

Committee of the Whole (1) Report

DATE: Tuesday, September 13, 2022 **WARD(S):** ALL

TITLE: SAFEGUARDING AND ENHANCING STAFFING LEVELS FOR
VAUGHAN FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICES COMMUNICATIONS
DIVISION

FROM:

Nick Spensieri, City Manager

ACTION: DECISION

Purpose

To request four (4) full-time employment (FTEs) Communications Operators to further safeguard and enhance staffing levels for Vaughan Fire and Rescue Service's (VFRS) Communications Division. This report provides an overview, context, and financial implications.

Report Highlights

- VFRS's Communications Division is responsible for providing front-line emergency management service to individuals who call 911 in need of help.
- Increasing staffing pressures are hindering VFRS's Communications Division and the ability to deliver such a critically important public service.
- Immediate action is required to safeguard and enhance staffing levels for VFRS's Communications Division.
- To keep each platoon fully covered 24/7 with an allowable and reasonable buffer, a request for four (4) FTEs would add one (1) person per shift to allow; one (1) member off on approved leave and leave a buffer of one (1) for known and unexpected short-term absences.

Recommendations

1. That Council approve the recruitment and immediate hire of four (4) FTEs to the Vaughan Fire and Rescue Services Communications Division.

Background

Increasing staffing pressures related to sudden and unexpected absences (short term-sick, critical, bereavement) coupled with parental leaves and short- and long-term injuries have left VFRS's Communications Division (the 911 call center) below an acceptable staff level on numerous occasions in the last six months.

It should be noted that the backup facility's main use was designated only due to a failure of equipment/technology and was not intended to be used in cases of personnel shortages.

Previous Reports/Authority

Not applicable.

Analysis and Options

To keep each platoon fully covered (a minimum of two (2) employees are need 24/7, with a buffer of one (1) FTE. an emergency approval for four (4) FTEs would add one (1) person per shift to allow; one (1) member off on approved leave and leave a buffer of one (1) for known and unexpected short-term absences.

Financial Impact

Each additional communications operator is approximately \$99,505 annually, including \$97,505 in labour costs (including overtime and benefits) and \$2,000 in related non-labour costs for uniforms, training, etc. The total estimated financial impact of hiring four communication operators is \$398,020.

The prorated 2022 financial impact of hiring these additional communication operators, assuming a hire date of Nov. 1, 2022, is estimated to be \$66,337. If required, any budget overage in 2022 may be offset by gapping from internal vacancies. This approval should nearly eliminate the need for callback overtime.

Broader Regional Impacts/Considerations

NG911 is a federal and CRTC mandated change to a national 911 VOIP (Voice Over Internet Protocol) telecommunications system occurring in the coming 2-3 years. All municipalities that operate call take/dispatch centers must make this state-of-the-art change as legacy Bell circuits are decommissioned.

VFRS has budgeted and planned for this change and is already committed to the planning and procurement phase. Opportunity for growth within York Region exists in Vaughan.

If the City will be able to attract outside dispatching capabilities, it must first eliminate any potential staffing shortages. VFRS is a leader in the York Region and the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area. However, the Communications Division has been operating at overcapacity for some time, keeping undue pressure on staff, both frontline and administration.

Conclusion

Immediate action is required to safeguard and enhance staffing levels for VFRS's Communications Division. Therefore, it is recommended that we be permitted to immediately start a recruitment and hire four (4) Communication Operators.

For more information, please contact: Andrew Zvanitajs, Fire Chief, ext. 6301

Attachments

None.

Prepared by

Andrew Zvanitajs, Fire Chief, ext. 6301

Approved by

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nick Spensieri', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Nick Spensieri, City Manager