

Staff Report for Decision

DATE OF MEETING October 21, 2020

AUTHORED BY BRAD WOOD, ASSISTANT FIRE CHIEF – OPERATIONS

**SUBJECT COMMUNITY RESILIENCY INVESTMENT PROGRAM (FIRESMART
COMMUNITY FUNDING AND SUPPORTS PROGRAM)**

OVERVIEW

Purpose of Report

To gain Council's support in applying for funding through UBCM for FireSmart activities in the City of Nanaimo for 2021. |

Recommendation

That the Finance and Audit Committee recommend that Council support the City of Nanaimo's application to the Union of BC Municipalities for the Community Resiliency Investment Program (FireSmart Community Funding and Supports Program) and if successful the project will be added to the 2021-2025 Financial Plan.

BACKGROUND

The City has risk for wildland fires in a number of areas particularly within the interface with urban development. The FireSmart program is a community based wildland fire prevention initiative where communities come together as a group and FireSmart their neighborhoods. This initiative is being promoted by the Province to reduce the risk of damage caused by wildfires and grants are available through UBCM. Staff is making application for a FireSmart Community Funding grant and require a Council resolution to make this application. |

DISCUSSION

The current Community Wildfire Protection Plan rates the city as having a "Low with pockets of moderate" fire risk. In addition to this, the 2015 Hazard Risk and Vulnerability Analysis (HRVA) determined that the risk for wildland fires in the City is "Medium". While the forested areas in the City are decreasing as a result of development, areas of risk remain both within the City boundary and immediately outside the boundary with potential to affect City lands. In addition, there are a number of parks and Crown lands that interface with urban development contributing to interface fire potential.

Given the recent drought conditions and the number and severity of fires experienced in the 2020 fire season, a major wildfire event will quickly tax the resources of the fire department and other city agencies. Having the community involved in the application of FireSmart principles to their homes and property will build resiliency in the community and allow property and structures to

better withstand a wildland fire event and limit damage. This in turn allows resources to concentrate on controlling and extinguishing the spread of the fire.

The funding would assist in the development and promotion of a FireSmart program and to improve the City's approach and resiliency to community safety by reducing the risk of damage resulting from a wildfire within Nanaimo and neighbouring lands. Staff is requesting a contribution from UBCM for the amount of \$49,600,000 which is the full amount of total project costs.

OPTIONS

1. That the Finance and Audit Committee recommend that Council support the City of Nanaimo's application to the Union of BC Municipalities for the Community Resiliency Investment Program (FireSmart Community Funding and Supports Program) and if successful the project will be added to the 2021-2025 Financial Plan.
 - The advantages of this option: The funding would assist in the development and promotion of a FireSmart program and to improve the City's approach and resiliency to community safety by reducing the risk of damage resulting from a wildfire within Nanaimo and neighbouring lands. Community involvement and environmental protection are also key advantages of accessing the funding grants.
 - The disadvantage of this option is that FireSmart activities are reliant on the successful application.
 - Financial Implications – The activities are not in the current operating budget and will only be undertaken if the grant application is successful.
2. That the Finance and Audit Committee recommend that Council deny support to apply to the Union of BC Municipalities for the Community Resiliency Investment Program (FireSmart Community Funding and Supports Program).
 - The advantages of this option: No change to current operations or resources.
 - The disadvantages of this option: The lack of funding would result in not developing or promoting a FireSmart program and would not improve the City's approach and resiliency to community safety by reducing the risk of damage resulting from a wildfire within Nanaimo and neighbouring lands.
 - Financial Implications: If any FireSmart activities are required throughout the year, there will be limited funding available.

SUMMARY POINTS

- The FireSmart program is a community based wildland fire prevention initiative where communities come together as a group and FireSmart their neighborhoods.
- This initiative is being promoted by the Province to reduce the risk of damage caused by wildfires and grants are available through UBCM.
- Staff is requesting a contribution from UBCM for the amount of \$49,600.00 which is the full amount of total project costs.

Submitted by:

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Concurrence by:

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