
CITY OF KELOWNA

MEMORANDUM

Date: April 4, 2005
File No.: 5600-02 Fire Hydrants
To: City Manager
From: Water/Drainage Manager & Assistant Fire Chief
Subject: Hydrant Use Policy

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Council approve the attached Hydrant Use Policy for the City of Kelowna Water Utility;

AND THAT Council authorize staff to bring forward a revised hydrant use fee as part of the Water Regulation Bylaw;

AND FURTHER THAT Council authorizes a budget amendment of \$68200 to implement the Hydrant Use Policy as outlined in the report.

BACKGROUND:

Bulk water requirements for city crews, the development community and private individuals are provided using fire hydrants through a permitting process. Permits are issued to users for a fee who are then allowed to connect and operate hydrants to meet their needs. Hydrant use is then tracked and a follow-up is completed by city crews to inspect for damage and ensure proper operation after use.

Hydrant use has seen significant growth over the past number of years. In 2004, 2700 individual hydrant use days were recorded within our utility service area. As growth in the community continues and the need for bulk water use increases a significant risk to the water utility and the fire department has emerged. The potential for backflow of contaminants into the water system, the risk of water hammer that can result in water main breaks and interruption of service to our customers has increased significantly. In addition more and more unskilled individuals are operating hydrants which has created concern from the fire department as a result of unsupervised activity.

The water utility has worked with the Fire Department to develop improved methods to manage the use of fire hydrants. Staff has also reviewed hydrant use with the other water districts through the Kelowna Joint Water Committee who also use the hydrant permit process. They agree that the current level of activity and use of hydrants represents a risk to the water systems and changes must be made.

Budget has been approved to begin the installation of filling stations throughout our service area. The number of filling stations to be installed will be limited due to cost and access considerations. These filling stations will offer an alternative to hydrant use allowing the user to load bulk water in a safe and controlled manner thereby reducing the use of hydrants and any associated risks. Although hydrant use will be reduced once the filling stations are installed it will not be completely eliminated. Bulk water and

temporary water connections will still be required in certain areas that cannot be accommodated by filling stations. Information gathered from other communities has confirmed that the use of hydrants for bulk water needs is very limited and in most cases it is only city staff that is allowed to operate hydrants

The utility is currently charging the user \$25 per hydrant permit. In addition the user must rent and/or supply other equipment and gather material such as backflow preventors and wrenches resulting in an estimated cost to the user of approximately \$28.50 per hydrant per day. The water utility can provide this service and all equipment by using one seasonal staff person, vehicle and necessary equipment for \$25 per hydrant per day. The benefit to the customer is that the equipment and set up is provided upon receipt of the hydrant permit by city staff. The benefit to the water utility and fire department is the risk of contamination and damage to the hydrant and the water system is greatly reduced. Fees for hydrant use will be brought forward as part of the Water Regulation Bylaw revisions in early May 2005.

Based on the previous level of hydrant use activity outlined above and the level of activity that is anticipated going forward, the total cost of the program to provide this seasonal service each year is \$68,200. This includes a seasonal staff person for 8 months per year along with vehicle and equipment needs. These costs each year will be recovered through permit fees received from users. Over the next 3 years it is anticipated that hydrant use for bulk water needs will be reduced as filling stations are installed however hydrant use for bulk water will not be totally eliminated. This service will therefore be evaluated on an annual basis and adjustments to the program and its costs will be brought forward as part of the annual budget process.

Water/Drainage Manager

Director of Works and Utilities

Assistant Fire Chief

Fire Chief