



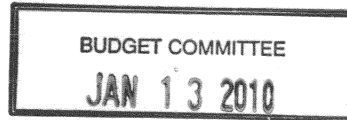
Corporate Report

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DATE: January 5, 2010

TO: Chair and Members of Budget Committee
Meeting Date: January 13, 2010

FROM: Paul A. Mitcham, P.Eng., MBA
Commissioner of Community Services

SUBJECT: Urban Forestry Maintenance Backlog – Implementation

- RECOMMENDATIONS:**
1. That the \$780,000 approved by Budget Committee to eliminate the forestry backlog be funded as follows:
 - a) \$193,500 for the hiring of one additional Forestry crew at a cost of \$123,500 (9 months), plus equipment lease costs of \$70,000 to be funded through a 2010 tax rate increase; and
 - b) The balance of \$586,500 for one-time contracted work be funded through Operating Reserves.
 2. That the Recreation and Parks complement be adjusted accordingly.
 3. That a comprehensive Forestry Management resource plan be developed prior to 2011.

BACKGROUND: At the Budget Committee meeting of December 14, 2009, funding for the 2010 budget year in the amount of \$780,000 was approved to eliminate the existing backlog of Forestry work orders. The report to the Budget Committee dated November 27, 2009 included provision for additional contract work to deal with the backlog, along with the hiring of temporary staff to manage the new contracts. Subsequently,

Community Services was asked to examine options for implementation of the backlog management plan including the use of contractors, additions to the Urban Forestry staff complement on an ongoing basis, or a combination of both.

PRESENT STATUS:

As noted in the earlier Corporate Report, the extreme number of storm related, emergency service requests received by Forestry from July 2009 on, required all routine work orders normally handled by City staff to be put on hold. As of November 2009, the Forestry Operations section had 2,575 outstanding work orders, which translated to a backlog in service provision of approximately ten to twelve months.

The Forestry Operations Unit currently consists of one Supervisor of Operations, four Maintenance Inspectors, fourteen full-time Arborists and four temporary Arborists. The eighteen Arborists are divided into seven crews: three aerial truck crews and four climbing crews. These staff carry out routine street tree maintenance, as well as emergency pruning and removal of City trees. In addition, the City relies on contractors to carry out pro-active tree maintenance including block pruning of street trees and hazard tree mitigation in woodlands. At present, Urban Forestry utilizes contractors to supplement the work of City crews. The \$780,000 approved by Budget Committee would be over an above this contract work.

COMMENTS:

The December 14, 2009 recommendation to Budget Committee envisaged the current Forestry maintenance backlog being eliminated through the use of additional contractors. This solution would leave City Forestry staff in a position to deal with ongoing work orders, with the current backlog eliminated late in 2010. If however, weather conditions in 2010 or subsequent years, are similar to those experienced in 2009, Forestry crews will be diverted to emergency work, and the backlog will again, begin to build. It should also be noted that Transportation and Works will be bringing forward a report in February with regard to maintenance needs related to Cooksville Creek, including management of trees in the valley and the watercourse. The funding enhancement approved by Budget Committee for Urban Forestry does not include any changes in maintenance practices or services levels which may be recommended in the Cooksville Creek report.

The December report to Budget Committee anticipated one time funding for contract work to eliminate the Forestry backlog. In an effort to implement a more sustainable solution, staff have examined the option of funding additional full time staff on an ongoing basis including the required vehicles and equipment.

This option would meet the objective of eliminating the Forestry Maintenance backlog in 2010 and would provide a transition to begin making Forestry staffing levels more sustainable. Ongoing labour funding would be required for 2011 and beyond, and equipment purchase costs would need to be included in a future capital budget submission.

For the longer term, staff anticipate that the City's tree inventory will continue to expand, that storm calls will continue to be a major, if unpredictable factor and require ongoing maintenance, and that demand for increased Forestry maintenance levels, such as those recently discussed in relation to flooding of Cooksville Creek experienced this past summer will continue. In addition, the City must meet the challenges of future tree mortality as a result of Emerald Ash Borer, and as noted in the previous report, there is a need to enhance ongoing maintenance of trees in parks and greenbelts. Meeting these challenges will require a longer term resource plan, tied to the anticipated needs of Mississauga's urban forest. The development of such a plan is underway and will be completed in the first half of 2010.

FINANCIAL IMPACT: Budget Committee approved the addition of \$780,000 to the 2010 operating budget at the December 14, 2009 meeting. \$123,500 will be used to add three additional staff complement, effective April 1, 2010, to the existing 2010 budget submission. \$70,000 will be needed for capital equipment lease and the balance of \$586,500 will be used towards contracted service costs.

A more detailed financial impact will be determined as part of the 2011 Business Plan. The financial impact of the labour cost and lease cost, totalling \$193,500 are to be funded from the tax levy, resulting in an increase of 0.06% in the tax rate. The balance of the cost of \$586,500 will be funded from the operating reserves as one time funding.

CONCLUSION:

Budget Committee has approved an additional \$780,000 in funding for 2010 to eliminate the existing Forestry maintenance backlog. If this funding is used entirely for contractors the backlog will be eliminated in the coming year, but may reoccur. It is recommended that funds be partially used for an increase in the City staff complement (including required leased vehicles and equipment) to assist in making Forestry Operations more sustainable over the long term.

While the additional funding in 2010 will serve to eliminate the Forestry backlog, there is a gap between current staffing and funding levels, and the need to carry out both emergency and routine work on a sustainable basis. In addition, the City will continue to expand its inventory of public trees, and has set a goal, as part of the Strategic Plan to plant one million trees over the next decade. Finally, there is a desire for enhanced levels of forestry maintenance in valley lands, and staff would like to provide for more proactive maintenance of City trees in parks and greenbelts. With this in mind, Urban Forest staff, in conjunction with Community Services Business Planning, will, in 2010 be developing a comprehensive plan, addressing the budget and resource capacity needs of Urban Forestry over the long term, allowing for adequate proactive maintenance of City owned trees and the ability to respond effectively to emergency situations. This plan will be brought forward as part of the City's 2011-14 Corporate Business Plan.



Paul A. Mitcham, P.Eng., MBA
Commissioner of Community Services

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