommendation. Suggestion was made to include the initial response time in the E&R By-law.

Asset Management – Recommendation #13

Suggestion was made to revise the wording on the 2nd paragraph on pg. 71 from, “Commercial Cab vs. a Custom Cab” to “Standard Cab vs. a Custom Cab” to better illustrate the savings associated with a renovation to Station 1 that would allow Station 1 to house an aerial truck.

Training Tower – Recommendation #14

Suggestion was made to remove the section of this recommendation recommending the completion of immediate repairs to the Training Tower in 2017 as this work has already been approved and is underway. However, the recommendation to regarding the Training Tower will remain as it has been forecasted in the 2019 Capital Budget.

Fleet Replacement – Recommendation #15

This recommendation is to keep the status quo fleet vehicle replacement schedule and to ensure ongoing monitoring of the process. This recommendation has been removed from the Committee’s prioritization chart.

Mechanics – Recommendation #16

This recommendation is to maintain 2 dedicated mechanics within their own association to oversee the maintenance and repair of all Fire apparatus. This is a status quo recommendation to ensure ongoing monitoring of the process. This recommendation has been removed from the Committee’s prioritization chart.

Question was raised about who would receive updates on the status of recommendations which are to be monitored and reviewed on an ongoing basis. As the Master Fire Plan is a living document, it is envisioned that this Committee will continue on. Chief Wood noted that after Council has moved the Master Fire Plan, the Committee should meet quarterly to monitor and review the status of the recommendations.

Discussion ensued about the time required to review the draft Master Fire Plan and prioritize recommendations. The draft plan continues to be revised. An electronic copy of the revised plan with appendices will be sent out prior to the next meeting of May 11, 2017. Request was made to have changes in revised draft highlighted to help Committee members focus on the new areas of the plan.

Prioritization chart to be forwarded to Committee and Committee is asked to rank recommendations and provide completed chart to P. Kraft by April 27, 2017.

8. Date of next meeting

May 11, 2017

9. Motion to Adjourn

6:00 pm