

Memorandum

To: Lisa Spitale,
Chief Administrative Officer

Date: December 4, 2023

From: Erin Williams
Fire Chief

File: 2406059

Subject: 2024 Budget – Strengthening the Emergency Management Office and the Public Safety and Fire Prevention Division – Analysis if funding Were Reduced

PURPOSE

The purpose of this memo is to answer Council's question regarding the impacts to the Emergency Management Office and Fire Prevention Office if funding levels were reduced.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The impacts of full and reduced budget enhancement approvals are reported within. Full approval of the funding request will provide 2 FTEs and cost \$178K + benefits. This will allow maintenance of current service levels despite the increased workload to meet the new requirements for Community Hazard Risk Vulnerability Analysis and Business Continuity Plans as well as to continue some work underway to improve response plans for extreme weather events and develop data analytics to guide resource deployment and management decisions.

Approving an additional EMO FTE and denying the request for an additional FPO FTE will result in reduced FPO support for the EMO, extended life safety inspection cycles, and reduced collaborative emergency preparedness activities with the community.

Without any increased staffing to the EMO nor the FPO will result in reduced service levels as staff is re-allocated to the work prescribed by the new legislation and regulations. As a result, only the highest-priority community collaboration EMO activities will be preserved, life safety inspection cycles will be extended, compliance with the new regulations may not meet deadlines resulting in fines for the City and the EMO could be closed during vacation periods of the only employee if the Deputy Chief is seconded to the Crises Response Team.

BACKGROUND

Attached with this memo is the November 20th memo which outlines the funding request for the Emergency Management Officer and the Fire Prevention Office. At the November 20th Budget Workshop, Council asked that staff provide an analysis of the impacts to the service delivery model if funding could not be approved.

ANALYSIS

The impacts to the service delivery model for the Extreme Weather Preparedness initiatives are analyzed for three funding scenarios: 1) 100% funding per the budget request, 2) funding Emergency Management Office (EMO) for 1 FTE without funding for an additional FTE for the FPO and 3) no funding for additional staff for either office.

Scenario 1 – 100% Funding, Emergency Management Office 1.0 FTE and Fire Prevention Office 1.0 FTE (\$178K + Benefits)

This service delivery model is summarized in the Memo dated November 20, 2023 and includes the following:

Emergency Management Office (EMO)

- Development of collaborative programs to build resilience at different levels of the community in preparation for a wide range of emergencies including extreme weather events
- Implementation of processes for increasing community awareness of emerging situations the EMO is monitoring;
- Provide timely support for seasonal challenges, particularly to vulnerable populations,
- Collaboration with local businesses, non-profit and faith based organizations, and outside agencies for community preparedness and response to emergencies,
- Update Community Hazard Risk and Vulnerability Assessments to comply with the new legislation; and
- Create Business Continuity Plans for the City's departments in the event of sustained emergencies affecting City operations to comply with the new legislation and regulations.

Fire Prevention Office (FPO)

- Development of new and updated fire safety guidelines and policies to provide clarity for new development projects with the lens of emergency response ability;
- Strengthen our use of data and technology to effectively strategize fire prevention and emergency response outreach and operational efforts; and
- Support for the implementation of established and new EMO initiatives without compromising the existing level of service.

Scenario 2 – Partial Funding, Emergency Management Office 1FTE (\$78K + Benefits) without additional Fire Prevention Office staff.

This service delivery model supports the EMO only and would result in lesser service from the FPO. The partial funding will limit the team's ability to implement initiatives and conduct outreach efforts and will have the following impact:

- Reduced connections with community groups and residents to assist with implementing extreme weather initiatives;
- Inefficiencies resulting from the lack of insight on the nature of the building stock in the City;
- Extended life safety inspection cycles decreasing inspection frequency; and
- Reduced FPO support for EMO operations.

Scenario 3 – No funding for additional EMO and FPO staff

This service delivery model will create vulnerabilities in our core EMO and FPO services as it will require reduced service levels from EMO and FPO. Services will be halted or delayed to accommodate newly legislated and regulated activities. The expected impact of this scenario on our ability to support the community are as follows:

- Reduced connections with community groups and residents, to assist with implementing extreme weather initiatives requiring these to be limited to the highest priority initiatives only;
- Limited ability to respond to simultaneous extreme weather event such as extreme heat and a non-weather related emergencies;
- Inefficiencies resulting from the lack of insight on the nature of the building stock in the City
- Extended life safety inspection cycles decreasing inspection frequency,
- Delayed completion of critical response guides, community hazard risk and vulnerability assessments and business continuity plans as required by the new legislation and regulations which will hinder our community's preparedness and could result in the City being fined; and
- EMO may be closed during some EMO periods when the only EMO employee is on vacation if the Deputy Chief is seconded to the Crises Response Team initiative.

ATTACHMENTS – November 20th Budget Memo - Being Prepared for Extreme Weather Events by Strengthening the Emergency Management Office and the Public Safety and Fire Prevention Division

Memorandum

To: Lisa Spitale,
Chief Administrative
Officer

Date: November 20, 2023

From: Erin Williams
Fire Chief

File: 2400147

Subject: 2024 Budget – Being Prepared for Extreme Weather Events by Strengthening the Emergency Management Office and the Public Safety and Fire Prevention Division

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to provide the rationale for the service enhancement requests for the Emergency Management Office (EMO) and the Public Safety and Fire Prevention Division (FPO). These new positions are needed to build internal capacity and support the implementation of emergency planning initiatives currently underway due to the increasingly complex community impacts caused by growth and climate change.

