

## Attachment # 1

*Five memos from Directors/Departments  
re Staffing Resource Challenges*

## MEMORANDUM

### *Parks and Recreation*

**To:** Lisa Spitale  
Chief Administrative Officer

**Date:** May 30, 2022

**From:** Dean Gibson  
Director of Parks and Recreation

**Doc:** 2088950

**Subject:** Parks and Recreation Staffing and Service Delivery Challenges

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Further to your request for information related to current and ongoing challenges related to staffing and the delivery of departmental services and workplans, please accept this memo as an overview of the current situation within the Parks and Recreation Department.

#### Summary

In general terms, the Department is experiencing on-going challenges recruiting and retaining staff across many operational areas. This is particularly acute in services areas where staff certifications and specialized training is required. The lasting impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic are also partly attributed to somewhat higher rates of absenteeism in some areas of operations. Because of the current situation, the department is finding that response times to some service requests are slower than normal, backlogs in routine and preventative maintenance work are growing, community recreation program offerings are fewer, and community recreation facility operating hours may need to be curtailed at certain times. The current situation is very dynamic and will require ongoing communication to the public regarding any changes in service offerings, particularly in the recreation services area.

#### Recreation Services

The Recreation Services Division is currently sustaining existing core operations albeit with reduced capacity in some service areas. As operations transition to summer and fall programming cycles in the next few weeks, it is anticipated the Recreation services team will be responding to the pending impacts resulting from ongoing staffing shortages. Over the past several months, the Division has experienced considerable staff turnover due to a variety of reasons. While internal applicants have filled many permanent positions, this turnover has also required that operations draw upon existing auxiliary employees to temporarily backfill essential vacant positions. As a result, extraordinary pressures have been placed on the "pool" of auxiliary staff to the extent that there are now very few qualified staff to call upon for work, and interest from new applicants is at an all-time low. As the nature of the services provided by the Recreation Division relies heavily upon auxiliary staff,

low staffing levels have a direct impact on the quantity and variety of services offered and the operating hours of the facility in which programs are provided.

Of particular noted is the current provincial and national shortage of skilled and trained aquatics staff. This gap is partially caused by the cancellation of advanced leadership and aquatic training programs across all jurisdictions during the pandemic as well as locally, a movement of staff from Recreation Services into other employment areas (internally within the City and externally to other employers). Competition for aquatics staff within the region is at an all-time high and are expected to exist until training opportunities for new up and coming staff increase across the region.

The Recreation Services team is currently looking at new approaches towards recruitment and new demographics for future employees. Recreation Services will work with the City's Human Resources Department and the Union to explore opportunities to remove barriers involved in obtaining required certifications for this rewarding employment. Opportunities for, and the benefits of, employment within Recreation Services will be highlighted in job fairs, social media and through youth leadership groups in the coming weeks and months.

#### Parks Horticulture and Arboriculture Services

Parks Operations currently has 2.5 full-time equivalent vacancies due to recent staff departures in Horticulture Services. Although the recruitment process has commenced, availability of qualified and experienced staff is very low, a situation that is not unique to just the City of New Westminster. The historical large pool of interested applicants no longer exists and in some cases, staff are resorting to recruiting former employees to come out of retirement and apply to take on short-term work assignments. In addition, Arboriculture Operations has had a rise in staff absenteeism over the past 6 months. Arboriculture is a public and worker safety-sensitive area of work and is dependent on a full staff compliment to complete seasonal workplans. Pending successful recruitment processes and a reduction in absenteeism, we anticipate the operational impacts for Park Operations to be short term (3-6 months).

In response to the above challenges, staff are prioritizing horticulture and arboriculture work related to public safety and maintenance of critical and higher profile assets and areas. This may result in some park and public spaces appearing less manicured than usual; delay in completion of lower priority preventative maintenance work and the changeover between seasonal plantings; and longer response times to non-urgent tree service requests and an increase in the backlog of scheduled tree pruning work, replacement boulevard tree planning, and natural areas maintenance work. To the extent required to support emergency tree work responses, contracted companies will be engaged to sustain appropriate service levels.

