

NO: **R189**

COUNCIL DATE **October 3, 2011**

REGULAR COUNCIL

TO: **Mayor & Council**

DATE **September 23, 2011**

FROM: **General Manager, Parks, Recreation and Culture
Fire Chief**

FILE **5000-01**

SUBJECT: **Grant Application to Support the Development of a Community Wildfire
Protection Plan**

RECOMMENDATION

The Parks, Recreation and Culture Department and Fire Department recommend that Council:

1. Receive this report for information; and
2. Endorse an application to the Provincial Strategic Wildfire Prevention Initiative for a grant of \$15,000 to prepare a Community Wildfire Protection Plan for the City of Surrey.

BACKGROUND

Following the wildfire experiences in Kelowna, the Shuswap and other areas in the interior of British Columbia, the Provincial Government established a Strategic Wildfire Prevention Initiative that provides funding to local governments to assist in the development of a Community Wildfire Protection Plan (the "Plan"). The goal of the Initiative is to support the development and implementation of fire prevention strategies for wildland areas under the jurisdiction of local governments. Essentially, the Plan will create fire risk assessments for wildland areas and prioritize actions with respect to preventing fires within those areas.

The City of Surrey has significant tracts of wildland within its boundaries. Much of this land is forested and adjacent to developed neighbourhoods, which presents a greater potential for interface fires. Some of these areas are city-managed parkland (>3000 acres of forest) or is identified to be acquired as parkland to support the on-going development of the City. In any given year during the dry summer months, the City is faced with managing fires within City's forested areas.

DISCUSSION

The Provincial Strategic Wildfire Prevention Initiative provides funding to local governments of up to \$15,000 to fund the development of a Community Wildfire Protection Plan for wildland areas. Managing wildfires is a difficult task due to the many compounding factors that contribute to them and the complications related to controlling and suppressing them. The Wildfire Plan will act to identify the risks that exist for such fires in the community and will assist in focussing management of such fires on factors that will be most effective in preventing them. The Plan would not only identify the risks but also provide a clear and precise action plan for mitigating the risks in both the

short and long term. The work plan for developing the Wildfire Plan has been divided into phases including:

- 1) Phase I: The completion of a Wildfire Risk Analysis (WRA) to identify all areas within the City that pose moderate to high risk for such fires. This would be done remotely using aerial photography; and
- 2) Phase II: The delineation of critical interface areas and completion of detailed ground assessments that would act to quantify fuel loading and values that are at risk. This would be followed by the development of fire mitigation strategies by area and the prioritization of areas for the implementation of mitigation treatments.

The Wildfire Risk Analysis would be completed for all major wildland areas, both private and public, within the City. Detailed ground assessments would then be completed that would then enable the City to take preventative measures, such as ground level fuel reductions, to reduce the risk of fire. The Analysis for private lands would enable the Fire Department to better prioritize education and information initiatives that could be directed to the owners of such lands.

Staff has estimated that a budget of \$35,000 is necessary for the preparation of the Plan. If the City is successful in its application for a grant of \$15,000 from the Province, the remainder of the needed funds would be available from the Parks operations budget.

The application for funding under the above-referenced Provincial Initiative requires a resolution of endorsement from City Council.

SUSTAINABILITY CONSIDERATIONS

The development of a Community Wildfire Protection Plan will assist in achieving the goals of the City's Sustainability Charter by addressing the following specific objectives as contained within the Charter:

- E12: *“Enhance and Protect the City’s Natural Areas, Fish Habitat and Wildlife Habitat”*; and
- SC11: *“Improve Public Safety and Security”*

CONCLUSION

Based on the above discussion, it is recommended that Council endorse an application to the Provincial Strategic Wildfire Prevention Initiative for a grant of \$15,000 to prepare a Community Wildfire Protection Plan for the City of Surrey.

Laurie Cavan
General Manager
Parks, Recreation and Culture

Len Garis
Fire Chief
Fire Department