



Title: New Fire Station Headquarters and Emergency
Operations Center
Report Number: FES2021-07
Meeting Date: Tuesday, December 07, 2021
Report Prepared: Monday, November 29, 2021

RECOMMENDATION(S):

THAT Council consider the referral of the Fire Station Headquarters and Emergency Operations Center in the 2022 Capital Budget deliberations.

REPORT:

The Fire Department is appreciative of the opportunity to bring forward to Council the request to purchase land back in 2020 for the City of Thorold's Fire Station 1 Headquarters and Emergency Operations Center (EOC). With a myriad of decisions that still need to be made to bring forward those relating to the Fire Station 1 Headquarters, requesting that the discussion around the building of the facility be brought for consideration during budget deliberations is an important step for the City of Thorold.

Over the past 34 years, a number of studies and reviews, including a comprehensive Fire Master Plan has been completed by Mayors, CAO's, Councilors, Fire Chiefs and stakeholders, including our Consultants, Career Firefighters, Volunteer Firefighters, Fire Marshalls Office and Insurance Underwriters (IAO).

It is important to highlight the need for the fire department to maintain the integrity of the services being provided for the community and its staff and volunteers in a safe and compliant manner. With AODA compliance and minimum standards to be met for this public facility, Council is taking on the responsibility of not providing our community with a facility that does not meet the necessary compliance relating to AODA, human rights, safety, health and safety, Ministry of Labour, and NFPA 1500 and 1581 standards. This report also address some of the concerns with not being provided proper office space and with adequate training areas.

Background:

In 1987, the City of Thorold embarked on a study of the Fire Department which reviewed the existing Fire Protection Facilities and Services to determine what changes should be considered in order to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the

department. Arising from this was a Fire Service Review Plan which established a recommended course of action to guide the provision of Fire Protection Services and related facilities in Thorold to the year 2000.

A committee was established on October 24, 1989 and mandated to prepare a Municipal Fire Protection Plan for the City of Thorold. The committee comprised of the Mayor, 2 – Councilors, CAO, Fire Chief, Deputy Fire Chief, Representative from Local 1182 and District Chiefs from Stations 1, 2, 3 and 4.

At that time, the Office of the Ontario Fire Marshall (OFM) recommended the purchase of land as soon as possible in the Confederation Heights area, in the vicinity of Collier Road for construction of a new headquarters. The recommendation in 1991 was that Council consider a new headquarters to be constructed within that area and built to accommodate four apparatus bays, a meeting/Lecture room, office space for the Fire Chief, Deputy Fire Chief, Training and Fire Prevention Officers, Administration staff and training accommodations for the firefighters to replace the existing Station #1.

The committee recommended that land be purchased in the Confederation Heights area in 1995 in the vicinity of Collier Road for the construction of the new headquarters station in the year 1998. The monies gained by the sale of the existing Station #1 were to be used to offset this incurred cost. In 1996, a Fire Service Review by OFM indicated that the need for a new headquarters station still exists and will escalate as development continues to bring increased demand for emergency services in the western areas of Thorold. This need has been identified in a number of reports over the past 15 years and most recently was reported by the OFM, Insurance Advisory Organization (IAO) and the City's former fire protection planning committee.

In the conclusion of the OFM review, it was stated that “we most respectfully suggest, in this name of austerity, citizens can and will tolerate a little longer wait for books from the library or to process a license at the municipal offices. They will not tolerate the wait for a fire department response if their home is on fire or a family member lies unconscious on the floor, regardless of cost. There is no reason to believe the City of Thorold and their Fire Service cannot develop a new plan as part of your municipal strategy which fully identifies and addresses fire protection based upon needs, costs and expectations of the public they protect”.

