



City of Richmond

Report to Committee

To: Community Safety Committee

Date: February 24, 2006

From: Geoff Lake
Deputy Chief

File:

Re: Additional Level Request - Fire Prevention Officer

Staff Recommendation

That the report titled "Additional Level Request – Fire Prevention Officer" be received for information.

Geoff Lake
Deputy Chief
(2734)

FOR ORIGINATING DIVISION USE ONLY		
CONCURRENCE OF GENERAL MANAGER (A-103) 		
REVIEWED BY TAG	YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>
REVIEWED BY CAO	YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>

Staff Report

Origin

During the 2006 budget process RFR staff submitted an additional level request to add one fire prevention officer to the existing complement. At the January 24th regular meeting of Council the matter was referred to staff to:

“Report to the Community Safety Committee on the request for a Fire Prevention Officer, and the duties and expectations which would be required when inspections were undertaken”.

The following report outlines the City’s responsibilities in the general area of Fire Prevention and specifically fire inspections and investigations that a Fire Prevention Officer would be assigned.

Analysis

The current Fire Services Act requires the city to arrange for a “regular system of fire inspections” in buildings defined as “hotels” and “public buildings”. The Act does not specifically outline the frequency upon which these inspections are to be carried out, but rather puts the onus on the City to determine this matter. Historically, the RFR has fulfilled its obligation to inspect all buildings and investigate all fires as required within the Act, however the selection and frequency of said inspections has been somewhat random and inconsistent. These inconsistencies in frequency are due in part to factors such as exponential growth in the city’s building stock, the department’s need to re-assign Inspectors to more pressing duties, the lack of a modern records’ management system and no increase in the fire prevention staffing in the past 20 plus years.

In addition to inspections of existing businesses and buildings, the RFR is also required to provide inspection services for certain construction projects, business licences, above and underground tank installations, dangerous goods, requested fire safety inspections, requested comfort information for property purchases, public complaints, plans reviews, fire safety planning, fire evacuation planning and mock fire drills.

Currently, the total number of occupancy inspections RFR is required to perform on a regular basis is approximately 12,000. (This number does not include follow-up inspections to ensure compliance is reached.) Of this number, approximately 8,000 are considered lower risk or routine inspections and are assigned to the fire suppression crews as part of their daily responsibilities. The remaining 4,000 inspections are more technical in nature and require an appropriately trained and experienced Fire Prevention Office to conduct them. Of these 4,000, approximately 800 are public assembly buildings such as hotels, churches, schools, and theatres etc, which need to be inspected with more frequency than regular establishments.

Hourly time requirements to conduct these more technical inspections can range from 1 to 3 hours depending on the size and complexity of the building, the fire suppression systems involved and the number of safety infractions found. However, it is not uncommon for a fire inspector to spend 20 – 30 cumulative hours dealing with a single inspection when the business owner is in non-compliance and is not co-operative in correcting infractions.

The existing RFR – Fire Prevention Division consists of the following staff:

- 1 - Chief Fire Prevention Officer
- 2 – Fire Prevention Captains
- 5 – Fire prevention Officers

This staffing complement has been in place for approximately 20 plus years. The primary functions of these positions are as follows:

Chief Fire Prevention Officer – has overall responsibility for the division and work assignments. His duties include overall staff direction and leadership, setting policy, report writing, bylaw amendments, training staff, liaise with other agencies etc.

Fire Prevention Captain – each of these two positions has a primary function (1. Fire Investigator. 2. Plan Reviewer) that take up a majority of their time. Their secondary roles include inspections.

Fire Prevention Officer (FPO) – the primary role of this position is inspections. Other secondary but unavoidable functions include: fire safety planning, fire evacuation planning, fire investigation, public education, displays and demonstrations, complaint follow-ups, general public inquiries etc.

If this position is approved, the additional Fire Prevention Officer will be tasked with inspections of hotels, community care facilities, theatres and public assembly buildings.

In addition to the increased inspection frequency we will be:

- evaluating existing fire and life safety risks in hotels.
- evaluating the capabilities and skills of hotel operators and supervisory staff.
- developing and presenting a hotel fire safety/training program to hotel operators and staff.
- assisting hotel operators and supervisory staff to develop and practice acceptable fire evacuation procedures.

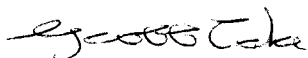
Financial Impact

The annual cost of a Fire Prevention Officer is \$96,800 (which amounts to a 0.08% tax increase).

Conclusion

The staffing levels in RFR's Fire Prevention Division have not increased since the mid 1980's. During this same time frame, the City of Richmond's building stock and requests for inspection and other related services has increased dramatically.

RFR's goal is to achieve an acceptable level of fire safety for the community and to provide a safe environment for building occupants by ensuring that occupancies meet or exceed the relevant fire safety legislation. An additional Fire Prevention Officer will assist us in achieving this goal.



Geoff Lake
Deputy Chief
(2734)

GL:gl