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Dean Gibson  
Director of Parks and Recreation



Corporation of the City of  
**NEW WESTMINSTER**

**M E M O**

*Climate Action, Planning and Development*

**To:** Lisa Spitale, Chief Administrative Officer      **Date:** May 30, 2022  
**From:** Emilie K. Adin, Director of Climate Action,      **File:** 2088504  
Planning and Development  
**Subject:** Staffing Resource Challenges and Reduced 2022 CAPD Work Plan

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**Current Staff Resource Challenges**

The Climate Action, Planning and Development department (CAPD) includes the functions of bylaw enforcement, building permits and inspections, the Climate Action Team, and long range, development and community/social planning. CAPD has significant staff resource challenges at this time, with the overall department averaging 67% reduced capacity. This includes a significant number of vacant positions in each of the department's divisions/sections. In addition to this, anywhere from 20% to 71% of staff in each division/section of the department is operating at reduced capacity. Reduced capacity calculations reflect: reduced capacity of senior staff in "Acting" roles due to leadership vacancies, new staff undergoing training, maternity leaves, and experienced staff on reduced hours for health or family reasons.

**Impact of Regional and Global Crises on Work Plan**

The CAPD teams have been working above-and-beyond normal capacity since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, leading many elements of the City's response to the pandemic (e.g. Education and Enforcement Task Force, At-Risk and Vulnerable Population Task Force, Seniors Task Force, New Normal Staff Committee) and ensuring essential development and construction permitting continued without pause. This level of effort continues as department staff play key roles in responding to most of the ongoing crises affecting our region (e.g. Heat Dome, Opioid Crisis, and the Affordable Housing Crisis, including the community organizing, policy development and development/construction responses).

The above issues, as well as pent up development demand, have resulted in a significant backlog of development and building permit files. It is difficult to address this backlog with current resources. New development applications and inquiries are received daily. The growing backlog and timelines are resulting in long review timelines and understandable frustration from applicants.

Beyond the backlog of development and permit review, the City's need to address ongoing crises (listed above), plus new crises (i.e. Emergency and 24/7 shelters, sex worker safety, Ukrainian crisis response, the Downtown Livability Strategy), is limiting the ability of staff to achieve items that had been set forth in the 2022 workplan approved by Council. This means that the City's ability to meet the 2019-2022 Strategic Plan has been limited.

**Difficulty Retaining and Recruiting Qualified Staff**

The combination of significant resourcing issues, and working beyond normal capacity for an extended period of time reaching back to March 2020, is having negative impacts on the ability of the team to be responsive to the public and to Council. Reductions in workload are required to support the health and wellbeing of current staff.

Staff have explored “buying our way out” of this issue in the shorter term by engaging consultants, e.g., in the area of development planning. Staff have made inquiries with qualified consultants who appear to be largely uninterested in doing this type of work or who would be charging the City prices that are well outside what one could support in a public service context. Quickly staffing up internally with qualified candidates is also proving difficult to achieve on a short horizon as it is strongly an “employee’s market” in development-related industries, with municipalities and private sector firms currently all seeking to employ the same staff. Strong competition has resulted in many recent postings for CAPD positions having had to be reposted to attract qualified candidates.

**Proposed Reduced 2022 CAPD Work Plan**

Due to capacity and resourcing challenges, the work plan of the CAPD department will need to be greatly reduced. The table in Attachment 1 summarizes staff’s recommendations. Any items moved out of the “on hold” category into the “to advance” category, or new items added to the “to advance” category, would need to be balanced by an equivalent item moved out of the “to advance” category.

The work plan will be reviewed again once vacancies can be filled and backlogs addressed.

**Required Resourcing**

The current staff resourcing challenges have prompted a hard look at the department’s resources.

In the case of development application review, stale-dated policies and regulations (i.e., when City policies and regulations do not reflect new community priorities or changes to the market) can result in a slower permit process, costing time and money to applicants. In turn, a slower development application process reduces the City’s ability to address the affordable housing crisis and to respond to local, regional and senior governments’ goal of meeting housing demand and closing the affordability gap.