BACKGROUND

Every City in the Province of BC is required to have an emergency program in place under the new BC Emergency and Disaster Management Act legislation. The Emergency Management Office works with various response agencies including public service organizations, internal city departments, local non-profit organizations, faith based organizations, local businesses, other local authorities and the Province.

The new updated Emergency and Disaster Management Act reflects the realities of climate change and extreme weather events such as extreme heat incidents and the transition to focus on the four pillars of emergency management: mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery. This legislation is scheduled to have regulations released in late 2023 and will require the EMO to complete new comprehensive

City wide risk assessments and business continuity plans for all anticipated hazards.

The Public Safety and Fire Preventions Division has seen an increase in inspections, investigations and community outreach efforts due to the changing landscape of our building stock and the support needed for implementing EMO initiatives (see attachments).

OVERVIEW AND CONTEXT

Our City witnessed numerous unprecedented events over the past several years including a pandemic, heat dome / extreme heat event, and atmospheric rivers. These events demonstrated the importance of building a resilient organization and community to weather such events.

Experiences from past significant events have launched collaborative programs and processes for improving our community outreach efforts to increase awareness and build resilience at different levels. For example, in response to the heat dome, EMO developed a proactive outreach program for disseminating critical cooling information to targeted vulnerable properties, developed an innovative heat response monitoring centre in collaboration with Fraser Health, and helped implement the “One Cool Room” air conditioner support program (see attachments). Led by EMO and supported by FPO, the team achieved positive outcomes by leveraging their experiences, strong inter-agency partnerships, intimate knowledge of our community’s building stock, and technology.

This work helped improve our community’s resilience to heat and built a foundation for growing and strengthening our connection with our community members. It is imperative to continue this momentum and expand our resilience for other potential high impact events; however, this work requires dedicated resources to execute efficiently and effectively. Currently, the commitment to providing timely support for seasonal challenges is creating vulnerabilities in other areas of our system, such as delaying routine fire inspections, policy updates and other forms of community outreach.

Additionally, the EMO recognizes that many of our current city wide response plans need to be updated and/or re-developed to fit the current demand and or planning needs of the city. The proposed new regulations will require us to update the following key plans in the next

2-4 years; A Hazard Risk & Vulnerability Assessment, Business Continuity Plan, Emergency Response Guide, Emergency Bylaw, Recovery Plan and Emergency Support Services plan. This increased requirement to be more resilient, update response guidelines and preparations to fit our changing climate and legislation will further impact the teams' ability to perform their regular duties.

The addition of one FTE will allow EMO to continue to improve the community's ability to be prepared for extreme heat events, expand foundational emergency preparedness efforts to be able to pivot for other emergency events, and work with local businesses, non-profit and faith based organizations and outside agencies to become compliant with the new legislation. The combination of these services will benefit the full range of community members from our vulnerable population to large businesses.

Similar to the EMO team, the FPO team continues to adapt and adjust to the changing needs of our community. These needs include our ability to address new construction methods and materials, transfer complex design knowledge to the Fire Suppression Team, and use technology to strategize our outreach efforts and support novel initiatives such as those from EMO.

A new escalating fee structure for excessive false alarms and re-inspections will take effect on January 1, 2024. This new fee structure is intended to incentivize property owners to resolve prolonged unresolved violations in a more expeditious manner as well as recover cost for the extraordinary efforts these properties demand. This new fee structure increases the maximum fee per instance of excessive false alarms and re-inspections from \$300 and \$100, respectively, to \$600 and \$605, respectively.

The addition of one FTE will allow FPO to develop new and update existing guidelines and policies to provide clarity for new development projects, increase the level of emergency response ability in innovative building complexes, grow our use of technology to effectively strategize outreach and operational efforts, and continue support of EMO initiatives without compromising the our existing level of service.

The increase in staffing for EMO and FPO will allow our teams to continue growing and strengthening our connections, building resiliency, and achieving compliance with existing and new regulations.

ALIGNMENT WITH THE STRATEGIC PLAN

The ongoing emergency/fire prevention and community outreach work that the EMO and FPO team is trying to grow and strengthen is strongly aligned with two Council Strategic Plan Priorities:

Community Belonging and Connection

The frequency and severity of extreme weather events is increasing as evidenced by the death of 28 New Westminster residents during the 2021 “Heat Dome”. The EMO has added many new initiatives to mitigate and prepare for similar incidents in the future. Many of these initiatives strive to build community resiliency by harnessing the power of community belonging and connection through social cohesion and enabling individuals and groups to better support one another before, during and after an emergency.

Safe Movement of People

The FPO and EMO have some overlapping responsibilities: identify hazards and then prepare for, mitigate, coordinate a response to, and recover from these identified hazards. FPO is working towards identifying locations, times and conditions that compromise the safe movement of people throughout New Westminster. This information can inform communication strategies as well as City transportation plans.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

1. 1 full time employee in the Emergency Management Office (EMO) to assist with continuing to build on the emergency planning initiatives that have been started as well as preparing the documentation required to be in compliance with new regulations - \$78K plus benefits.
2. 1 full time employee in the Public Safety and Fire Prevention Division (FPO) to be able to continue supporting EMO initiatives as well as increase the capacity to develop and revise New Westminster Fire & Rescue Services policies and guidelines to the increasingly complex community impacts caused by growth and climate change - \$100K plus benefits.