The IAO provided a report in 1996 indicating that “the Headquarters Fire Hall is not well located to respond to its area of the City and is too small to accommodate the personnel and apparatus assigned to it. It should be relocated westerly (out of downtown) to the area of Collier Rd and Confederation Ave. There is, at present, sufficient land available in the area and this location provides an excellent response pattern north of via Collier, east via Hwy 58 (cross the canal) or Richmond (to downtown) and south via Beaverdams Rd and Hwy 406. The relocation of the Fire Hall would be even more critical should the Pine St. interchange with Hwy 58 be closed”.

The existing Station 1 Headquarters was built in 1964 and as in the reports from 1989 on, it is mentioned that the headquarters was too small for the growth of the Fire Service and in the wrong location for the growth of the City.

When we were faced with responding to the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2019, our emergency services response teams, including the fire department, emergency management team, and our staff realized just how undersized our headquarters really is. To ensure all Health and Safety measures at Station 1, the Career Firefighters were re-located upstairs, however, this still does not provide us with adequate space for our day-to-day operations. With the measures that the pandemic has brought to light, these actions will be in place until we can build a new station. Currently, 25 Volunteer Firefighters do not have a proper facility to be able to hold in-class training or association meetings. We are accommodating with some creative training scheduling with Station 2 and Station 4, which increases the burden on our staff. When we cannot combine training, Volunteer Firefighters from Station 1 have to train in the truck bays for in-class training sessions. The career staff use the upstairs Kitchen, lounge, dining, and work-out area to do in-class training on a daily basis. Every Firefighter deserves a suitable training area to maintain suitable training needs, maintain safety and safety skills, and most importantly be effective and efficient when providing emergency response services to the citizens of Thorold.

Analysis:

Station 1 does not meet many National Fire Protection Association Standards (NFPA) or the Province of Ontario, Ministry of Labour Firefighter cancer prevention checklist. NFPA 1500 and 1581 discuss Fire Service Facilities and are the two main standards we must meet. Attached are applicable sections of NFPA 1500 and 1581, with highlighted areas of non-compliance.

NFPA is the standard that all Provincial Fire Services follow for everything from Health and Safety, to proper PPE, to proper equipment, to proper vehicles, to proper training, to proper staffing. These standards guide Fire Officials to make proper decisions to keep all firefighters safe and give them the necessary education and equipment to perform their jobs. OFM and the Ontario Fire College adopted the NFPA standards for training curriculum back in 2013. This curriculum was the best thing that happened to the fire service. Every firefighter across Ontario now trains to the same standard curriculum.

Decontamination is a very big part of today's fire service. Back in 2014, the Ontario Government passed presumptive legislation that now qualifies firefighters for certain cancers to be part of a workplace injury for all firefighters across the province of Ontario. Studies after studies have shown firefighters that have passed away from cancer can now prove that these were work place injuries. For these reasons, we are mandated by the Provincial Government under the Ministry of Labor Section 21 Guidance notes to have a decontamination program for firefighters that have been subject to any type of contaminants. The smoke in today's firefighting is getting more and more toxic with all the new technologies, pre-engineered joist, plastics etc. Fires burn hotter and faster

today than they ever have. To date we have what we call a gross decontamination Standard Operating Guideline (SOG) in place where a firefighter can wash themselves down with their PPE and SCBA still on before they take their PPE off. This is one step. We are now mandated to provide proper decontamination areas and showers when they return to the station so they can shower and put clean clothing on. The existing Station 1 does not have any personal lockers for Volunteer Firefighters to keep clean clothes in to change into, even if they had a shower. This is now mandated by Provincial Legislation under the Ministry of Labour. Thorold Fire and Emergency services has no way of doing this at Fire Station 1. We currently only have one (1) shower stall for all firefighters, they have to pass through the training office/lounge kitchen area on the main floor, off the truck bay. This being a very big Health and Safety concern. The Ministry of Labour has developed a Firefighter's cancer prevention checklist, which we are to follow but fall way short of being able to do so, in the existing Station 1.

Washroom facilities at Station 1 alone are inadequate. We have no shower or adequate washroom facilities for female firefighters and at station 1. With four (4) female firefighters in the City of Thorold, we are not meeting the requirement to accommodate a safe environment for our female firefighters.

