



**Subject: Fire Department Administration Update**

**To: Council**

**From: Office of the Chief Administrative Officer**

Report Number: 2024-83

Meeting Date: March 19, 2024

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**Recommendation:**

That Chief Administrative Officer Report 2024-83 be received; and

That the Chief Administrative Officer be directed to enter into an agreement with the Township of Wainfleet to enlist the services of a Fire Chief and Deputy Chief for a duration not exceeding 120 days; and

That a Joint Shared Services Committee be established with the Township of Wainfleet and that the Chief Administrative Officer and the Mayor be appointed to the committee; and

That by-law to appoint a Fire Chief and a Deputy Chief be brought forward at the regular Council meeting on March 26, 2024.

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**Purpose:**

To ensure compliance with the *Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997*, this report is being presented to Council to propose the adoption of by-laws for the appointment of a Fire Chief and a Deputy Fire Chief.

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**Background:**

Fire Chief Scott Lawson commenced his current position with the City on January 4, 2021. Recently, Chief Lawson has announced that he will resign from his position to take employment at a fire department in a neighbouring municipality.

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## Discussion:

The *Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997* requires a municipality with a fire department to appoint a chief for the fire department. Consequently, Chief Lawson's departure will require the City to appoint a Fire Chief, effective upon his departure.

In 2023, the City entered into a memorandum of understanding with the Township of Wainfleet to explore a shared services model of service delivery whenever an opportunity was presented.

Staff believe that the vacancy of the fire chief position and the deputy fire chief position presents an opportunity to explore shared services.

Staff recommend that a Shared Services Committee be created to oversee the negotiation of a shared service arrangement to define the terms and conditions.

Staff estimate it will take about three months to create the shared service agreements and suggest the Chief Administrative Officer be directed to negotiate the agreement with the Township of Wainfleet. The Shared Services Committee will be integral to the negotiation of the agreement.

To maintain compliance with the *Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997*, staff recommend appointing the Township of Wainfleet's Fire Chief and Deputy Fire Chief to act as the City's Fire Chief and Deputy Fire Chief for the 120-day period.

Alternatively, the City could continue the recruitment of a full-time fire chief. While the position has been advertised, it is unlikely to be filled prior to Chief Lawson's departure from the City consequently, staff recommend the appointment of the Wainfleet Fire Chief and Deputy Fire Chief.

If a shared services agreement is determined not to be suitable option for the City and the Township of Wainfleet, the City can proceed with recruitment process for a new fire chief.

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## Internal Consultations:

The Chief Administrative Officer has consulted the Fire Chief and the Chief Human Resources Officer in the preparation of this report. The Chief Administrative Officer also met with the executive of the Port Colborne Professional Fire Fighters Association and the Port Colborne Volunteer Fire Company.

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## Financial Implications:

The City will reimburse the Township of Wainfleet for the cost of the time their staff spend providing administrative services to the Fire Department. These costs are

expected to be lower than the allocated budget for the Fire Chief and Deputy Fire Chief's wages in 2024, this will consequently lead to savings.

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### **Strategic Plan Alignment:**

The initiative contained within this report supports the following pillar(s) of the strategic plan:

- Welcoming, Livable, Healthy Community
  - Economic Prosperity
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### **Conclusion:**

The Fire Chief's last day with the City will be April 10, 2024. A new Fire Chief must be appointed by by-law prior to his departure. Appointing the Fire Chief and Deputy Fire Chief from Wainfleet will satisfy this requirement.

Staff will prepare an agreement between the City and the Township of Wainfleet to satisfy the City's statutory obligation. Port Colborne and Wainfleet staff will continue to explore permanent partnership opportunities to work toward a more fulsome shared service agreement.

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Respectfully submitted,

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### **Report Approval:**

All reports reviewed and approved by the Department Director and also the City Treasurer when relevant. Final review and approval by the Chief Administrative Officer.