



City of Richmond

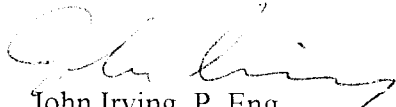
Report to Committee

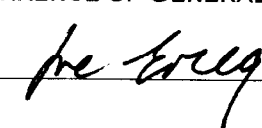
To: Planning Committee
From: John Irving, P. Eng.
Manager, Building Approvals
Re: Tree Protection Bylaw Funding

to Planning - Mar 21, 2006
Date: March 10, 2006
File: 03-0970-01
XREF: 12-8000-20-8057

Staff Recommendation

That the attached report be received for information.


John Irving, P. Eng.
Manager, Building Approvals
(4140)

FOR ORIGINATING DIVISION USE ONLY					
ROUTED TO:		CONCURRENCE		CONCURRENCE OF GENERAL MANAGER	
Budgets		Y <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>		
Human Resources		Y <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>		
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

At the Council Meeting of January 24, 2006, Council made the following referral to staff:

"That staff examine whether or not the Tree Protection Bylaw could be funded on an interim basis for two years with unappropriated revenue from the gaming reserves, and determine whether or not two on-staff arborists and a clerk would be necessary; and further, that the funding of \$250,000 for the Tree Protection Bylaw within the 2006 base budget be set aside until such time as staff have had the opportunity to consider alternate methods of dealing with this bylaw.

The following report is provided in response to this referral and in support of the upcoming proposed permanent Tree Protection Bylaw.

Findings Of Fact

The current Tree Protection Bylaw #8014 has been in enforcement since December 19, 2005. The following summarises the level of activity experienced in administering the bylaw to the end of February:

Month	Permits Issued
December	3
January	19
February	48
TOTAL	70

Phone or In-person Inquiries:

Approximately 6 to 10 per day
300 to 500 total to-date

In addition to the above, there are over a dozen larger development projects in various stages of development approvals, which have extensive tree issues. Considerable effort is expended on coordination and review to ensure tree bylaw issues are addressed in the development approval processes. As illustrated in the number of permits issued, tree bylaw activity is steadily increasing. Each permit issued with replanting requirements also results in a three-year commitment to follow up on letter-of-credit release inspections.

This workload is currently being met as follows:

Position/Department	Full-Time Equivalent
Tree Preservation Official (TFT)	1
Parks Department Support	0.5
Building Approvals Dept. Support	0.5
Customer Service Support	0.5
Development Approvals Dept. Support	0.25
TOTAL	2.75

The current workload demand of 2.75 FTE is an average demand and in a given day or hour, there can be five or six staff working simultaneously on tree bylaw issues. This workload is expected to grow over the course of the coming months and years, as greater compliance is achieved (raising the number of processed permits) and the number of tree re-plantings increases long-term administrative management demands. Meeting the current workload with support from other departments is creating severe strain on those departments and resulting in compromised customer service.

Development of the proposed permanent Tree Protection Bylaw is near completion. The proposed changes are not anticipated to create any significant changes to the current workload demand or growth.

Surrey Case Study

The City of Surrey has just completed an extensive review and public consultation process on their 10-year old bylaw and is currently preparing a new bylaw for implementation in the spring. Surrey has experienced a low level of compliance with their existing bylaw that has resulted in considerable erosion of their urban forest. They have identified low staffing levels as one of the key reasons this has occurred. The low staffing level also resulted in higher levels of employee stress that has resulted in high staff turnover. Surrey is now proposing that additional staff are hired to manage and administer their new bylaw, including a Tree Administrator, a Bylaw Enforcement Officer, and an additional Environmental Technologist/Arborist. This would bring their total number of tree bylaw positions to five.

Contracting

Contracting of services to administer the bylaw is not recommended for a number of reasons including:

- less than immediate response time to complaints and service requests,
- poor integration with internal departments such as Parks and Development Approvals,
- lack of value-added customer service,
- contractors cannot administer discretionary portions of the bylaw, and
- higher hourly cost and additional internal cost to manage contractors.

Analysis

It was originally estimated that meeting the workload created by the Tree Protection Bylaw would require three new full-time positions, two arborists/tree protection officials and a clerk. Experience with administering the tree protection bylaw to-date has clearly shown that this estimate is accurate. Departments currently supporting the administration of the bylaw can only continue to do so on a short-term basis as this effort is compromising core service delivery.

Current experience in hiring for all regulatory and professional positions at the City has clearly demonstrated that there is a severe lack of skilled labour in the marketplace. Initial inquiries indicate that this general shortage may be even more acute for arborists and tree professionals. In this market climate, advertising for temporary positions creates little or no response from qualified candidates. Interest from quality candidates is generated only when full-time permanent positions are offered.

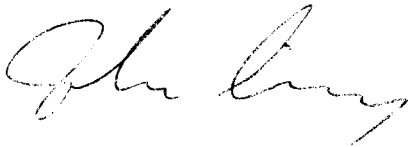
For the City in general, and certainly within the Building Approvals Department, the rate of employee retirement will accelerate over the coming years. The risk of general overstaffing is minimal to non-existent as any future decrease in service demand can be addressed through retirement attrition.

Financial Impact

Leaving the funding of \$250,000 for the Tree Protection Bylaw within the 2006 base budget will have no impact beyond that already identified in the 2006 budget. Although this budget is required for full-year expenditures, actual expenditures in 2006 will likely not exceed \$150,000 given that full implementation and hiring will not occur before May, 2006. The remainder will return as surplus for allocation by Council.

Conclusion

Staff's previous analysis and current experience are consistent and clearly indicate a need for three full-time staff to adequately administer the Tree Protection Bylaw. Effective implementation of the Tree Protection Bylaw and adherence to the City's high customer service standards are contingent on these positions being permanent and full-time.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Irving". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "John" being more prominent than the last name "Irving".

John Irving, P. Eng.
Manager, Building Approvals
(4140)

Jl:ji