After a fire, firefighters are required to wash their masks and hang them to dry. Our current area to do this is in our boiler room. One old ceramic sink that is used as a utility sink so we have to wash and rinse masks in a 5-gallon pail, with no place to hang them to dry, so they put them back into the lockers with their bunker gear. This again is a very big Health and Safety concern. Firefighters rely on their masks for life safety devices during fire operations, so there is a very high importance that they are clean of contaminants and properly maintained. The bunker gear lockers where they put their clean masks are made out of plywood and this does not follow today's standards for bunker gear storage. The lockers for bunker gear under today's standards are to be made with non-porous material, which is a racking style locker so the gear has air circulation around it. The bunker gear lockers are also to be in a separate room with negative pressure ventilation.

In our boiler room, we also have improper storage that violates the Fire Code, a boiler that was installed the year the station was built (1964) and is on borrowed time. The boiler recently (this year) had asbestos around the site glass that had to be remediated as the asbestos was falling off of it. Again Asbestos being a Health and Safety concern.

There are currently 3 offices and 1 change room directly off the apparatus bay floor, which is non-compliant with Health and Safety Standards as there is a requirement for health and safety purposes that there be a corridor off the truck bays that can lead to offices. This poses a significant health and safety risk with the possibility of diesel emission being very high when trucks are coming and going. Back in 2000-2001, we installed a Nederman system, which is an exhaust extracting emissions system. A hose is connected to the truck as it is backing into the station which draws the emissions to the exterior of the building. This provides some relief, but is not guaranteed to eliminate all diesel emissions. Station one is not adequate for office space as well as record

keeping. Currently the Fire Chiefs Office and administrative office is in one room. The Fire Prevention Office too small to accommodate Fire Prevention records, so the records are maintained in filing cabinets in the stairwell which is a violation of the Fire Code.

Asbestos situations at Station 1 are of very great health and safety concerns. We have had two repairs done this year one in the boiler room on the boiler and one in the FPO office where the asbestos was disturbed and needed to be remediated. I know we have other City facilities that have asbestos in them and it is important for the City to recognize and properly identify and notify staff that work in those buildings. However, the difference at Station 1 headquarters is it is staffed 24 hours a day 365 days a year.

Earlier this year in the upstairs men's washroom, we had a rotted out copper pipe in the wall from the urinal leaking into the upstairs kitchen that needed to be repaired. There was a main 4" sewer pipe leaking onto the top of Pumper 1 in the truck bay. Raw liquid sewer water was leaking from an old copper sewer pipe. It has been repaired with proper PVC piping but I am sure it is just a matter of time before more of them start to rot away and leak.

Recently, one of the bay doors operating mechanisms fail. Due to the age of the operating system, we can no longer get parts, due to the spacing between our doors there had to be fabrications made to be able to fit a new door operator at a cost of \$5000.00.

Conclusion:

With the fire hall being a public facility, we do not meet compliance and could be subject to associated fines for non-compliance. Our employees deserve a place to work free of Health and Safety concerns, with proper office space and with adequate training areas. We need to protect the ones that protect our citizens.

Staff are recommending that Council consider the costs associated with the construction of a compliant Fire Station Headquarters and Emergency Operations Center in the 2022 Capital Budget deliberations.

BUDGETARY STATUS:

There are no financial implications associated with this report as it is being requested for discussion during budget deliberations.

STRATEGIC PLAN:

Responsible Community Growth and Infrastructure Planning

CANADIAN CONTENT:

N/A

ATTACHMENTS:

1991 Municipal Fire Protection Plan
1996 Fire Services Review - Office of the Fire Marshall
1996 Insurance Advisory Organization (IAO) Report
2000 Fire Protection Master Plan
National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) Standard - Section 1500 and Section 1581
Minister of Labour - Firefighter's cancer prevention checklist
Minister of Labour - Section 6.1
Fire Apparatus Magazine Article - Nov 2021

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