

Staff Report for Decision

DATE OF MEETING | March 15, 2023 |

AUTHORED BY | Geoff Whiting, DEPUTY FIRE CHIEF – OPERATIONS |

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

OVERVIEW

Purpose of Report

To provide Council with information on the UBCM Community Resiliency Investment Program (FireSmart Community Funding and Supports Program) and obtain a Council resolution supporting an application for FireSmart activities in the City of Nanaimo for 2023. |

Recommendation

That the Finance and Audit Committee recommend:

1. Council endorse the City of Nanaimo's application under the UBCM Community Resiliency Investment Program (FireSmart Community Funding and Supports Program), and;
2. Amend the 2023-2027 Financial Plan if the application is successful.

BACKGROUND

The City has risk for wildland fires in a number of areas particularly at 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 are making application for a FireSmart Community Funding grant and require a Council resolution to support the 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. As well, there are a number of parks and Crown lands that interface with urban development contributing to interface fire potential.

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 a fire. Community FireSmart events have been held in the Long Lake Heights, Cottle Hill and Protection Island communities over the past several years.

The City is requesting \$68,715 from the program this funding will support the continued efforts to FireSmart higher risk areas and improve community safety by reducing the risk of damage resulting from a wildfire. Continuing these projects, will support broader community FireSmart education and training initiatives for Fire Department staff. The grant will also support the equipping of a Structural Protection Unit as an additional resource for the City.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

This project is not included in the approved 2023 – 2027 Financial plan and is contingent on a successful grant application. If funding is successful the 2023 – 2027 Financial Plan will be amended to add the \$68,715 project funded 100% from the grant.

OPTIONS

1. That the Finance and Audit Committee recommend:
 1. Council endorse the City of Nanaimo application under the UBCM Community Resiliency Investment Program (Firesmart Community Funding and Supports Program), and;
 2. Amend the 2023-2027 Financial Plan if the application is successful
 - i. The advantages of this option: The funding would assist in the further development of the FireSmart program and improve community safety and resiliency by reducing the risk of damage resulting from a wildfire in Nanaimo. Community involvement and environmental protection are also key advantages of accessing the funding grants.
 - ii. The funding will equip a Structural Protection Unit trailer which will be an additional resource for protection of property within the city.
 - iii. The disadvantage of this option is that FireSmart activities are reliant on the successful application.
 - iv. Financial Implications: This project is not included in the approved 2023-2027 Financial Plan, and is contingent on a successful grant application.
2. That the Finance and Audit Committee recommend that Council deny support to apply to UBCM 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 a severe reduction in the City's FireSmart program and would leave the city more susceptible to the threat of wildfire and at greater risk of property loss.
 - 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 \$68,715 which is 100% of total project costs.

Submitted by:

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Concurrence by:

Tim Doyle
Fire Chief

Jake Rudolph
Chief Administrative Officer

Laura Mercer
Director, Finance