

Fire department's plan calls for two new stations

By **Melanie Hennessey**
CANADIAN CHAMPION STAFF

The Milton Fire Department is hoping to build two new fire stations and hire 60 full-time firefighters within the next seven years.

These are just a few items on the department's ambitious wish list laid out by Fire Chief Brian Ellsworth Monday night at the Town's community services committee meeting.

Ellsworth presented the recently completed Fire Master Plan, which lays out where the department is looking to go from now until 2014.

The plan recommends building new stations near Regional Road 25 and the future Louis St. Laurent Boulevard and another adjacent to James Snow Parkway and Waldie Avenue. The document also calls for renovating the current fire station on Steeles Avenue and moving the Derry Road station west, putting it closer to Tremaine Road. The status would be maintained at the Campbellville station.

"Fire department station locations need to meet existing needs and future growth," Ellsworth said, noting having four stations in urban Milton would provide an optimized response level.

Collectively, the station plans are expected to cost \$10 million.

On the manpower side of things, the plan recommends bringing on 60 full-time firefighters by 2013 to provide 24/7 staffing at the urban fire stations, along with more than a dozen other staff members such as platoon chiefs and fire prevention inspectors.

Once all of the new staff is on board, the department's annual operating costs would increase by \$5.2 million.

The addition of 60 firefighters would also equate to \$300,000 worth of new equipment, like bunker gear and breathing apparatus.

Currently the department relies heavily on part-time fire-

fighters, with the Derry Road station being the only one that has 24/7 staffing.

"No significant staffing changes have occurred within the department prior to 2008," the plan explained. "As such, the initial years of the plan set a steep pace to achieve acceptable service levels by the time full development occurs."

Ellsworth emphasized that the recommended increase has nothing to do with the quality of the current staff, but rather the quantity.

"We have an awesome fire department staff right now that provides a level of service that's second to none," he said.

He noted the local department does struggle when it comes to the turnout time of its part-time staff for a number of reasons, such as increasing traffic congestion and the part-timers' inability to leave their full-time jobs to respond to calls.

He explained that by having more full-time staff to complement the part-timers, the department would increase its ability to minimize response times as much as possible.

"The sooner we get there, the sooner we can mitigate the emergency," he said.

The master plan also suggests council adopt performance measures for the local department that call for:

- The first responding fire vehicle with a staff of four to arrive within four minutes of travel time, 90 per cent of the time

- The arrival of 10 firefighters within 10 minutes of response time, 90 per cent of the time

The councillors around the table applauded the master plan, like Ward 4 Councillor Paul Scherer.

"It's very aggressive, it's shooting for the moon, but I think it's the right approach," he said.

Fellow Ward 4 Councillor Wendy Schau voiced her support for the performance measures.

The committee went on to support a motion that says the recommendations in the plan will be addressed and considered through the Town's annual budget process. This means

nothing is set in stone right now and council will consider all of the aforementioned requests each year at budget time.

The motion also calls for staff to be authorized to take the necessary actions to buy and sell lands for the station plans.

Melanie Hennessey can be reached at mhennessey@milton-canadianchampion.com.

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