Based on these sets of impacts, the CAPD Department will explore bringing forward requests for new staff positions for Council’s consideration as part of the 2023 budget process.

This memo was written by:

Jackie Teed, Senior Manager, Climate Action, Planning and Development

Emilie K. Adin, Director, Climate Action, Planning and Development

## Attachment 1

| CAPD Division/Section       | Work Plan Items On-Hold  | Work Plan Items to Advance   |
|-----------------------------|--|--|
| Bylaw Enforcement           | All calls/enforcement not a significant life-safety impact, or tenant support<br>Bylaw updates (i.e. smoking, unsightly)   | All life-safety calls/enforcement; Tenant support calls as resources allow   |
| Climate Action              | Adaptation and Resilience Plan; Climate Action Engagement and Communication Strategy, incl. website update;<br>New climate action financing (e.g. carbon pricing; grant applications for new projects, unless approved, shovel-ready, with PM)<br>Step Code acceleration unless capacity found; Heat Pump Pilot Program<br>Participation in other org's research | eMobility Strategy; Slower completion of CEEP 2050; required annual reporting; KPI Report Card, if interdepartmental capacity available<br>Low Carbon Fuel Credit annual reporting/approval process and sales; creation of a Funding Spend Decision-Making Framework<br>Energy Save New West; CEERS implementation; Current Step Code improvements<br>Energy Poverty Project   |
| Land Use Planning           | 22 <sup>nd</sup> Street Station Bold Vision; Infill Housing Phase Two (triplex, duplex)<br>City Regional Context Statement update  | OCP monitoring (i.e. laneway, infill townhouse); Future school planning; support Retail Strategy development<br>Required review/Council consideration of Metro 2050  |
| Development Planning        | Slower intake/review of new applications, and those at the earlier stages (e.g. appointments pushed out by a number of months, dependent on staff capacity)<br>Ongoing streamlining, including City-led consultation/public hearing process update and slowing progress on digital permitting  | Current applications likely to be completed prior to Council's summer break; with sr. government funding deadlines; non-profit childcare applications on the mainland, all childcare applications in Queensborough<br>Update development application guides, slowly advance development review manuals (essential for organizational resilience in the face of staff turnover)   |
| Community (Social) Planning | New grant applications; new contracts with external organizations/sr. government; collapse COVID-19 task forces; where possible cease participation on community-based bodies<br>Queensborough School Age Care Plan; Social Benefits Zoning Phase 2; limited support of DEIAR implementation; Community Poverty Reduction Strategy;<br>New emergent issues       | Managing existing grants; current contracts (i.e. Welcoming and Inclusive New Westminster; Homelessness Coalition Society; Overdose Prevention Community Action Team; Community Action Network; Digital Inclusion Initiative; Hey Neighbour Collective)<br>Food Security Plan; Sanctuary City Policy; Affordable Housing Development Policy; Opioid Response Pilot; tenant protection; Downtown Livability Strategy; Homelessness Strategy; Sex Worker Safety Policy<br>Ukrainian Crisis Response; Newcomer Festival |
| Heritage Planning           | HRA Refresh policy/implementation<br>Support reconciliation portfolio; non-development inquiries from the public   | HRA Refresh policy principles  |
| Building                    | Slow plan review and inspections for single detached dwellings; records management<br>All correspondence not a significant life safety or tenant support issue<br>Slow digital permitting project  | Commercial projects and projects with sr. government funding deadlines<br>Address backlog of tasks previously postponed which are impacting review of new applications (e.g. late inspections, streamlined TI process, training)   |



## Memorandum

To: Lisa Spitale  
CAO

Date: May 25th, 2022

From: Erin Williams  
Acting Fire Chief

File No:

Subject: NWFRS Staffing Challenges

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New Westminister Fire Rescue Service prides itself on the delivery of professional service in both Emergency response and community support. This includes: Fire Suppression, Medical assistance, Motor vehicle incident response, Hazardous Materials response, Emergency management, Technical Rescue, Community Outreach & Public Education and Fire & Life Safety Inspection & Compliance. This service delivery model is supported by a Fire Suppression Division, Life Safety & Public Education Division, and Emergency Management Division. These three Divisions report to the Fire Chief, Deputy Chief and four Assistant Deputy Chiefs.

