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Item No. 4

Halifax Regional Council
August 12, 2008

TO: Mayor Kelly and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY:

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "William H. Mosher".

William H. Mosher, Chief Director Fire & Emergency Service

DATE: July 17, 2008

SUBJECT: **Response to Questions - Committee of the Whole Budget Meeting
April 16, 2008 for Fire & Emergency Service**

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

During the April 16th, Committee of the Whole Budget Meeting, Councillor Mosher requested a report on the following: 1) What are HRM's Fire Standards? 2) How does HRM measure up to the Standards? 3) What is the liability if the standards are not met; and the Councillor asked that the report take into account the rural communities as well.

At the same meeting, Councillor Hum advised that she would like to know the future budgeting for firefighter needs in Bedford West and Bedford South in regards to new fire stations and staffing. She indicated that this could either be addressed in the report requested from Councillor Mosher or a separate report.

Councillor Hum's request will be addressed in this report.

BACKGROUND

The standards were presented on December 13, 2005 during the Council Focus Areas for Public Safety. This standard would provide the Fire Service with a mechanism in which to measure its service delivery, as well as to provide a strategy to deal with future growth of Halifax Regional Municipality. Council approved the document "Service Delivery Standards for Halifax Regional Fire and Emergency Service" on February 14, 2006. The service level standard would be implemented over a multi-year period for the delivery of fire and emergency services to the citizens of the Halifax Regional Municipality.

To fully implement the service standard in 05/06 required 81 additional firefighters. Staff recognized that financial implications to HRM to fully implement the service standard in one year was not a reasonable expectation. Therefore, the recommendation was put forth to accept the document "Service Delivery Standards for Halifax Regional Fire and Emergency Service" as the desired level of service to be aspired to for the delivery of fire and emergency services. The goal for the balance of 2005-06 fiscal period was to continue meeting service standard of 70% of the time which was based upon the actual resources at that time. In subsequent years, budgetary increases are required in order to work towards the long term goal of full implement of the desired standards to meet the 90% of the time for responses. The rate of increase will be determined as part of the Business Planning and Budgetary process.

DISCUSSION

In response to Councillor Mosher's questions, all responses take into account the rural communities:

1) What are HRM's Fire Standards?

The desired approved standards states:

A) For Fire Protection Districts with population density exceeding 100 persons per square kilometer:

- A dispatch time of 60 seconds;
- A turnout time of 60 seconds;
- A response time of 5 minutes or less - 90% of the time for a single unit response, or for the first arriving unit of a multiple unit response.
- A response time of 8 minutes or less - 90% of the time for subsequent arriving units of a multiple unit response or alarm assignment.

B) For Fire Protection Districts with population density under 100 persons per square kilometer:

- A dispatch time of 60 seconds;
- Staff turnout time of 60 seconds
- Volunteer turn out time of 6 minutes or less - 90% of the time
- A response time of 10 minutes or less - 90% of the time.

C) Annual Auditing is recommended for all service delivery standards. This allows for confirmation of service levels and to serve as a planning tool for future growth.

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2) How does HRM measure up to the standards?

In response to how HRM is measuring up to the standards, we are still meeting the actual standard as approved during the 05/06 fiscal year of arriving on scene within 6 minutes after being dispatched in the urban area 70% of the time.

In the rural areas we are meeting the actual standard of 16 minutes after being dispatched, 70% of the time. We do have areas of concern with the remaining 30% due to lack of/or no volunteers available during peak day time hours to respond to emergencies.

3) What is the liability if the standards are not met?

The due diligence of working towards meeting a standard provides that we have identified a measurement for a desired service delivery of 90% of the time. Also built into the service standard are Acceptable and Extraordinary Exemptions to cover times when the service standards do not apply such as: Island properties not accessible by public roadway, a natural disaster, or a State of Emergency. There is flexibility in that the standards as they are expressed as a percentage of time and the standards are to be phased in over time. Under the Municipal Government Act s.300 restricts liability for acts or omissions in providing or failing to provide an emergency service to instances of gross negligence. The service standard does provide a standard for liability purposes against which gross negligence can be measured.

In response to Councillor Hum's question:

1) Would like to know the future budgeting for firefighter needs in Bedford West and Bedford South in regard to new fire stations and staffing?

The Gross Capital Budget for 2012-2013 has \$5,000,000 identified for a New Bedford West Fire Station. This station will be required to cover new territory that cannot be covered in a timely manner from existing stations with existing resources and equipment. To address the staffing and equipment needs for this station it will need to be addressed closer to the building of the station and will be included in future business planning and operating budgets.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

There are no budget implications at this time.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT POLICIES / BUSINESS PLAN

This report complies with the Municipality's Multi-Year Financial Strategy, the approved Operating, Capital and Reserve budgets, policies and procedures regarding withdrawals from the utilization of Capital and Operating reserves, as well as any relevant legislation.

ATTACHMENTS

None

A copy of this report can be obtained online at <http://www.halifax.ca/council/agendasc/cagenda.html> then choose the appropriate meeting date, or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 490-4210, or Fax 490-4208.

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William H. Mosher _____

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