

CORRESPONDENCE
2020 APRIL 27

Note from Dir. Public Safety and Community

Services:

Comments in the letter will be taken into consideration by staff as the recommendations from the Service Review are prioritized and submitted to Council for approval as part of the budget approval process. In addition, a Council Workshop on the Fire Service Review will be scheduled in the coming weeks.

Mayor and Council City of Burnaby

Please find attached a report that I have prepared in response to the Burnaby Fire Department Needs Assessment Study that was received by city council on April 20, 2020. Since council was first made aware of the summary contents of the report; I have spent considerable time analyzing its contents and their implications for the city. In addition, I also examined similar service reviews for the cities of Toronto and Winnipeg.

I came to realize that the review that the city conducted was, to say the least, very narrowly focused; and fails to provide a complete picture for council to rely upon for future actions.

I am not an expert by any means, but I do believe that the report I have attached provides some additional context for this review; and would appreciate your review of my comments as we deal with these recommendations and make decisions both in terms of budgets and policy in the coming years.

I have also provided a link to the city of Winnipeg report from 2018; that provides the kind of analysis and detail I would have expected with our review. <https://www.winnipeg.ca/fps/2020-strategic-direction/pdfs/WFPS-Master-Plan-Final-Report.pdf>

Thank you for your attention to my comments.

Colleen Jordan

City Councillor

Copied to:
City Manager
Dir. Corporate Services
Dir. Public Safety and Community Services

Critique of the Burnaby Fire Department 2019 Needs Assessment Study

Respectfully Submitted to City of Burnaby Mayor and Council April 20, 2020
by Councillor Colleen Jordan

Background

In July of 2019, the City of Burnaby issued a Request for Proposals for a Burnaby Fire Department Needs Assessment. The RFP outlined the following items that must be addressed:

- Demand for service;
- Levels of service;
- Regional Comparisons/Gap Analysis/Recommendations;
- Core Function Review;
- Training and;
- Administration

Darkhorse Analytics was awarded the contract in 2019, for the bid price of \$121,957.00. On December 4, 2019 Darkhorse presented their preliminary findings in a workshop to City Council. The final report ([which can be viewed here](#)) was circulated to City Council on March 11, 2020. The report appears on the April 20, 2020 Open Burnaby City Council meeting agenda, with a recommendation that Council receive the report for information. This report follows on a previous study conducted in 2002.

The report provides a series of recommendations in various categories of activities for the Fire Department going forward.

2020-2022 Immediate Recommendations:

- 1.1. Increase Executive staff to lead department
- 1.2. Invest in IT infrastructure and analytics support
- 1.3. Develop a 24-month Strategic Plan

- 2.1 Provide new positions to develop, implement and oversee department initiatives in occupational health, safety and wellness
- 2.2 Provide new positions to champion and increase workplace diversity to reflect the community the department serves.
- 2.3 Replace Fire Station 4 (Duthie)
- 3.1 Improve emergency response time
- 3.2 Staff Ladder companies to NFPA Standard - 1 firefighter per ladder (20 FTE)
- 3.3 Build Fire Station on Burnaby Mountain – 4 firefighters (20 FTE)
- 3.4 Build Fire Station at Big Bend – 4 firefighters (20 FTE)
- 3.5 Complete a Fire Station Location Strategy to address future growth
- 4.1 Rebrand Prevention Division to Community Risk Reduction
- 4.2 Develop a Comprehensive Burnaby Mountain Strategy to address changing risks.

Critique

The impact of only the “Immediate” recommendations would see the staff complement of the Fire Department increase by 82 full time positions by 2023 (see page 40 of the report). The accumulated cost of the staffing recommendations would conservatively be \$21 million by 2023, which is the equivalent of an 8% property tax increase.

The study did not even mention the potential cost impact to the City.

The study somehow assumes that two additional fire halls can be built and staffed within three years, which, in my experience, is not a reasonable timeline.

Recommendations: 1.1 Increase executive staff to lead department divisions and initiatives effectively; 1.2 Invest in IT infrastructure and analytics support to develop a proactive, innovative, and data-driven culture; and 2.1 Provide new positions to develop, implement, and oversee department initiatives in occupational health, safety, and wellness.:

The City of Burnaby's 2020 budget provides for responding to several of the recommendations contained above (even though the report recommendations were not approved by Council) and will have an impact of \$2.7 million on the 2021 budget (which would require approximately a 1% property tax increase, if all positions are filled. Included are 5 admin positions, and 2 IT and analytics positions, (1 less than the total recommended).

Recommendation 2.2 provides for a new position to champion and increase workplace diversity to reflect the community the department serves yet does not present data on the current staff compliment. The recommendations for addressing diversity do not appear to be specifically addressed in the City's 2020 budget. Of note is that of the 16 new recruits hired in January 2020, only 2 are women (compared to the City of Toronto where 6 of the 9 new hires for 2020 are women). Why did the City not add more women and racialized workers at this time, given that we were already aware of the fire department's lack of diversity and the report recommendations?

There are additional recommendations for 14 executive and administrative positions in 2021 and 2022; which would account for \$2 million of additional payroll costs by 2023.

There is, however, no recommendation to increase the support staff complement (currently 5 persons), to meet the administrative demands of the new executive and administrative positions.

Why are no new support staff positions anticipated? Is the current support staff expected to support all of the new positions, or will this be an additional cost to be added later?

