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Item No. 6.2
Budget Committee
March 1, 2023

TO: Chair and Members of Budget Committee
(Standing Committee of the Whole on Budget)

Original Signed

SUBMITTED BY:

Cathie O'Toole, Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: February 10, 2023

SUBJECT: **Proposed 2023/24 Halifax Regional Fire & Emergency Budget and Business Plan**

ORIGIN

As per Administrative Order 1 and the Budget and Business Plan consultation schedule presented to Regional Council on November 8, 2022, staff are required to present the draft 2023/24 Business Unit Budget and Business Plans to the Budget Committee for review and discussion prior to consideration by Regional Council.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Halifax Charter, section 35 (1) The Chief Administrative Officer shall (b) ensure that an annual budget is prepared and submitted to the Council.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Budget Committee:

1. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer to incorporate the Halifax Regional Fire & Emergency (HRFE) proposed 2023/24 Budget and Business Plan, as set out and discussed in the accompanying plan and supporting presentation, into the Draft 2023/24 Operating Budget.

BACKGROUND

On January 12, 2021, Regional Council adopted a Strategic Planning Framework, establishing priority outcomes for their term, and directed staff to develop plans to advance these outcomes.

As part of the design of the 2023/24 Budget and Business Plan development process, the Budget Committee is reviewing each business unit's budget and proposed plans, in advance of completing detailed HRM Budget and Business Plan preparation.

This recommendation does not include the addition/removal of any proposed Budget Adjustment List options.

DISCUSSION

Staff has prepared the proposed 2023/24 Halifax Regional Fire & Emergency Budget and Business Plan consistent with the 2021- 2025 Strategic Priorities Plan approved on December 1, 2020, as well as fiscal direction provided on November 25, 2022.

Following direction from the Budget Committee, staff will proceed to prepare the detailed Budget and Business Plan for inclusion in the proposed 2023/24 HRM Budget and Business Plan documents to be presented to Regional Council's Budget Committee, as per the process and schedule approved on November 8, 2022.

As part of the budget process, Regional Council may be provided with a list of possible service increases and decreases that will allow them to more fully direct changes to the budget.

Reductions and Over Budget Options

The following budget reductions are included for consideration by Budget Committee:

- Reduction in service outside of the urban core, by eliminating all career staffing (FTEs) at some stations, through attrition.
- Grant Reductions to Ground Search and Rescue (GSAR) groups.

The following over budget options are included for consideration by Budget Committee:

- Increase Staffing by up to 15 firefighters to convert Middle Musquodoboit (Station 38) to a 24/7 Career Composite Station.
- Additional emergency management funding for emergency kits for newcomers, training and education for emergency management volunteers, HfxAlert advertising, and funding to maintain Amateur Radio Club Towers used by the Emergency Operations Centre.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The recommendations in this report will lead to the development of a proposed 2023/24 Budget. There are no immediate financial implications from this recommendation. The broader financial implications will be discussed and debated as the budget is developed in more detail.

RISK CONSIDERATION

Although there is no immediate risk associated with this report, there may be risks associated with individual decisions during the budget debate that could favour short-term results over longer-term strategic outcomes. Individual decisions made during budget debate will, however, be considered for both short- and long-term impacts to levels of service, asset condition, and cost.

In addition, the administration seeks to reduce these risks in three ways: by providing Regional Council with several fiscal options to assist in the achievement of longer-term strategic outcomes, by assessing both corporate and capital project risk, and by providing the opportunity to draw Regional Council's attention to project or program related risks when reports are presented for consideration.

Enterprise risks are reviewed as part of the strategic planning process and mitigating initiatives incorporated into business planning activities to reduce or eliminate the impact and likelihood of the risk occurring.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The 2022 Municipal Services Survey was conducted from September 12 – 29, 2022. This survey was available online and by mail to all residents, and received 4,030 responses to a variety of budget, planning, and priorities questions. The results of the 2022 Resident Survey were provided in an information report presented to Regional Council on November 22, 2022.

The 2023/24 budget process also seeks to solicit public comment by inviting members of the public to provide feedback prior to each business unit budget and business plan presentation.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

No environmental implications were identified.

ALTERNATIVES

Budget Committee could choose to amend the Budget and Business Plan as proposed in the supporting presentation through specific motion and direct the Chief Administrative Officer to prepare the Budget and Business Plan for inclusion in the proposed 2023/24 HRM Budget and Business Plan documents.

Budget Committee could also choose to add an item to the BAL through the following motion(s):

- 1) That the Budget Committee include a reduction of \$947,600 for Reduction in service outside of the urban core, by eliminating all career staffing (FTEs) at some stations, through attrition as outlined the Briefing Note BN059 within the proposed 2023/24 Halifax Regional Fire & Emergency budget to the Budget Adjustment List as an operating expense under budget option for consideration.
- 2) That the Budget Committee include a reduction of \$141,300 for Grant Reductions to GSAR teams, as outlined the Briefing Note BN060 within the proposed 2023/24 Halifax Regional Fire & Emergency budget to the Budget Adjustment List as an operating expense under budget option for consideration.
- 3) That the Budget Committee include:

Option 1: an increase of \$137,100 to increase staffing by 15 firefighters to convert Middle Musquodoboit (Station 38) to a 24/7 Career Composite Station while maintaining all E Platoon Stations as outlined the Briefing Note BN061 within proposed 2023/24 Halifax Regional Fire & Emergency budget to the Budget Adjustment List as an operating expense over budget option for consideration.

Option 2: an increase of \$91,400 to increase Staffing by 10 firefighters and convert one E Platoon Station to a volunteer response only, to convert Middle Musquodoboit (Station 38) to a 24/7 Career Composite Station as outlined the Briefing Note BN061 within the proposed 2023/24

Halifax Regional Fire & Emergency budget to the Budget Adjustment List as an operating expense over budget option for consideration.

Option 3: That the Budget Committee include an increase of \$45,700 to increase staffing by 5 firefighters and convert two E Platoon Stations to a volunteer response only, to convert Middle Musquodoboit (Station 38) to a 24/7 Career Composite Station as outlined the Briefing Note BN061 within the proposed 2023/24 Halifax Regional Fire & Emergency budget to the Budget Adjustment List as an operating expense over budget option for consideration.

- 4) That the Budget Committee include an increase of \$90,000 to fund Emergency Management items as outlined in the Briefing note BN062 within the proposed 2023/24 Halifax Regional Fire & Emergency budget to the Budget Adjustment List as an operating expense over budget option for consideration.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 – 2023/24 Halifax Regional Fire & Emergency Proposed Budget and Business Plan

Attachment 2 – 2023/24 Halifax Regional Fire & Emergency Proposed Budget and Business Plan Presentation

Attachment 3 – Briefing Note BN059 – Reduction in Service Outside of the Urban Core

Attachment 4 – Briefing Note BN060 – Grant Reductions to GSAR Teams

Attachment 5 – Briefing Note BN061 – Increase Staffing (by up to 15 Firefighters) to Convert Middle Musquodoboit (Station 38) to a Career Composite Station

Attachment 6 – Briefing Note BN062 – Emergency Management

Attachment 7 – HRFE 2022 Fact Sheet

A copy of this report can be obtained online at halifax.ca or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 902.490.4210.

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