

Report to Council



Date: June 18, 2018
File: [RIM Classification Number]
To: City Manager
From: Andrew Hunsberger, Urban Forestry Supervisor
Subject: Community Wildfire Protection Plan Update

Recommendation:

THAT Council receive for information the June 18th, 2018 report by the Urban Forestry Supervisor;

AND THAT Council approve in principle the updated Kelowna Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) completed by B.A. Blackwell & Associates;

AND THAT staff engage stakeholders and the public on the results of the plan and gather feedback;

AND FURTHER THAT staff report back to Council for consideration of an implementation strategy and final recommendations.

Purpose:

To update Council on a new Community Wildfire Protection Plan report.

Background:

The City of Kelowna has a well-established Community Wildfire Protection Program. The program priorities are determined by our *Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP)*, which was last updated in 2011. The CWPP is based upon a 20-year planning cycle with anticipated plan updates every five (5) years.

The CWPP is a document that defines the risk from wildfires in identified area, identifies measures necessary to mitigate those risks and outlines a plan of action to be implemented. The *Wildfire Fuel Mitigation Program* and the *FireSmart Education & Communication Program* are the two key programs used to achieve the goals outline in the CWPP. They are

well established programs that drive our efforts to minimize the risk associated with wildfire in and around the City of Kelowna.

The City initiated a wildfire fuel mitigation program in 1998 for city-owned land and has treated hundreds of hectares. The program has evolved over the years to include a planning and fire prevention component with the intent to minimize the threat to the public from wildfires. As an example, the Kelowna Fire Department has initiated a pilot program using the *FireSmart Home Partners app* to assess up to 160 homes located in the wildland-urban interface in 2017. The City is also supporting a provincial initiative to create a landscape-level fuel break located on provincial crown land south of the city that would slow the progress of a large wildfire event.

An update to the CWPP was necessary due to:

- Growth and development in the wildland-urban interface where the risk of wildfires is most prevalent,
- Forest health issues due to pine beetle, tussock moth and drought over the past decade.

These factors, as well as fire suppression practices, have led to a gradual buildup of forest fuels and subsequent increases in wildfire risk. Historically, the Okanagan valley would experience frequent fires of low intensity, keeping forest fuel levels at a much lower and manageable level.

The updated CWPP provides 47 prioritized recommendations. These recommendations have been assessed and the majority can be achieved with current resources. Staff have already undertaken some of the recommendations as a continuance of our *Wildfire Fuel Mitigation Program* and the *FireSmart Education & Communication Program*.

There are recommendations prioritized as “high” that will require additional internal resources to implement and may present more challenges, such as:

- Wildfire Development Permits triggered for new construction and major retrofits/renovations as part of the building permit. Other local governments such as the District of North Vancouver have a similar process in place. Staff will look at those models to possibly emulate,
- Bonds refunded based on the submission of a FireSmart post-development inspection of buildings and landscaping. Currently there is no inspection of on-site landscaping but this has been noted to be a significant hazard if not done properly.
- Review of current OCP Wildfire Development Permit process to strengthen and expand reach of the existing policy.

Additional resources will also be needed to assist with development and planning concerns on private lands. We have completed initial consultation with the *Urban Development Institute (UDI) - Okanagan Chapter* to ensure the development community is aware of the wildfire planning concerns and possible changes to the development permit process. Further consultation is required with homeowners living in the wildland-urban interface.

Internal Circulation:

Ian Wilson, Infrastructure Operations Manager
Scott Cronquist, Deputy Fire Chief
Blair Stewart, Park Services Manager
Ryan Smith, Community Planning Manager
Maria Lee, Communications Advisor
James Moore, Long Range Policy Planning Manager

Financial/Budgetary Considerations:

To be determined

Considerations not applicable to this report:

Legal/Statutory Authority:

Legal/Statutory Procedural Requirements:

Existing Policy:

Personnel Implications:

External Agency/Public Comments:

Communications Comments:

Alternate Recommendation:

Submitted by: A. Hunsberger, Urban Forestry Supervisor

Approved for inclusion:



Ian Wilson