

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE JUNE 3, 2002

**NEW STAFF COMPLEMENT APPROVAL
VAUGHAN FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE, FIRE PREVENTION DIVISION
(ITEM 8, BUDGET SUB-COMMITTEE MEETING OF MAY 27, 2002)**

Recommendation

The Budget Sub-Committee recommends:

That this matter be deferred to the next Budget Sub-Committee meeting for staff to provide additional information.

Report of the Deputy City Manager and Fire Chief

The Deputy City Manager and Fire Chief recommend:

- 1) THAT the approved complement of the Vaughan Fire and Rescue Service, Fire Prevention Division be amended to include one additional Fire Prevention Technologist and one additional Fire Prevention Inspector; and
- 2) THAT the year-2002 employment cost of the two additional Fire Prevention staff be fully offset by the 'gapping' savings created by the three recent staff resignations and the lower salary rates of the new-hire employees at the entry-level job classification.

Purpose

The Fire Chief originally requested additional complement (3 FTEs) for the VFRS Fire Prevention Division in the 2002 Operating Budget submission, which funding was deemed not to be available and thus, was not approved. However, since the budget estimate submissions, three Fire Prevention Inspectors have tendered their resignations to accept career opportunities with the Ontario Fire Marshal's Office and the new Central York Fire Services (Newmarket/Aurora).

This item requests the approval of two additional staff (2 FTEs), within the available funding in the approved 2002 Operating Budget, who can be recruited and trained concurrent with the vacancy replacement process underway.

Background - Analysis and Options

2002 Operating Budget New Complement Requests

The 2002 Operating Budget submission included requests for 1 FTE Training Officer in the Training Division (which Council has recently approved); and, for the addition of 3 FTEs in the Fire Prevention Division, specifically:

1 FTE--Fire Prevention Technologist (FPT): Reporting to the Fire Prevention Captain, FPT performs fire safety reviews on building permit plans that have been submitted to Building Standards Dept. The FPT also performs field inspections on new buildings; and,

2 FTE--Fire Prevention Inspectors (FPI): Reporting to the Fire Prevention Captain, FPI performs inspections on fire protection systems in new buildings, fire safety compliance inspections on existing buildings, licensing and complaint inspections, teaches public education and conducts fire investigations.

Service Level Comparisons

In comparison to the Town of Markham who employs 13 members in their Fire Prevention Division, there are 10 members in Vaughan. As a reflection on the property base / assessment basis, that requires fire code compliance efforts, on a ratio of the number of Fire Prevention staff to the Regional levy apportionment, Markham's ratio is '1 to 2.2' while Vaughan's is '1 to 2.9'. On a 'staff to population' ratio, Markham is '1 to 18,500' while Vaughan is '1 to 21,400'.

Although Vaughan employs fewer staff in Fire Prevention, it is understood that Vaughan Fire Inspectors carry out a greater role in municipal licensing inspections and carryout inspections in a larger variety of mixed industrial occupancies. It is also understood that Markham will be hiring two additional Fire Prevention Inspectors each year, for the next three years, to meet their growth demands on service.

The following table compares various aspects of Vaughan Fire and Rescue Service, Fire Prevention Division staffing levels, with other fire departments in the Region:

	Markham Fire Department	Vaughan Fire Rescue Service	<i>Vaughan Fire Rescue Service (proposed)</i>	Central York Fire Services	Richmond Hill Fire Department
Total Fire Prevention Staff	13 FTE	10 FTE	12 FTE	5 FTE	7 FTE
Regional Assessment Apportionment	28.554%	29.344%	29.344%	12.385%	17.575%
Population	240,000	214,000	214,000	110,000	140,000
Ratio of Staff / Assessment	1 : 2.197	1 : 2.934	1 : 2.445	1 : 2.47	1 : 2.511
Ratio of Staff / Population	1 : 18,461	1 : 21,400	1 : 17,833	1 : 22,000	1 : 20,000
2000 MPMP Dept. Cost/\$K Assessment	.87	.72	.72	.98 (Newmarket only)	.79

The 'Ratio of Staff to Apportionment of the Regional Assessment', is an appropriate comparator, given the extensive industrial base that demands the greatest service level attention in Vaughan. The 'Ratio of Staff to Assessment' to increase from 10 to 11 FTEs would become 1:2.668 while increasing to 12 FTEs as recommended herein, becomes 1:2.445 and increasing to 13 FTEs as originally requested, becomes 1:2.257—all of which would still reflect a lower service level than Markham.

Budget Implications

In accordance with the Collective Agreement, all bargaining unit job classifications are based on a percentage basis relative to the salary of a First Class Firefighter. The experienced 1st Class Fire Prevention Inspector and Fire Protection Technologist salaries are 100% or the same as that of a First Class Firefighter. The probationary employees start at 70%, annually progressing to 3rd Class, 2nd Class and then 1st Class, at 80%, 90%, and then 100% respectively, over three years.

The 2002 budget estimates for the Fire Prevention Division included the full annual salary of the three Fire Prevention Inspectors who recently resigned. Thus, the budget contains a sum equal to 300% of one First Class Firefighter's salary, plus benefit and employment expense costs, for these three employees.

Based on a June 10th start date for the three replacement employees PLUS the two new complement positions requested herein, the net-'gapping' savings/costs are estimated to be LOWER THAN THE TOTAL AMOUNT BUDGETED in 2002 or salary/benefit **savings of \$45,228** which would more-than adequately off-set the miscellaneous hiring costs of five new employees in both the two new positions and the three replacement employees to fill the current vacancies (i.e. training materials, uniform and personal protective equipment and office work-station furnishings/ communication devices).

A summary of the 'gapping' savings in 2002 and the following years' net-savings/costs based on current rates and inclusive of benefits, for the hiring of the replacement employees to fill the current vacancies and options to add one, two or three new FTEs, are then estimated to be:

Budget 'Gapping' Annual Net-Savings/Costs Estimates				
Budget Year	3 Replacements & No New FTEs (Status quo)	3 Replacements & 1 New FTE	3 Replacements & 2 New FTEs (Recommended)	3 Replacements & 3 New FTEs
2002	(\$104,326)	(\$74,777)	(\$45,228)	(\$15,699)
2003	(\$52,465)	\$2,412	\$57,385	\$112,166
2004	(\$30,755)	\$31,528	\$93,472	\$155,585
2005	(\$9,046)	\$60,304	\$129,654	\$199,204
2006 (('True' annual budget impact)	\$0	\$72,365	\$144,730	\$217,095

This recommendation and its financial implications has been discussed and considered with Finance staff.

Conclusion

The current workload demands for fire protection systems approvals/acceptance, fire cause determination, fire safety plan review and complaint and licensing request inspections, indicate that other program areas such as public fire safety education and routine fire code compliance enforcement inspections will be substantially reduced during the period of time for the replacement staff to achieve proficiency.

The recent Provincial Offences Court, precedence setting conviction and \$10,000 fine of a Vaughan business establishment for failure to have a Fire Safety Plan as required by the Ontario Fire Code, is anticipated to place increased demands on Fire Prevention staff to expedite the Fire Safety Plan approval process, just to clear the current backlog of submitted plans pending approval and establishments expected to now seek voluntary compliance.

The approval of the additional positions without increasing the approved 2002 Operating Budget and recognition of the cost progression impact in future years would assist in 'catching-up' to the increased fire protection services workload demands of a growing municipality.

Respectfully submitted,

Councillor Bernie Di Vona, Chair