Recommendation 3.2 Staff ladder companies to NFPA 1710 standard – 1 FF per ladder (20 FTE)

The City's 2020 budget provides for an additional 20 firefighters to meet the NFPA standard for ladder trucks. Though, initially, it was reported to council by the consultant in the December summary that Burnaby was the only city in the region that did not meet the standard of 4 firefighters per ladder truck, further to my request to demonstrate that claim it proved not to be the case. In fact, the City of Toronto also has 3 person ladder trucks (though they also have many high-rises). In addition, the Winnipeg Fire master plan 2018 states "Aerial apparatuses are staffed with a minimum 2 firefighters, which does not meet the NFPA 1710 standard." Reference was also made by City staff that this was a Workers' Compensation regulation that required 4 persons for a ladder truck, which, again, was found not to be the case.

The report states that "BFD has adopted the NFPA 1710 standard as its goal." Darkhorse appears to have simply accepted that target; without any critical analysis.

In spite of these facts and without Council approval of the report recommendations, the recruitment and hiring process for the first 16 of the 25 positions (recommended in the report) and later included in the City's 2020 budget began in 2019, with the new recruit class beginning employment with the City on January 13, prior to the initial budget presentation to council on January 20, 2020.

Recommendations: 2.3 Replace Fire Station 4 and 3.3 Build a Fire Station on Burnaby Mountain – 4 FF (20 FTE) -- North East sector fire halls.

For many years, the City has recognized the need for additional service to the North East sector. Indeed, in 2018 an RFP was issued for a consultant report on the area. That RFP was canceled in favor of this study. Replacing #4 Hall (Duthie), adding a new Burnaby Mountain hall, and potentially dealing with a greatly expanded Trans Mountain Oil tanker facility in the same area complicates the decision making as to the risk and needs for this section of the city. Unfortunately, the study "does not include specific risk analysis" of

the Trans Mountain Expansion Project at all. (The report indicates this was left out because of confidentiality concerns.) Replacing #4 Hall, and building Burnaby Mountain, without consideration of the impact of Trans Mountain, would be a risky and potentially very costly mistake.

Recommendation: 3.4- Build a Fire Station at Big Bend – 4 FF (20 FTE)

Again, as in the 2002 needs study, it is recognized that the Big Bend area will require a new fire hall. The 2002 study recommended an order of priority starting with #7 Hall (completed in 2009) Burnaby Mountain, then Big Bend. Capital Budget 2020 calls for beginning the design process for #4 Hall replacement and #8 Hall Burnaby Mountain, with projected completion in 2023 at a capital cost of \$42 million plus new equipment. (Again, of note is that equipment to address the Trans Mountain Expansion Project is not included).

The Mid-term (2025) and Long-term (2030) recommendations focus on evaluating the progress made from investments in the immediate term, and on future long terms plans that would be developed over the next 3 years. They include also, replacing #1 Hall.

Core Function Review

A Core Function Review was one of the deliverables outlined in the RFP for the study. Unfortunately, some core functions were not addressed and/or compared to other benchmark cities. For example:

- Dispatch service in Burnaby is provided by firefighters employed by the City, rather than through E-COMM, which services the majority of other cities in the region. There is the potential to provide cost savings to the City by transferring these services to E-COMM, but the study did not look at the cost of this service to the City, nor even the potential savings of using admin/support staff for these duties, rather than fully qualified firefighters.
- The number of firefighters per population was not studied or compared to other cities in the region. Budget comparators, administration

comparators, and incident comparators were reviewed. If the City follows the recommendation to hire 82 firefighters, our complement would total 368; we would have only 67 fewer firefighters than Surrey, which has a population more than double that of Burnaby, and service area is 3 times the size of our city. That would mean 1.35 fire fighters for each 1000 population in Burnaby versus 0.75 fire fighters for each 1000 population in Surrey. No analysis is given for this significant disparity.

- Medical Emergencies amount to more than half of the Call Categories that the Fire Department responds to. Though the number of calls has been significantly reduced due to changes introduced to dispatch protocols by British Columbia Emergency Health Services, there is no analysis of the future of this function; and no recommendation to increase firefighter training relative to emergency medical response. In spite of this, the City of Burnaby's budget for 2020 includes a recommendation to expend \$880,000 to increase the certification level of First Responders.

Process Matters:

The study outlines the Stakeholder Engagement process. Within the body of the report, some stakeholders are identified. The vast majority of the consultation, however, appears to have taken place within the Fire Department alone. The steering committee that oversaw the project included the City's Director of Public Safety and three deputy chiefs of the fire department, and the firefighters union President. The report lists 14 individuals who were interviewed; only 5, the City Manager, and the OIC of RCMP, the Mayor; and only one city councilor, and one support staff member; were not Fire Fighters. Four members of the firefighters Union Executive were interviewed. The union, CUPE Local 23, representing the support staff was not interviewed. None of the 5 Fire Chiefs who previously led the department, between 2007 and 2020, were interviewed. No other cities were reported as being interviewed or consulted, even though mutual aid agreements are an important service back up.

The study also references historical reports that were reviewed (page 11), including the 2019 Fire Underwriters Survey. But the report does not specify the results of that review, as is commonly presented in other reviews such as the Winnipeg study referenced earlier.

In Conclusion, I find that this report was a very costly exercise which puts forward the equivalent of a wish list of the Fire Department for its future growth; and council will need to carefully study each and every recommendation and its budgetary implications in the next coming years. Council must carefully consider the competing interests of all the departments of the city and their needs going forward; and not necessarily accept that the wishes of one department should supersede others; always being mindful of the impact on taxpayers.