



Fire Hall Relocation – Benefits to Administration Report

June 6, 2017

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1.0 Introduction

On April 24, 2017 Town Council received the HIRF Committee Report on the benefits of relocating the Fire Hall from the perspectives of Safety of the Town, Growth of the Community, and Cost Mitigation. A Council resolution (168/2017) directed administration to prepare a supplemental report that added the perspective of benefits to Town Administration, particularly from the perspective of the following departments: Public Works, Fire, Planning & Economic Development, and the Parks Department. Each of the identified departments have outlined how moving the Fire Hall will impact each of their departments. Results of the report shows that relocating the Fire Hall has many benefits to Town Administration.

2.0 Department Analysis

Public Works, Fire Department, Planning, Asset Management and Parks Departments are analyzed below:

2.1 *Public Works*

Public Works strives to improve the quality of life for residents of the Town of Taber through responsive, efficient and effective delivery of essential services to every neighborhood, while endeavoring to preserve, improve and construct infrastructure within the Town. In performing these duties, the department makes every effort to efficiently apply the best possible management and technology, at the lowest possible cost, to achieve the most effective results.

- Public Works maintains, repairs, rehabilitates and improves the condition of the Town's physical and natural assets in order to preserve and protect the major investment in its infrastructure so that the Town may realize the maximum possible benefit of its intended purpose and to adequately preserve these assets for succeeding generations. Due to the HIRF requirements, for every lot that is developed, 0.006ha of additional land is consumed and an extra 4.8m of all the various infrastructure and servicing components required for development. This is additional infrastructure that becomes property of the Town and is then responsible for ongoing maintenance, repair and eventually replacement.
- Room to grow our ever expanding services is inevitable and needs to be addressed, having the Fire Department relocate allows public works that room to grow. Most of our fleet must be indoors at all times for emergency purposes for snow removal, water breaks and sewer backups. Our additional staff also need room to grow to enhance their capabilities and maintain efficiency within Public Works and better service Taber's citizens.
- The current Fire Department location has an excellent training facility which we already regularly use for safety meetings and staff training. We have a shortage of offices with the Town's new Safety Coordinator using the mechanics area as his temporary office. The Safety Coordinator could utilize one of the existing Fire Hall offices. The administration of the Town's safety program could have one location everyone could utilize.
- It is our continuing goal to engage all citizens of Taber and to communicate the service level expectations of the community and to provide those services that enhance the quality of life for residents of the Town in which we live, and for this expectation Public Works also needs to room to grow.

2.2 *Fire Department*

The first benefit to moving the Fire Hall to a central location would be the decrease in response times. Recent Studies have shown up to a 5 minute faster response time. This would increase the citizen's safety with more efficient response times and improved service by the well-respected Taber Fire Department. Currently, the fire department amazingly still holds great response times to calls but since it is situated on the eastern outskirts of

Taber, by moving it inwards will shorten the times even further. This was confirmed by Fire Wise Consulting, a third party study completed in December of 2015, financed by the Town of Taber. These results proved that by placing a Fire Department in the downtown core would result in an average of 5 minutes faster response times. This can reduce the number of deaths, disabilities, and property loss, reduce costs to citizens and the Town while strengthening the community pride.

The second benefit is the elimination of HIRF requirement, which requires the fire department to be on scene and flowing water in under 10 minutes 90% of the time. This includes the call into a 911 dispatcher. By removing HIRF this would allow developers and builders to build more cost-effective housing; possibly attracting larger corporate businesses to our community that require a larger workforce requiring more cost effective homes.

The third and final benefit to moving the fire hall would be to build a fire hall with expansion capabilities for future committee growth. Building proper drive-through apparatus bays currently 6 units use 4 doors to exit the building which causes some safety concerns.

2.3 Planning & Economic Development

As identified in the HIRF report, the relative cost of housing in Taber is high compared to surrounding centres which ultimately negatively impacts the growth of the community. Current and future development that falls outside of the 10 minute response time can address HIRF in a few different ways. One way it can be addressed through building materials and design including no side facing windows and installing sprinklers which significantly drives up the costs of building. A second and more common way it is addressed is by increasing the distance between residential buildings (setbacks), which forces lot sizes to be bigger, in turn driving the costs up. A desktop analysis estimates this to result in an additional \$11,245.00 per lot which is passed on to the home buyer.

In addition to costs, larger lot sizes jeopardizes efficient land use and smart growth patterns for the Town of Taber. Efficient land use recognize that land is a limited, non-renewable resource and it should not be wasted. Land-use decisions should reduce the rate at which land is converted from an undeveloped state into permanent, built environment and utilize the minimum amount of land as necessary for new development. Continuing development patterns with the Fire Hall in its current location will result in an inefficient growth pattern for the Town.

2.4 Parks Department

The current Fire Hall would provide space for recreation staff and vehicles. The current situation for Recreation is increasing amount of fleet and staffing. Having the space would:

- Provide adequate storage for expensive equipment, expanding life of the equipment by reducing wear and tear;
- Provide space for staff to complete inspections and repairs whether worker or mechanic;
- Provide a centralized meeting space for effectiveness of managing the team – currently staff are starting their day at three different locations which hampers the leadership and direction we are trying to provide;
- Allow for staff to have an area for proper storage of their clothing/boots, currently we are unable to accommodate all.
- Separate staff's personal items from their lunch room. Current lunch room holds some of the lockers, is very small and smells.
- Allow training rooms above current Fire Hall to be utilized by staff for training/course purposes and shared with other departments as currently occurs.

- Provide more office space which is in great need. Currently Trent (the Recreation Manager) is housed in what was a furnace room which is poor surroundings for Trent and inadequate for our needs. It could serve as a satellite office in the winter to oversee operations there. It would also allow a better work space for staff required to complete computer tasks such as the Lead Hand or Rec. staff with projects, including pool staff.
- Assist with that storage and inventory control and management. The storage space for the Aquafun Centre is maxed out, as is the auditorium. There is also a lack of storage at the shop and as such, smaller items that should have been indoors over the years have been stored outdoors.

3.0 Conclusion & Recommendation

The intent of this report is to be supplemental to the HIRF Committee Report to evaluate the benefits of Fire Hall Relocation to Town Administration, particularly Public Works, Fire, Planning & Economic Development, and the Parks Departments. Results of the report shows that relocating the Fire Hall has many benefits to each department within the Town Administration.