### Fire Suppression

In recent years the Fire Suppression Division has seen staffing challenges. This is partly due to delayed recruitments and unanticipated retirements. Another factor was decisions to not begin recruitments early in the year but rather wait until vacancies occurred. A recruitment typically takes up to four months for completion from the time a competition begins. This year we made several changes to the recruitment process which included;

- Planning phase began in early January with a goal of recruits trained and on staff by June 2nd
- Hiring a larger recruit pool for anticipated retirements

- Creation of an eligibility list from successful candidates to fill unexpected vacancies

The regional labour market remains very competitive for recruitment of fire fighters.

#### Life Safety & Public Education Division

This Division has seen a growing demand for staff resources in the past several years and recruitment & retention have been difficult. This division is currently staffed with one Fire Protection Engineer and three Fire Investigators/Inspectors. This presents a challenge for meeting inspection targets for 2022. The division work plan will be reviewed in Q2 to assess and address staffing issues.

#### Emergency Management Division

The Emergency Management Office has recognized the need for a different approach in response to incidents and activating & operating the Emergency Operations Center. This has resulted in a growing demand on staff resources.

From lessons learned during recent events such as the Covid 19 Pandemic and Heat Dome, the emergency management office staff have been developing corporate and community based response plans and staff training. This has been supported by the addition of three auxiliary staff that have a high level of expertise and knowledge in Emergency Management. Staffing needs will continue to be monitored as the program evolves.

#### Chief Officers

The exempt management staff normally consists of the Fire Chief, a Deputy Chief and four Assistant Deputy Chiefs. Each Chief Officer has several reports and portfolios to oversee in order to support internal operations, City initiatives and regional concerns. Each Chief Officer also, on a weekly rotational basis, acts as an on call Duty Chief. This role is 24 hours per day/ 7 days a week and requires the Officer to monitor a cell phone and be able to respond to the City in a timely manner for larger scale incidents.





#### OFFICE OF THE FIRE CHIEF

Currently the Fire Chief (temporarily filled with an Acting Chief) and Deputy Fire Chief positions are vacant and one position is on leave. This leaves three Chief Officers to fill roles and responsibilities normally supported by six. In order to maintain business continuity, portfolios have been reassigned and prioritized based on operational need.

Overall, for 2022, the shift in recruitment strategy and filling of vacancies along with pro-active planning and increased education city-wide on Emergency Management services costs will be managed within the existing approved Fire Services budget as staff fill vacancies, reduce overtime expenditures and pursue grant funding to support emergency events.



NEW WESTMINSTER

## Memorandum

### Human Resources & Information Technology

**To:** Lisa Spitale  
Chief Administrative Officer

**Date:** May 30, 2022

**From:** Eva Yip  
Acting Director, Human Resources &  
Information Technology

**Subject:** Human Resources & Information Technology Staffing and Service Delivery Challenges

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Over the past 2+ years, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the HR & IT Department has played a lead role in developing and implementing COVID-related policies, procedures, mobilizing employees for remote work, and supporting the health and wellbeing of staff, while continuing to provide HR & IT core services and advancing the City's strategic and organizational priorities such as diversity, equity, inclusion, and anti-racism (DEIAR) initiatives, corporate implementation of the Professional Development Plan, collective bargaining with all the City's unions, supporting accelerated Climate Action, and supporting the Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) project. Moreover, there has been an increase in the volume of recruitment due to the impacts of the "great resignation" and "great reset", whereby there has been an unprecedented wave of voluntary attrition. The significant demands associated with this work has resulted in critical HR & IT staffing resource challenges. HR & IT staff have been working above and beyond their capacities in order to meet the critical HR & IT needs of the organization.

Despite the best efforts of HR & IT staff, this has resulted in a number of key functions being delayed including, but not limited to: recruitment and hiring, learning and development, disability management, policy development, computer hardware replacements, software upgrades, infrastructure enhancements, and eGov services. The increased workload and competing work-life demands during the pandemic are also impacting staff well-being.

