



Master Fire Plan Outlines Recommendations for the Next Decade

Last month, Fire Chief Bill Balfour presented a Master Fire Plan that was initiated to ensure the Fire Department was prepared to deliver fire protection to residents throughout the township today and for years to come. The Master Fire Plan was prepared by Emergency Management and Training, and provides a comprehensive assessment of the current service capability along with an extensive list of strategic and operational recommendations to help staff become better prepared to deliver services in the future. It relies on current and projected population and existing services levels and incorporates service goals and expectations. While it is a ten-year plan, it is noted that it should be subject to periodic review to ensure it continues to reflect current needs and circumstances.

Council establishes the level of fire services across the township through the regulations they set, the budget items they approve and their staffing decisions. In addition to these direct decisions, other regulations, particularly related to planning, have consequences to the fire department's delivery of these services.

The Master Fire Plan included twenty recommendations, both operational and strategic, highlighted by priority. Strategic recommendations require Council support through financial and policy decisions, while operational recommendations fall within the authority of the Fire Chief.

Among the strategic recommendations included in the Plan was the construction of a new Fire Station in the Municipal Office area; a change in the status of the Deputy Chief position from a voluntary to a full-time position with training and operations responsibility; the dedication of the Fire Prevention officer to a full-time prevention role; the evaluation of the tiered response to non-urgent medical calls and the assignment of specific officers to medical call response. As medical calls now account for half of all calls for service to the Cavan Monaghan Fire Department, the consultant recommended re-examining how they are addressed. Local calls for urgent medical situations including life threatening events are directed and responded to immediately by the local fire staff and this will continue. In addition, the fire department is called to

respond to non-urgent situations whenever the projected arrival of an ambulance on the scene is more than 10 minutes. Given the growing demand for this type of call and the less time-sensitive nature of the need, the consultant recommended this level of response warranted further review.

The report also included recommendations for the replacement of specific equipment and the potential acquisition of an aerial apparatus as one of the options to address emergency calls to taller buildings should they receive approval for construction.

Among the operational recommendations were specific items regarding staff selection, training and administrative procedures.

Chief Balfour will present his own recommendations to Council in the next few months where he will outline his own priorities for the department. Then it will be up to the elected officials to make their own determine which strategic recommendations will be implemented. At \$1.2 million, an aerial apparatus is probably not high on Chief Balfour's wish list, but a new Fire Hall likely sits near the top. This capital project has not been formally discussed since 2016, when a preliminary design with a \$5 million price tag was presented. Discussion about the project will likely be resurrected, but even at the original cost it will put a strain on the Township finances. Maybe it's time to form a new fundraising committee. KG