

DATE OF MEETING April 17, 2024

AUTHORED BY Geoff Whiting, DEPUTY 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 a grant under the Community Resiliency Investment Program for FireSmart activities in the City of Nanaimo for 2024.

Recommendation

That the Finance and Audit Committee recommend Council endorse an application to the Community Resiliency Investment Program and if successful the 2024-2028 Financial Plan be amended to include this grant.

BACKGROUND

The Community Resiliency Investment Program's FireSmart Community Funding and Supports program provides funding to First Nations and local governments in BC to increase community resiliency by undertaking community-based FireSmart planning and activities.

FireSmart BC is a group composed of agencies whose collaborative goal is to maintain and improve the delivery of the FireSmart BC program to support better wildfire preparedness, prevention and mitigation by ensuring alignment with FireSmart disciplines and provides the tools and education necessary to enable citizens, communities, First Nations and local governments to increase their wildfire resiliency.

The FireSmart Community Funding and Supports Program intake is open, and funding permitted, applications are being accepted between October 1, 2023 and September 30, 2024 for the 2024 program and up to \$100,000 for 100% of eligible project costs is available towards FireSmart initiatives.

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.

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.

This funding will support the continued efforts to FireSmart these higher risk areas and improve community safety by reducing the risk of damage resulting from a wildfire. In addition to continuing these projects, funding for 2024 will support broader community FireSmart education and training initiatives for Fire Department staff. Beginning in 2023 the CRI began providing funding for the equipping of a Structural Protection Unit trailer over a four year phase in. This trailer will carry the equipment necessary to install protection sprinklers on residences at threat from wildfire. The current application includes funding for phase two of this process. Staff is requesting a contribution from UBCM in the amount of \$65,000.00 which is one hundred percent of total project costs. |

OPTIONS

1. That the Finance and Audit Committee recommend Council support endorse an application to the Community Resiliency Investment Program and if successful the 2024-2028 Financial Plan be amended to include this grant.
 - Advantages: 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.
 - The funding will equip a Structural Protection Unit trailer which will be an additional resource for protection of property within the City.
 - Financial Implications: Will allow the City to undertake FireSmart activities that are not currently in the budget. The 2024 – 2028 Financial Plan will be amended if the grant application is successful.

2. That the Finance and Audit Committee recommend Council do not endorse an application to the Community Resiliency Investment Program and if successful the 2024-2028 Financial Plan be amended to include this grant.
 - Advantages: No change to current operations or resources.
 - Disadvantages: 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 \$65,000.00 which is one hundred percent of total project costs.

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