

STAFF REPORT

THE CORPORATION OF THE TOWN OF COBOURG



Report to:	Mayor and Council Members	Priority:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> High <input type="checkbox"/> Low
Submitted by:	Mike Vilneff, Fire Chief, Cobourg Fire Department, mvilneff@cobourg.ca	Meeting Type:	Open Session <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Closed Session <input type="checkbox"/>
Meeting Date:	November 15, 2021		
Report No.:	Fire-002-21		
Submit comments to Council			

Subject/Title: Cobourg Fire Department 2021 Annual Report

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Council receives this annual report for information.

1. STRATEGIC PLAN

2019-2022 Strategic Plan
Programs – Action #4 Improve Customer Service

2. PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

The Cobourg Fire Department is a composite service employing 14 full time and 20 volunteer fire fighters, an administrative assistant, and a full time Fire Chief and Deputy Chief.

The department offers services including structural firefighting, motor vehicle collision response, water rescue, medical assists with defibrillation as well as fire prevention inspections and public education.

3. PURPOSE

Mission Statement:

The mission of the Cobourg Fire Department through delivery of programs and services, to protect life and property in our community from the adverse effects of fire, sudden medical, environmental, and other emergencies, both natural and man-made.

4. ORIGIN AND LEGISLATION

Not Applicable.

5. BACKGROUND

The year 2020 will be remembered as the year of a worldwide Pandemic with COVID19 impacting all aspects of life in communities and countries across the globe and impacts have been felt at every level. This has required individuals, organizations and communities to develop new and evolving solutions in response to ever changing conditions as a result of the impacts of COVID-19 .

Municipal governments have been responding to evolving legislation and finding new ways to meet the needs of our communities in safe, effective, and efficient ways. Cobourg Fire has adapted to meet all new provincially mandated measures, some of these changes included:

- Revised dispatching protocols – mandated by Central Ambulance Communications Centre (CACC) to include the pre-screening of callers and patients.
- Revised guidance on Personal Protective Equipment – this included what type of PPE to use and where and when
- In-person training was paused – although emergency services were exempted by the province, virtually every fire service restricted its training programs and used different formats to keep in person numbers low.
- We worked with our volunteers, minimizing their attendance at the Fire Hall to manage staff numbers and reduce personnel cross over to reduce the chance of infection. This approach was continually monitored and changed as needed after the first wave.
- Fire Station was closed to the public to reduce the possibility of workplace transmission.
- Contact tracing introduced for anybody entering the station. This included contractors, Town staff, and Cobourg Fire staff.
- Separation of operations and management staff –we physically separated operations staff from administration staff in the station. This eventually morphed into management staff working from home on an alternating basis.
- Fire Prevention and Administration staff working from home – the Fire Prevention Officer and Administrative Assistant were part of the first Town staff compliment to begin working from home.
- Implementation of virtual meetings and platforms like Zoom, Microsoft Teams, to ensure business continuity.

6. ANALYSIS

Emergency Response

In 2020, the department responded to 1,356 incidents. This number shows a reduction in calls for service from the previous 2 years (1,507 in 2019 & 1,666 in 2018) This can be somewhat be attributed to modified response protocols. Some types of incidents of lesser severity were removed from our response matrix in order to lessen the risk of exposure.

The types and number of responses can be seen in the following table.

	Pre-fire conditions	Fire	False alarms	Open air burning	Carbon monoxide false alarms	Medical	Public hazard	Rescue	All other
2020	30	23	136	27	32	799	32	81	196
2019	32	26	121	19	33	968	39	113	156
2019	29	25	144	27	33	1,120	36	113	139

An interesting phenomenon occurred with respect to medical calls during the early stages of the pandemic. Although we saw a decrease from response protocol changes, our partners at Lindsay EMS Dispatch confirmed that calls for EMS in general were down. This also lined up with confirmation from Northumberland hills Hospital that visits to the hospital were also down. People were generally reluctant to call for help or attend at the hospital in fear of the virus.

Fire Prevention

The department continued to be very busy with fire prevention activities in 2020. Over 500 prevention activities including inspections and consultations were completed by staff. Our Fire Prevention staff fully embraced the virtual world and were able to find new ways to deliver service, including a new process for conducting virtual fire drills. This was received as a positive innovation and as such, the process was shared throughout the provincial fire services to help ensure that buildings were compliant, and occupants remained safe within their facilities.

