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TAMRMS#: B05



1.0 FTE Fire and Ambulance Mechanic

Notice given by: Councillor Hughes

BUDGET POSTPONED MOTION:

That \$xxx,xxx for a 1.0 FTE Fire and Ambulance mechanic is added, to be funded through 2026 tax base and offset by the expected savings in currently budgeted external maintenance costs, with the salary amount at a comparable competitive salary.

Administration's Understanding of the Intent of the Motion:

It is Administration's understanding that the intent of the motion is to add a 1.0 FTE Heavy Duty Technician that is dedicated to the performance of maintenance and repair activities for the Fire Services and Ambulance fleet. This technician would hold a heightened qualification for specialized repairs on emergency vehicles, which exceed regularly assigned duties on heavy equipment. Further, the funding required for the position would be offset by reducing the budget for contracted services required for these fleet activities.

SUMMARY

This agenda report responds to the Budget Postponed Motion directing Administration to allocate a competitive salary for 1.0 FTE Fire and Ambulance Mechanic position. The position will be a Heavy Duty Technician with certification as an Emergency Vehicle Technician (EVT). The position will support internal capacity, reducing the reliance on contracted services and will enhance consistency in maintenance and repairs of emergency services fleet vehicles.

While it is believed that the intent of the motion is to reduce contracted services costs to fund the position internally, contracted services will continue to be required for highly specialized repairs. However the annual budget for contracted services is projected to be reduced. A supplemental budget allocation will be required to fully fund the new position as the contracted services budget allocation for emergency services fleet vehicles is less than the projected expenses for the position.

ALIGNMENT TO COUNCIL DIRECTION OR MANDATORY STATUTORY PROVISION

N/A

BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION

Emergency Services rely on specialized fleet vehicles to perform the tasks required of them. The department operates various vehicles such as Fire trucks, Tanker trucks, Aerial Lift Apparatus and Ambulances. These emergency vehicles have unique equipment features that other general heavy-duty equipment and vehicles do not have. A heightened certification exists, Emergency Vehicle Technician (EVT), for Heavy Duty Technicians that includes detailed training on the emergency services specialized equipment.

Currently, the City of St. Albert employs Heavy Duty Technicians within Public Operations Fleet Services, who complete the general mechanical and preventative maintenance work for the Emergency Services fleet. Contracted services are retained when the maintenance work exceeds the internal capacity of the City or when the maintenance and repairs require specialized EVT certification or training.

As identified in BIR-026-006, in 2025 the total expenses for maintenance and repairs of Emergency Services Fleet Vehicles are projected to total \$316,000. Within this total is \$96,000 for contracted services. The internal fleet services labour for 2025 is projected to total \$118,900. This indicates that the majority of tasks related to emergency vehicles can be completed by Heavy Duty Technician without EVT certification. As such, Administration recommends that a premium be established to supplement the heavy duty technician wage when performing EVT specific activities, reverting to the Heavy Duty Technician wage when non-EVT tasks are being performed.

A dedicated internal Heavy-Duty Technician (EVT Certified) would provide:

- Readily available internal staffing for critical apparatus and equipment.
- Reduced reliance on external contracted services.
- Flexibility of scheduling increases the efficiency of repairs through direct consultation between fleet and emergency services maintenance planners.

Within the existing CUPE 941 Collective Agreement, the Heavy-Duty Technician hourly wage in 2025 is \$46.01. Applying 2080 regular hours in a year, this equates to \$95,700 annually. Adding in employee benefits equates to an annual budget requirement of \$118,200.

The existing CUPE 941 Collective Agreement includes provision for \$1.00 per hour premium for cases that the City deems that two distinct compulsory trade certifications are operationally advantageous. This premium added to the Heavy-Duty Technician can be considered the lower boundary for the wage of the new position with an annual budget requirement of \$120,800.

A more detailed wage evaluation and negotiation will be completed if the motion passes. This will include determination of a wage premium supplementing heavy duty technician wages, applied during the performance of EVT activities.

A regional scan indicates that municipalities from a mid to larger size begin to staff specific EVT certified Heavy Duty Mechanics as the requirement for the specialized certification increases. A complete elimination of contracted services is currently unlikely as the EVT program initially implemented would consist of a single 1.0 FTE that does not provide for redundancy and would not be feasibly capable of completing all the associated tasks due to equipment, facilities, or tooling limitations. However, the additional FTE is expected to reduce contracting costs and improve fleet operational readiness.

The fleet services 2026 budget for contracted services remains consistent with 2025 budget of \$96,000 for emergency vehicles. If this position is approved, contracted services would be reduced by approximately \$30,000.

STAKEHOLDER COMMUNICATIONS OR ENGAGEMENT

It is anticipated that this position will be a unionized position and would therefore require further engagement and collaboration with the appropriate bargaining unit.

IMPACTS OF RECOMMENDATION(S)

Financial:

Approval of this motion would result in the addition of 1 FTE and a net increase to the 2026 tax base of \$63,800.

This is the net impact based on salary and benefits of \$93,800 for partial year April- December (or \$125,000 per annum) less \$30,000 contracted services budget savings.

Compliance & Legal:

Proper certification will need to be maintained internally to perform the tasks internally that were previously completed by external sources. Bringing this service internal will also bring internal, liability risk for work performed by the new position.

Program or Service:

The additional position will increase capacity within Fleet Services. The dedicated resource will be able to provide more responsive repairs and maintenance as an internal resource relative intermittent hiring of contracted services. This will lead to decreased vehicle and equipment downtime.

Organizational:

At the City of St. Albert, Heavy Duty Technicians are unionized employees within Public Operations (Fleet Services) represented by The Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 941. Other municipalities have a similar EVT position within a different bargaining unit than their respective Fleet Services team. Heavy Duty Technicians at St. Albert report directly to an employee represented by CUPE 941, therefore the preference would be for the new position to be represented by CUPE 941.

Collaboration between Fire Services and Fleet Services is anticipated to be strengthened as the position will have dedicated expertise.

Risks

While creating the new position brings in services currently not provided internally, a single FTE does not offer redundancy within the organization and contracted services support may fluctuate as the EVT program matures.

There is a risk of labour relations complexity if union placement or representation is disputed.

ALIGNMENT TO PRIORITIES IN COUNCIL'S STRATEGIC PLAN

Initiative aligned with Strategic Plan:
None at this time

ALIGNMENT TO LEVELS OF SERVICE DELIVERY

F.3.1 - Emergency Medical Services

F.3.3 - Fire Prevention

F.3.4 - Fire Response

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