

Memo

To: Council

From: Alain Muise, CAO

CC: Louis Boudreau, Facilities and Water Supervisor, Hans Pfeil, Director of Public Works, Janine Muise REMO Coordinator.

Date: February 12, 2021

Re: Status update on Capital project – Fire pond review and repair

The following is an update on our Fire Pond Improvement project, one that focuses on the safety of the fire ponds currently used in our municipality.

History

The issue was identified through research from staff, in response to a variety of questions and concerns raised by individual fire departments. A report was developed internally that was led by our then Municipal Clerk. The result was an identification of all fire ponds used or traditionally used in our communities, and some of the infrastructure needs of each location. The needs ranged from very little to significant. The focus at the time was safety related, as the Council had indicated an interest in mitigating the potential risk of injury at these locations, even if they are not in direct control or ownership of these locations.

The initial budget allocation was quite insufficient to address the list of issues identified, therefore Council, in the most recent development of the capital budget, agreed to allocate \$50,000 this year, knowing the solution would likely be multiyear. We engaged a third-party safety advisor to further inform our work, and he provided recommendations that we began to implement. Some of the easier recommendations to implement included the installation of civic signage and other signage providing warning of any hazards. Those more complex

recommendations include fencing additions, potential restoration of dry hydrants, etc.

The Challenges.

In our initial roll out of signage, we received some fair, yet negative feedback from landowners. In short, fire ponds that were identified as usable by the fire departments were not entirely accepting of the landowners. In some cases, where there was a traditional arrangement, there is no longer an interest of the landowner to have their property used in this fashion. There are no agreements in place; no rights of way, and no permission to access properties.

Furthermore, we have faced drought like conditions in 3 of the last 6 years. In many cases, the existing “fire holes” didn’t have sufficient water to access in case of fire. We have identified those locations that dry up during drought conditions. From an administrative perspective, investing in fencing for those locations does not appear to be as important as either restoring their use, or deciding whether that location is suitable moving forward.

Consequently, it has forced us to pause and reexamine our approach. We are still committed to executing Council’s desire to make fire ponds safer. For this reason, we have focused on publicly owned locations. Specifically, we have asked for safety additions for locations in the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal right of ways. They agreed to install barricades for those locations that are at risk for vehicular traffic; namely Chemin des Ben, Highway 308 in Sluice Point, and Morris Island. Those locations are being investigated by TIR. In Wedgeport, a barricade was installed on Martin Road, resolving a safety issue there.

We will be providing a revised list of fire ponds to Council once they are discussed with the respective fire departments. As the investment is considerable, we want to be assured that investments are made smartly, and considering some of the climate changes occurring in our region.

Respectfully submitted.