The current HR & IT staffing challenges have prompted a serious review of the HR & IT department's resources. Historically, the City's workforce has grown more than the ratio of HR & IT staff to number of employees in the organization. HR & IT will be adding four temporary positions which will be managed within the City's current budget.

Over the next several years, we anticipate requesting additional positions to ensure that we are able to effectively support the HR and technology needs of a growing City workforce.

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Eva Yip  
Acting Director, Human Resources &  
Information Technology

# Memorandum

To: Lisa Spitale  
CAO

Date: May 18, 2022

From: Lisa Leblanc  
Director of Engineering

File No: 05.1040.10

Subject: Engineering Staffing Challenges and Work Plan Impacts

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The Engineering Department's top priority is to deliver core services in a safe, efficient and reliable manner. This includes: provision of water, wastewater collection, solid waste collection; streets, parks and public realm maintenance; utilities and transportation planning, design and project development; support for dozens of civic buildings and properties; development application review and development servicing, and; oversight of dozens of construction projects, including the City's own projects and those being delivered by developers and third parties.

The past several years have seen an escalating staff recruitment and retention challenge in Engineering, particularly in Operations and Transportation. These staffing challenges result in customer service impacts including long delays in addressing requests and questions; project delays and risk to project quality and budget, and; impacts to staff well being.

At this time, there are 23 active recruitments occurring within Engineering. The vacancies are impacting our ability to deliver core services in a safe, efficient and reliable manner, and to deliver the City's ambitious Strategic Plan and Climate Action Bold Steps, particularly as it relates to Sustainable Transportation. The chronic challenges we have in supporting land development and monitoring construction activities are further compounded by the high number of vacancies. Explained below are the work plan impacts that are being experienced in Operations and Transportation as a result of ongoing staffing challenges.

## Engineering Operations – Delivering Core Services in a Safe, Efficient and Reliable Way

Operations currently has 16 vacant full time positions, in addition to regular turnover of multiple auxiliary positions. Because the work is crew-based, and crews are small, vacancies have a significant impact. The result is reduced service levels across every task that is deemed non-emergency. Some of the most significant challenges include:

1. Downtown Livability - Downtown cleanliness and oversight of the portable toilet in Hyack Square.
2. Sanitation - missed waste collection and delays in responding.

3. Parks and Open Space Maintenance, particularly the “field” group - long grass in parks, sports fields, the cemetery and general reduced maintenance of surfaces.
4. Water/Sewers – more jobs are contracted out, at higher cost.
5. Sidewalk repair and replacement – delayed inspections and minor repairs. Preventive maintenance or lower priority repairs are often deferred.
6. Parking and Animal Services – Issues directly related to road safety and animal welfare are prioritized. Reduced patrolling and monitoring, and delays in responding to parking complaints.
7. Fleet Services – Reliance on contracting out repairs, which leads to long delays and higher costs. Very challenging to attract and retain mechanics.
8. For all groups in Operations, when we have staff sick or on vacation it can result in a complete shut-down of a section, and compounding delays and complaints, because we have so few qualified people available to backfill.

#### Transportation Project Delivery, Policy Development and Planning

Transportation has been particularly impacted by vacancies, with the Division operating with fewer than half of its full complement of 10 staff for most of the past 10 months. We have partially addressed this challenge with support from consultants. Our remaining Technologists are primarily focused on processing Street Occupancy Permits and planning for summer special events. Compounding the challenge has been a significant increase in the volume and management of Street Occupancy Permits associated with large third-party projects, such as Metro Vancouver’s New Westminster Interceptor project and the Telus Pure Fibre roll-out, and new development under construction. The Manager of Transportation position was vacated last summer, with an internal staff person Acting; we have been unable to backfill their home position (Transportation Engineer) in the meantime, which has resulted in a backlog of work.