Fire Prevention staff also worked very closely with the Clerks Department and the Building Department to ensure that restaurant patios still met safety regulations while being able to operate with expanded outdoor patio sizes throughout the pandemic.

Training

Training is a critical component of the work of the Fire Department and this continued throughout the pandemic with 324 training activities occurring in 2020.

When the pandemic hit early in 2020, physical distancing was one of the consistent safety measures implemented throughout the world. This measure, alongside our desire to maintain employee health and safety, resulted in a suspension of in-person training. This was coupled with our commitment to reduce the numbers of employees in workspaces to ensure that we could cohort our staff as a further health and safety measure. The staff of Cobourg Fire embraced the electronic world and training and skill development transitioned to virtual delivery models. In-person training resumed as provincial requirements changed, but for the most part, 2020 was a virtual training ground.

Specialized training courses that are traditionally offered at facilities like the Ontario Fire College were also cancelled in 2020. The province of Ontario also closed the Ontario Fire College and is moving all programming out to regional training centers. Conferences and seminars were also suspended and there does not appear to be anything scheduled for in-person learning opportunities until 2022.

Staffing

2020 brought several changes to Cobourg Fire. Captain Chris Brown retired from the department after a stellar career. The department backfilled the vacancy with Fire Fighter Rachel Dunbrack moving from the volunteer ranks into a full-time position.

Fire Fighter Bryan Blaind was promoted to the rank of Captain, and Fire Fighter Nigel Hall also made the move to full-time from the volunteer ranks when Council approved a new hire during budget deliberations. These moves have impacted the volunteer ranks requiring a recruitment process to bring our staffing back up to regular complement.

Apparatus

The Cobourg Fire Department operates a fleet of five frontline apparatus as well as three administration vehicles. These vehicles undergo regular maintenance and also receive specialized work on the fire pumps, elevating devices and on-board generator sets. Most of this work can be completed by mobile repair companies, but on occasion, the vehicles must be transported to shops throughout Ontario to complete required repairs.

A report on the status of the apparatus fleet was presented to Council By Deputy Chief Thompson in September.

Facility

Cobourg Fire Department operates out of one station protecting a population of 20,000 residents. The station, which is located at 111 Elgin Street East, was built in 1975. An addition was completed in 2003. The base building is now 45 years old which requires regular maintenance and upgrading of the plant infrastructure. Recent upgrades have included complete removal and replacement of asphalt, apparatus bay painting and upgraded lighting, HVAC replacement and complete removal and replacement of the flat roofing material.

To accommodate a changing workforce, the process of updating and renovating the locker rooms, washrooms and shower facilities has begun but has been hampered by pandemic repercussions. (spike in costing of construction materials, delays in getting drawings etc.) We were pleased to receive the funding from the Province through the COVID-19 Resilience Infrastructure Stream.

As a single station department, life cycle maintenance must be conducted regularly to extend the life of the building and grounds.



In late 2019, the province of Ontario announced some funding opportunities to enhance efficiencies in municipalities. In collaboration with our county partner municipalities, an application was made to conduct a countywide fire service review. This review was conducted throughout 2020 despite the challenges presented by conducting this work throughout a global pandemic. The report was presented to Council on March 2, 2021 and made several key recommendations. Two key deliverables included were a community risk assessment be completed followed by a Master Plan to guide the department for the next 5-10 years. The Community Risk Assessment and Master Plan will be brought forward for consideration during 2022 budget deliberations.

The department continues to work closely with its fire mutual aid partners throughout Northumberland County and fellow emergency responders in the Police, Public Works, and EMS services.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS/BUDGET IMPACTS

Not Applicable.

8. CONCLUSION

That Council receive this report for information

Report Approval Details

Document Title:	Cobourg Fire Department - Annual Report - Chief Administrative Officer-027-21 - Fire-002-21.docx
Attachments:	
Final Approval Date:	Sep 29, 2021

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

Tracey Vaughan, Chief Administrative Officer - Sep 29, 2021 - 7:09 PM