



Municipality of the District of Argyle

Item: Request for consulting support – Fire services review

Date: Jan 24, 2024

## *Our Vision*

*Argyle is the community of choice to invest, live and play.*

## *Our Identity*

*Argyle invests time & talent in growth opportunities in fishing, tourism, and renewable energy sectors.*

*Argyle provides affordable taxation while providing safe and **livable** communities and strives to engage and inform our residents on decisions that affect them most.*

*Argyle provides high class, accessible recreational and cultural facilities for health and for **play**.*

## **Background:**

Council has authorized the CAO to lead a fire services review for our municipality and in support of local fire departments and their delivery of fire protection for our community. Since the decision in spring of 2023, a special committee was formed with key volunteers to identify the issues most pressing to address. They did a fantastic job at outlining issues, but alas comes the next step – who can do the work, how long do we have to complete the work and do we have the expertise needed to complete the work.

It was the collective conclusion of the Fire Review Committee that they wanted to accelerate the work and be a part of implementing change but may not have the confidence of the entire volunteer group to do it themselves. Also, an audit of service can cause bad feelings and the preference would be to work with volunteers after critical changes are made.

We quickly turned to the idea that a consultant could assist us. In that process, we noted very few consultants with this particular experience. Through assistance from our members, we were connected with Jamie Coutts, from Seahawk Consulting out of Alberta. He and his team have incredible experience with reviewing fire departments across Canada, and he is a lifelong professional fire fighter. The CAO was in receipt of a presentation from Jamie, and a second with the entire Fire Review team. We were all convinced that his work is precisely what we need to move forward.

The last part of this process was to invite the Fire Committee, the Fire Review Committee members, key staff and Council to discuss and confirm this recommended approach. This meeting occurred January 25, 2024, and there was unanimous agreement that this approach is the best approach of the options we discussed.

Seahawk's work will involve intimate interviews with all willing members of all departments, including a full inventory of assets, age, needs for inventory replacement, recruitment, retention, training etc. The recommendations will put Council on the spot around future investment needs. In agreeing to a review, it is agreeing that there will likely be funding changes, and in some cases temporary increases to funding.

The cost for this service is set at \$50,000, plus disbursements. MODA has budgeted \$30,000 this fiscal year, and we will not exceed that amount this year, though we will require another \$50,000 budgeted in 24-25.

### **MGA and Procurement Considerations**

Procurement at the rate listed is allowable through this method as the number is within our procurement policy to avoid having to list a public tender.

Consulting services supporting fire service improvements is an allowable expense under Section 65 of the MGA.

### **Recommendation:**

Your fire department leadership unanimously agreed to this approach, of the departments that showed. 8 of 9 showed. We recommend that Seahawk be engaged to lead this review on our behalf.

### **Suggested motion:**

Move that the CAO engage Seahawk Consulting to lead a fire services review for our 7 fire departments and 2 shared fire departments.

Move that the CAO ensure that 2024-2025 earmark sufficient funds to support the entire cost of the fire services review.