



The Corporation of the Town of Tecumseh

Fire & Rescue Services

To: Mayor and Members of Council

From: Wade Bondy, Director Community Safety & Fire Chief

Date to Council: October 26, 2021

Report Number: FIRE- 2021-07

Subject: Firefighter Radio Enhancements

Recommendations

It is recommended:

That the addition of funding in the amount of \$9,360 (excluding HST) **be referred** to 2022 budget deliberations as part of the Community Safety operating budget under Contract Services.

Background

As Council is aware, the radio system used by Community Safety is operated under contract with Kelcom Radio Solutions ("Kelcom") with a monthly rate charged per radio for airtime usage.

The Town's firefighters have historically operated using one radio per team of two to three firefighters for operations on or within an involved structure or other emergency that requires entry into buildings where hazards immediately dangerous to life and health (IDLH) exist.

In 2021, Kelcom offered the Town additional refurbished radios at a deeply discounted price in order to equip each firefighter with a portable radio. The Director Community Safety & Fire Chief purchased the radios and agreed on a trial basis to activate those radios at the existing airtime rate under the contract with Kelcom, with no commitment to maintain activation of those radio units under the contract.

Comments

Firefighters entering a structure for interior operations or any other IDLH environment face significant risks during that work. These risks include becoming lost or separated from their team or falling through a floor weakened by fire. Operating an interior team where only one of the firefighters has a radio means that if the firefighter with the radio becomes separated from their team, falls through a floor or otherwise becomes incapacitated, the communication link is cut off for the entire team.

In addition, conditions within a structure frequently have greatly reduced or nearly zero visibility, and are typically very noisy making communication between team members incredibly difficult and messages from command personnel outside the structure often missed without each member having a radio.

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), operating under the US Centre for Disease Control, investigates every firefighter fatality in the United States. Reports issued following these investigations detail key recommendations for Fire Departments to help prevent future injuries and fatalities. A frequent recommendation within these reports is that Fire Departments should ensure that crew integrity is properly maintained by sight, voice or radio contact when operating in an IDLH atmosphere. Given the communication difficulties noted above, the most reliable method of maintaining communication is by radio.

In 2009, the International Association of Fire Chiefs ("IAFC") issued a position statement that outlines the need for each firefighter entering or working on a structure to have a radio for communication and their personal safety. This statement is appended to this report as Attachment 1: IAFC Position Statement.

The Countywide radio system is proposed to be replaced in 2023. The provision of individual radios for all firefighters will be recommended for Council's consideration, as part of that system. Until that replacement occurs, it is recommended that these additional radios be added to the Community Safety radio system to increase the safety of the firefighters in the interim. The costs of the additional radios and airtime charges under the existing contract with Kelcom is outlined in the Financial Implications section of this report.

It should be noted that should Council elect not to approve the addition of airtime for these radios to be used in firefighting, the additional radios would serve as spare radios for the Department, to be used during training and Public Education events, without costs for airtime usage.

Consultations

Financial Services

Financial Implications

The additional 20 refurbished radios were purchased in March of 2021 for a total cost of \$2,000 (excluding HST).

Airtime for these additional units would be at the same contract rate as the existing units of \$39 per radio per month for a total 2022 annual operating cost of \$9,360 (excluding HST).

Based on the success of the trial usage of the radios in 2021, it is recommended that Council consideration be given for the addition of \$9,360 plus HST to the Community Safety & Fire Service Operating Budget during the 2022 Budget process.

Link to Strategic Priorities

Applicable	2019-22 Strategic Priorities
<input type="checkbox"/>	Make the Town of Tecumseh an even better place to live, work and invest through a shared vision for our residents and newcomers.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ensure that Tecumseh's current and future growth is built upon the principles of sustainability and strategic decision-making.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Integrate the principles of health and wellness into all of Tecumseh's plans and priorities.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Steward the Town's "continuous improvement" approach to municipal service delivery to residents and businesses.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Demonstrate the Town's leadership role in the community by promoting good governance and community engagement, by bringing together organizations serving the Town and the region to pursue common goals.

Communications

Not applicable ☒

Website ☐ Social Media ☐ News Release ☐ Local Newspaper ☐

This report has been reviewed by Senior Administration as indicated below and recommended for submission by the Chief Administrative Officer.

Prepared by:

Wade Bondy
Director Fire Services & Fire Chief, C.E.M.C.

Reviewed by:

Tom Kitsos, CPA, CMA, BComm
Director Financial Services & Chief Financial Officer

Recommended by:

Margaret Misek-Evans, MCIP, RPP
Chief Administrative Officer

Attachment Number	Attachment Name
1	IAFC Position Statement