In spite of vacancies, the following projects are continuing to advance, and we will continue to prioritize them for the balance of the year:

| <b>Priority projects</b>  |  |
|---|--|
| <i>Initiative/Project</i>   | <i>Comments</i>  |
| Agnes Greenway  | Construction to start soon   |
| Uptown Greenways and Great Streets planning, design, and construction | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NWSS Connector – construction will be completed within the next few months;</li> <li>• Crosstown Greenway between 8<sup>th</sup> St and 5<sup>th</sup> St - detailed design and tendering will advance, and;</li> <li>• Sixth Street and Belmont Plaza streetscape improvements - detailed design and cost estimating, to support construction in 2023</li> </ul> |
| Active Transportation Network Plan                                    | Will be brought to Council for consideration in the Fall   |
| Master Transportation Plan Update                                     | Including status report and amendments to include New Mobility. We anticipate bringing this to Council for consideration in the next few months  |
| Core services   | These include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development application review</li> <li>• processing Street Occupancy Permits</li> </ul>   |
| Road Safety   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Completion of the Intersection Safety Review</li> <li>• Responding to safety related complaints</li> </ul>  |

|                                      |   |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| Action Requests and other Complaints | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We receive more than 400 complaints and requests for traffic safety improvements each year, many of which require field checks, analysis, and thoughtful response.</li> <li>• We prioritize investigating and responding to quantifiable safety concerns and accessibility.</li> </ul> |
|--------------------------------------|---|

As a result of vacancies, the following projects will be delayed until later in 2022 or 2023:

| Delayed projects   |   |
|--|---|
| <i>Initiative/Project</i>  | <i>Comments</i>   |
| Crosstown Greenway between 8 <sup>th</sup> Street and 5 <sup>th</sup> Street | Construction delayed to 2023 or later   |
| Queensborough Transportation Plan  | Project will be initiated in mid-2022, will advance more slowly than originally anticipated, and will not be completed until 2023.  |
| Neighbourhood traffic calming  | Committed construction projects in Connaught Heights will advance in 2022, but initiatives requiring further public engagement (e.g., particularly Lower Sapperton resident-driven traffic calming) will move more slowly.  |
| School traffic safety improvements   | This project is advancing, but not as quickly as anticipated, and we do not have the capacity to do much engagement with schools. The work is unlikely to be fully implemented prior to the start of the new school year.   |
| Downtown Transportation Plan implementation                                  | Interim improvements that had been planned for walking, cycling, and transit will not be implemented this year, including Eighth Street between Columbia and Carnarvon  |
| Pedestrian crossing improvements   | 2021-funded projects are still under construction; a small number of simple projects (i.e. signage and road marking) may be delivered later in the year, but there will be no new crossing improvements such as curb extensions or special crosswalks until 2023. |
| E-bikeshare strategy   | Preliminary work and information-gathering is underway, but it will not be possible develop a strategy for Council's consideration prior to 2023  |
| Cycling & Greenway spot improvements   | Most of the funding for network-wide spot improvements has been reallocated to the Council-initiated Active Transportation Network Plan, so there will be few 'on-the-ground' spot improvements implemented this year   |
| Brunette Ave/E Columbia St intersection                                      | Staff were expecting to develop the scope for a multi-year planning and design process for safety, Central Valley Greenway, and MRN improvements at this intersection. That work will not advance this year.  |

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|--|--|
| Thirteenth St streetscape and bikeway design | With current resources, we are unable to advance conceptual designs for 13 <sup>th</sup> St, which would have enabled us to leverage road space reallocation as part of an upcoming major Metro Vancouver water main replacement project |
| Action requests and complaints               | Prioritize safety and accessibility. Significant delay in responding to all other complaints and requests, especially related to on-street parking.  |

We are continuing to work on recruitment across the Department, and look forward to welcoming new staff as we fill vacant position. We have also embarked on a review of the Establishment List and our current workload of core service requirements, and anticipate requesting additional positions to better support development application review and development servicing, and construction oversight and inspection of public works. In the meantime, we anticipate that the large number of vacancies combined with the prolonged period of time that the Department has been under-resourced will result in delays and reduced service levels for several more months.

Best regards,



Doc # 2089250