

Budget Adjustment Request – Fire Uniforms

ISSUE

This report seeks City Council approval for a budget adjustment to Capital Project P.02509 Fire-Uniforms, which requires additional funds to proceed with the purchase of new uniforms and winter jackets.

RECOMMENDATION

1. That a budget increase to Capital Project P.02509 Fire-Uniforms, for the purchase of station wear and winter jackets in the amount of \$340,000 be approved; and
2. That the budget adjustment be funded from the Fire Department Uniforms Reserve for \$19,000 and Fire Department Capital Reserve for \$321,000.

BACKGROUND

Capital Project P.02509 Fire-Uniforms provides for the purchase of uniforms and protective clothing required by the members of the SFD and is funded from the Fire Department Uniform Reserve. The capital project has funding of \$88,000 available to partially fund the new uniforms. The Reserve receives annual funding of \$275,200 and has a current balance of \$19,480.

The Fire Department Capital Reserve is in place to fund projects that support existing services. In the past this reserve has been used to fund projects that include new equipment purchases, strategic plans, and was an additional funding source for replacement apparatus. The Reserve receives annual funding of \$250,000 and has a current balance of \$196,226. This reserve is permitted under the *Bylaw No. 6774 The Capital Reserve Bylaw* to go into a deficit position if it can be returned to a positive balance within five years.

The Saskatoon Fire Department (SFD) has been navigating challenges with its uniform procurement process. After terminating the uniform contract with the current vendor due to ongoing delivery and quality issues, SFD issued a Request for Quotation (RFQ) in March 2024 seeking a new uniform vendor. Cancelling the existing contract created an issue whereby the SFD was unable to fulfill uniform allotments for every uniformed member.

In addition to uniforms, the SFD is considering the acquisition of winter jackets for firefighters. These jackets are necessary for use in non-fire related incidents such as EMS and motor vehicle collisions, aiming to reduce the frequency of wearing structural firefighting gear to its intended purpose. The winter jackets also support efforts to improve occupational hygiene for firefighter safety. This is a new category, not previously included in the capital project.

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS

The RFQ stipulated five clothing items (uniform shirt, t-shirt, pants, sweater, and three-season jacket) which are required as per the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA). Upon evaluation of the bids from six qualified suppliers, it was determined that an additional \$175,000 in funding is required to purchase the base items in the contract. A portion of this additional cost is related to the fact that SFD is changing to a different uniform. This funding request will allow for the purchase of three sets of uniforms, replacing all the current substandard uniforms. Replacing the majority of uniforms at the same time allows for a consistent appearance for SFD staff when serving the public. Although the request results in a large expenditure in 2024, subsequent years will not be as significant as we will only be supplying full sets of uniforms to new staff and replacing pieces as needed for existing staff.

Replacing uniforms allows SFD to be more clearly identified as fire personnel and not Saskatoon Police Service (SPS) officers. Both the SPS and SFD provide distinct and important services to Saskatoon residents. Often there are instances when SFD personnel are mistaken as SPS officers, which can at times invoke a different reaction and impede the provision of fire protection or most commonly, EMS services. A transition plan is in place to minimize the cost of this transition as much as possible.

At the time the RFQ was issued, SFD was without a vendor and it was crucial that a new supplier be selected in order to provide appropriate uniforms to members. At the time of issuance, it was anticipated that there would be sufficient funds in the existing capital project, with the knowledge that the Fire Capital Reserve would be a possible funding source should the successful proposal exceed the budget. The final cost for replacement uniforms was not known until the quotations were evaluated, which came in higher than expected. Concurrently, additional required purchases, through the capital project for structural firefighting gear, were made reducing the funds available in the capital project. Structural firefighting gear also saw increased inflationary costs during this time.

The request for additional funding to allow for the tender for winter jackets emerged from discussions between the SFD and representatives of the International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF) Local 80. The purchase of winter jackets support efforts to minimize extraneous use of structural firefighting clothing apart from its intended use. The winter jackets would be durable, warm, and have outer high-visibility markings to enhance firefighter safety at non-fire related incidents such as EMS and motor vehicle collisions. Additional funds of \$165,000 are required to purchase the winter jackets. The winter jackets are a new item which were not previously included in the capital project.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

To fund the total budget adjustment of \$340,000, Administration is recommending transfers of \$19,000 from the Fire Department Uniforms Reserve and \$321,000 from the Fire Department Capital Reserve. After the transfers, the Fire Department Uniform Reserve will have a balance of \$480 and has a budgeted contribution of \$290,200 in 2025. The Fire Department Capital Reserve will have a deficit balance of \$121,774 with a budgeted contribution of \$250,000 in 2024. When considering future capital needs, it is projected that this reserve will be in a deficit position for approximately three years, which follows the governing Bylaw.

The long-term sufficiency of these reserves will be assessed, and identified contribution increases will be included in the 2026/2027 Preliminary Business Plan and Budget.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS

There are no privacy, legal, social, or environmental implications identified.

NEXT STEPS

If approved SFD will work with Procurement to award the RFQ for uniforms to the successful proponent, and also move forward with appropriate steps for purchasing winter jackets.

Report Approval

Written and

Approved by: Doug Wegren, Fire Chief

Reviewed by: Teresa Quon, Senior Financial Business Partner