



REPORT TO COUNTY COUNCIL

FROM: Andrea Loughlean, Manager of Emergency Management & Elgin-Middlesex Regional Fire School

DATE: November 29, 2023

SUBJECT: Request for additional resource

RECOMMENDATIONS:

THAT Elgin County Council approve the addition of a Fire Training Coordinator position in the Emergency Management department.

INTRODUCTION:


Observed gaps and excessive hours required by staff over the last two years, with respect to the Elgin-Middlesex Regional Fire School (EMRFS), have created an unsustainable workload in the department. The addition of a full time equivalent (FTE) Fire Training Coordinator position, with costs offset by increased revenue, would address the demands and allow improved efficiency and increased productivity within the department.

The request is being presented prior to budget approval, due to the timing of fire training starting early in the new year and significant need for additional resources toward the preparation and implementation of the 2024 fire courses.

BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION:

Over the course of 2022 and 2023, a gap within the Emergency Management department has been identified. The hours of required support from County staff with respect to the EMRFS by current and previous Managers and Administrative Assistants has consistently, and greatly, exceeded that expected of a typical FTE employee.

When we consider that the Emergency Management department has three pillars of focus: EMRFS, Emergency Management (EM), as well as Emergency Medical Services contract oversight (with CAO), the imbalance becomes apparent. With over 35 hours/week, for both Manager and Administrative Assistant alike, being spent on EMRFS business alone, it leaves little time for other aspects of work within the department, such as business continuity planning, advanced strategic planning, asset management, local municipal support, and performance management to name only a few.



The addition of a Fire Training Coordinator would help establish a more balanced and effective department workload. Thus, enabling each member of the team to be more effective and productive for present, short term, and long-term initiatives. Ultimately, this would not only benefit Elgin County but all of our LMPs as well.

To offset the cost of the additional full-time position, the revenue line for the Fire School has been increased to project revenue for 2024 by an additional \$100K such that the new position would be fully covered in the cost of the courses being offered. We would still remain competitive and be able to cover some additional costs under this model.


After presenting the department's 2024 proposed budget, which incorporated the addition of the Fire Training Coordinator, the Budget Committee was asked to approve this presentation to council at the December 6th meeting due to the immediate need within the department and our upcoming recruit program starting in January – EMRFS's most demanding and challenging time of year.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

By increasing course fees for those participating in EMRFS training, staff have increased our projected revenue for 2024 by an additional \$100K, which more than recovers the costs involved with the proposed Fire Training Coordinator position (\$98.4K).

Projected revenue was conservatively calculated based on 2023 actuals with regard to number of course participants and course attendance percentages. In 2023, we saw an increase in revenue compared to that of 2022, and should see final revenue for 2023 that exceeds our projected \$130K. We anticipate a similar increase in performance in 2024 based on increased awareness of the EMRFS, increased numbers of participants, and escalating reputation for the high-quality fire training being offered.

It was suggested at Budget Committee to increase projected revenue an additional \$10K to offset any increase to the 2024 budget overall. Our initial estimates were conservative projections, and an additional increase of \$10K projected revenue would be a reasonable expectation of the EMRFS's 2024 performance as per the request of the budget committee.



ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

Serving Elgin	Growing Elgin	Investing in Elgin
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ensuring alignment of current programs and services with community need. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Exploring different ways of addressing community need. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Engaging with our community and other stakeholders.	<input type="checkbox"/> Planning for and facilitating commercial, industrial, residential, and agricultural growth. <input type="checkbox"/> Fostering a healthy environment. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Enhancing quality of place.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ensuring we have the necessary tools, resources, and infrastructure to deliver programs and services now and in the future. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Delivering mandated programs and services efficiently and effectively.

LOCAL MUNICIPAL PARTNER IMPACT:

While the LMP fire services will see a slight increase in course fees, as will those municipalities outside of our EMRFS partners, it remains the most cost-effective means of training available. The additional departmental resources will continue to allow the LMP fire services to build internal capacity that aligns with provincially legislated requirements (O. Reg. 343/22) for NFPA certification by July 1, 2026 in the most cost-effective manner.

COMMUNICATION REQUIREMENTS:

Discussions have occurred with all Elgin County Fire Chiefs regarding the proposed changes and subsequent increase in course fees. It should be noted that the Fire Chiefs were in unanimous support of the addition of a Fire Training Coordinator position despite the slight increase in course fees.

CONCLUSION:

Given the significant and unsustainable workloads within the current staffing compliment, with regard to the EMRFS, it is recommended to add a Fire Training Coordinator FTE position to balance the workload and improve efficiency and productivity within the department. The cost associated with the Fire Training Coordinator and additional costs of \$10K would be offset by increasing projected revenue by \$110K.



All of which is Respectfully Submitted

Approved for Submission

Andrea Loughlean
Manager of Emergency Management
& Elgin-Middlesex Regional Fire School

Don Shropshire
Chief Administrative Officer/Clerk

