

DATE OF MEETING September 18, 2019

AUTHORED BY GREG NORMAN, DEPUTY FIRE CHIEF

SUBJECT CENTRAL ISLAND EMERGENCY SERVICES COMMUNICATIONS PARTNERSHIP FUNDING

OVERVIEW

Purpose of Report

To secure the funding to upgrade critical emergency communication radio equipment. |

Recommendation

That the Finance and Audit Committee recommend that Council approve the 900Mhz link system and allocate \$30,000 from the E911 Reserve.

BACKGROUND

Emergency 911 calls for the City of Nanaimo are answered through EComm in Vancouver and then fire calls are transferred to the Fire Communications Centre (FireComm) through a 911 link. The Central Island 911 Partnership was created between the Cowichan Valley Regional District (CVRD), Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN) and the City of Nanaimo (the City). FireComm provides dispatching to 26 fire departments providing a significant capital and long-term cost savings for the partners since the amalgamation. FireComm is staffed with 13 Nanaimo Fire Rescue staff (members of the IAFF Local 905), 8 full-time dispatchers and 5 relief dispatchers. In 2018, FireComm answered and dispatched 15,592 incidents.

For many years, North Oyster Volunteer Fire Department (NOVFD) has had challenges with radio communications delivered via the CVRD Woodley Range repeater. The repeater is within the Woodley Ecological Reserve that is located in between Brenton Paige Road and Kulleet Bay. Line-of-sight radio to the northeast of the repeater site are hindered by terrain and as such, NOVFD struggles with radio communications in their core area. Most initial responders live in the area of the fire hall and this is the exact area that struggles with radio signals, leading to garbled transmissions and missed pages to dispatch the department. As such, fire dispatch is required to page NOVFD twice, once via our telco-backup system and once via the radio repeater. This is done to ensure that NOVFD responders hear at least one page. |

DISCUSSION

An alternative site was found on Mt Hayes, of which coverage planning and drive testing show will be an excellent site to solve the radio issues for NOVFD. The CVRD entered into an agreement to locate a new fire radio repeater at the site.

Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada (ISED), the radio regulator, advised that a 900Mhz link system from fire dispatch would be required.

The equipment and configuration costs that would be required at FireComm in order to implement a dispatch connection to the new radio repeater at Mt Hayes has been quoted at \$30,000.

Funding

The Central Island 911 Partnership has a Cost Sharing Formula that states that, “*net operating costs will be shared on the basis of the populations of the jurisdictions of the Parties.*” The current cost sharing is the City 46%, CVRD 44%, and the RDN 10%.

The Central Island 911 Partnership contract states that: “*Any annual surplus generated from the collection of a Call Answer Levy related to the provision of Enhanced 911 Service will be placed by the Parties into a 911 Service reserve fund.*” The funds for this \$30,000 900Mhz link system would come from the E911 Reserve. The Partners have approved the funding request.

The operating and maintenance costs will be covered by the CVRD.

OPTIONS

1. That the Finance and Audit Committee recommend that Council approve the 900Mhz link system and allocate \$30,000 from the E911 Reserve.
 - **Budget Implication:** \$30,000 from the E911 Reserve fund and will be included in the future budget bylaw amendment for the 2019 – 2023 Financial Plan.
2. That the Finance and Audit Committee recommend that Council deny the 900Mhz link system and not allocate \$30,000 from the E911 Reserve.
 - **Budget Implication:** No funding implications at this point in time. |

SUMMARY POINTS

- North Oyster Volunteer Fire Department (NOVFD) has had challenges with radio communications delivered via the CVRD Woodley Range repeater.
- An alternative site was found on Mt Hayes which will be an excellent site to solve the radio issues for NOVFD.
- The equipment and configuration costs that would be required at FireComm in order to implement a dispatch connection to the new radio repeater at Mt Hayes has been quoted at \$30,000.
- The funding will come out of the E911 Reserves.

Submitted by:

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Concurrence by:

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