
CITY OF KELOWNA

MEMORANDUM

Date: November 1, 2006
File No.: File #:6410-00
To: City Manager
From: Director of Planning and Development Services
Subject: Review of Policies, Procedures and Bylaws Relating To Wildland Fire
Report prepared by: Trevor Parkes

RECOMMENDATIONS

THAT the recommendations section of the *Review of Policies, Procedures and Bylaws Relating to Wildland Fire* document attached to the November 1, 2006 report from the Planning and Development Services Department be received for information;

AND THAT the *Review of Policies, Procedures and Bylaws Relating to Wildland Fire* recommendations listed in Appendix 2 of the Planning and Development Services report dated November 1, 2006 be forwarded to the appropriate departments for their consideration and action in 2007 pending budget approval;

AND FURTHER THAT, staff be directed to implement the remaining initiatives identified within the *Review of Policies, Procedures and Bylaws Relating to Wildland Fire* document as budget and staff resources permit (to be determined through future budget processes).

BACKGROUND

In response to recent changes in provincial legislation, advances in technology and heightened public awareness stemming from the events of 2003, Council directed staff to review the City of Kelowna's wildland fire policies, procedures and bylaws to ensure that the City is effectively and efficiently protecting the citizens of Kelowna from the threat of wildland fires.

PROCESS

A proposal call resulted in the commissioning of B.A. Blackwell and Associates to review the City of Kelowna's current policies procedures and bylaws relating to wildland fire. The consultants began their work in early April 2006.

B.A. Blackwell and Associates assessed literature from Canada, the United States and Australia as these nations are similar socio-economically and face similar challenges of increasing development encroaching into the wildland urban interface. Additionally, they reviewed examples of City of Kelowna covenants, registered professional foresters reports, OCP policies and a wealth of other related City documentation to gain an understanding of the policies, procedures and bylaws currently being used by staff. In late April the consultants traveled to Kelowna to carry out two days of field observations of interface development in the City. This combination of document review and field work set the foundation for the review process.

In mid-May external stakeholders and internal city stakeholders were contacted by both email and phone with survey questions tailored to generate meaningful feedback relating to wildland fire issues facing Kelowna. Both internal and external stakeholders' responses were vital to the development of recommendations contained in the report.

The following civic stakeholders were contacted:

- Policy, Research and Strategic Planning Manager
- Development Services Manager
- Subdivision Approving Officer
- Inspection Services Manager
- Permits and Plan Checking Manager
- Development Engineering Manager
- Environment/ Solid Waste Manager
- Environment Technician II
- Risk Manager
- Fire Chief
- Fire Prevention Officer
- Parks Manager
- Parks and Landscape Planner
- Urban Forestry Supervisor
- Planner Specialist

Representatives from the following external organizations were also contacted:

- Ministry of Agriculture and Lands
- Protection Branch (Ministry of Forests and Range)
- Building Policy Branch (Ministry of Forests and Range)
- Ecosystem Section (Ministry of Environment)
- Urban Development Institute: Kelowna Chapter
- Interface Fire Committee
- Office of the Fire Commissioner
- Canadian Home Builder's Association: Kelowna
- Provincial Emergency Program
- Insurance Bureau of Canada

Responses were received from all but the Provincial Emergency Program, Interface Fire Committee and Protection Branch.

In late May, resident surveys were undertaken in two formats. Door-to-door surveys were carried out by B.A. Blackwell staff in both the Magic Estates and the Upper Mission areas. Additionally a web-survey was posted on Castanet.net seeking to gain input from a broader spectrum of residents than those that could be reached in a door-to-door survey. Over 450 homes were visited over two days in the door-to-door survey with 149 residents actually

participating in the survey. The web-survey ran for 4 days on Castanet.net and 186 surveys were completed. Responses to this survey identified what residents' opinions were relating to the responsibility for wildfire protection and various issues relating to wildfire prevention. The full results are contained in the attached report (see Appendix 1). Overall the results gave insight into the types of wildfire protection and prevention initiatives that would be supported by the residents in Kelowna.

A Public Open House was held on June 19, 2006 to provide the general public with an opportunity to comment on the survey results and to give additional feedback on wildland fire issues. Open House feedback combined with the survey results from both residents and input from stakeholders as well as the consultant's professional assessment of Kelowna's situation resulted in the creation of the recommendations contained within the report.

CONTENT

The *Review of Policies, Procedures and Bylaws Relating to Wildland Fire* recommends actions to address issues raised by both residents and stakeholders as well as those identified by the consultant following a detailed assessment of Kelowna's wildland fire issues. The project scope was to assess wildland fire issues at four distinct levels: landscape (including public/ private open space); subdivision; individual lot; and buildings. The consultant was also asked to provide recommendations to address issues that were discovered during the assessment phase.

The *Review of Policies, Procedures and Bylaws Relating to Wildland Fire* makes a number of recommendations (see pages ii to v of Appendix 1). The single most important recommendation, as identified by the consultant, is the installation of appropriate rated roofing materials. These materials reduce the chance of ignition from fire brands landing on the structure during a wildland fire event.

From an environmental perspective, a major recommendation of the *Review of Policies, Procedures and Bylaws Relating to Wildland Fire* is for the City to conduct a sensitive ecosystem inventory (SEI) identifying areas containing delicate vegetation, habitat, slope stability and erosion potential to ensure that fuel treatments and development do not negatively impact these important areas.

In terms of fuel reduction techniques the review recommends bringing fire back into the environment in the form of controlled prescribed burning (under appropriate venting conditions) as an efficient and natural means by which to reduce load within the City. Additionally, the review recommends the use of curtain burners to efficiently reduce the amount of wood waste generated from fuel treatments on forested lands as well as dealing with the huge volume of trees it is anticipated will be killed by beetle infestation in the coming years.

The *Review of Policies, Procedures and Bylaws Relating to Wildland Fire* also makes recommendations supporting increased public education by integrating a "Fire Smart" and wildfire safety program into primary school fire education programs, the introduction of a "Fire Smart" sticker program to certify residential properties meeting "Fire Smart" guidelines and the construction of a "Fire Smart" sample home to demonstrate wildfire protection principles in both structural material and landscaping.

IMPLEMENTATION

Appendix 2 lists initiatives that can be undertaken in 2007. In some cases the work can be undertaken without additional funding. In other cases, additional funding will be required. Where additional funding is required, such has been requested as part of the 2007 budget submissions. If Council approves those budget requests it is anticipated that work on the items noted will be initiated next year. Given the number of action items recommended and the magnitude of costs, it is anticipated that implementation of the remaining recommendations will need to await budget deliberations in subsequent years. It should be noted that implementation of some action items will require further consultation with affected stakeholders

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Approved for inclusion ☐

Mary Pynenburg, MRAIC MCIP B. Arch M.Pl.
Director of Planning & Development Services

Attachments

APPENDIX # 1: REVIEW OF POLICIES, PROCEDURES AND BYLAWS RELATING TO WILDLAND FIRE

Available on the City website:

www.kelowna.ca > City Hall > Council > Meetings > November 6, 2006

**APPENDIX # 2: REVIEW OF POLICIES, PROCEDURES AND BYLAWS
RELATING TO WILDLAND FIRE RECOMMENDATIONS TO BE
ACTIONED IN 2007**