

Committee of the Whole (2) Report

DATE: Tuesday, April 13, 2021

WARD(S): ALL

TITLE: FIRE SAFETY GRANT

FROM:

Gus Michaels, Acting Deputy City Manager, Community Services

ACTION: DECISION

Purpose

To seek approval for an application that was submitted to the Office of the Fire Marshal (OFM) for a Fire Safety Grant opportunity from the Province of Ontario. Vaughan Fire and Rescue Service (VFRS) is seeking \$80,100 to be used towards adopting a model of remote-online learning for on-duty staff, specialized mannequins, and the ability to perform virtual inspections. The grant application requires Council approval.

Report Highlights

- A grant opportunity is available from the Province of Ontario and is being coordinated through the OFM.
- The grant application requires formal Council approval.
- The Fire Safety Grant will provide \$80,100 to VFRS to allow the two priority areas to be addressed by providing the ability for on-duty staff to learn in a virtual environment, specialized mannequins, and the ability of virtual inspections.

Recommendations

1. That the Fire Safety Grant application (Attachment 2), coordinated by the Office of the Fire Marshal, be approved;
2. That a copy of the Council resolution be forwarded to the Office of the Fire Marshal; and
3. That a By-law be enacted authorizing the Mayor and the City Clerk to execute any related agreements in a form satisfactory to the City Solicitor.

Background

On March 11, 2021 the Government of Ontario announced a one-time \$5M grant to municipal fire services to assist in addressing challenges associated with training and virtual inspections due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Various concerns were brought forward from municipal fire departments to the OFM that included the inability to train fire service members due to new restrictions in place due to COVID which affected the training environment and virtual training opportunities. Also, fire departments expressed concerns regarding the fire code environment and the inability to enter premises to conduct inspections and promote fire safety.

The OFM advised the City that VFRS was eligible to receive up to \$80,100.00 as part of the grant program. The grant is intended to provide fire departments with the flexibility to support two priority areas:

1. To address ongoing training needs including registration, administrative programming, technology upgrades and associated costs for attending as well for providing services.
2. To address the challenging environment of code compliance and inspection through opportunities of an inspection program that may include technology, capital costs and training to ensure fire services are able to meet the demand of this need at the local level.

Due to the timing of the announcement made on March 11, 2021 by the Government of Ontario and the submission deadline of March 19, 2021 to the OFM, the application package was required to be submitted before Council approval. The OFM indicated that the Fire Chief could accept the grant in principle on behalf of the municipality and that Council approval could be sent following the next Council meeting.

Conditions of the grant include funds to be spent by August 1, 2021 and that a report back be sent to the Fire Marshal by September 1, 2021 outlining how the grant was utilized at the department level.

The application package was prepared by VFRS in consultation with Financial Planning & Development Finance and Procurement Services to ensure that acquiring the goods and/or services (if applicable), is in accordance with the City of Vaughan Procurement Policy.

Previous Reports/Authority

N/A

Analysis and Options

In order to address the first priority area, VFRS will adopt the model of remote-online learning for on-duty staff by moving away from the traditional classroom learning environment and to promote physical distancing requirements. This will be accomplished by providing each on-duty firefighter with the ability to use a mobile teaching aid (tablet) with appropriate software to use remote/individualized space within the fire station and away from others. All VFRS stations are equipped with Wi-Fi, therefore the infrastructure is in place to support this model. VFRS will also purchase additional training aids in the form of specialized mannequins.

In order to address the second priority area, VFRS will be transitioning to virtual inspections. This transition will allow our legislated obligation to be fulfilled, while keeping our staff as safe as possible. This will be accomplished with 2 iPads per inspector, enabling one to be used by the inspector and occupant. Through either Wi-Fi or hotspot technology, the inspection will be accomplished with two-way interaction on Facetime or a third-party application. The size of the iPad will be a direct benefit to the inspection. In order to support our staff to keep office congregation to a minimum is a fundamental priority moving forward. We will accomplish this by providing Inspectors the tools to keep the necessity to visit the office to a minimum. A virtual office space within their vehicles will accomplish this priority with the purchase of iPad mounting brackets for their vehicles.

For full list of Cost breakdowns please refer to Attachment 1.

Financial Impact

If the application package is approved, the City will receive \$80,100.00 that will be allocated to the revenue line. There will be an overage in expenditures that will be offset by revenues.

Broader Regional Impacts/Considerations

None

Conclusion

On March 25, 2021, the Acting Fire Chief received a Letter of Intent from the OFM indicating that the application package was approved. The full \$80,100 will be allocated

through a Transfer Payment Agreement, once Council approves the application package outlining the proposal for spending the funds.

Council endorsement by copy of a Council Resolution is required to be sent to the OFM for the Application to be considered complete. As per [By-Law 154-2018](#), the Chief Financial Officer & City Treasurer and City Clerk will authorize and execute the grant agreement.

For more information, please contact: Acting Fire Chief Mike Doyle, ext. 6320.

Attachments

1. Fire Safety Grant Cost Breakdown.
2. OFM Fire Safety Grant Application March 2021.

Prepared by

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Consulted with:

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Approved by

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Gus Michaels".

Gus Michaels, Acting Deputy City Manager, Community Services

Reviewed by

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jim Harnum".

Jim Harnum, City Manager