

Recommendation:

That the Fire Chief-2023-08 report, dated October 17th, regarding False Alarm By-law be received and that Council passed the attached By-law and fee schedule, effective January 1, 2024 at the appropriate time during the Council meeting.

Overview:

The current False Alarm By-law was implemented January 1, 2005. The two main reasons for a False Alarm By-law is to create a punitive process to encourage the reduction of false alarms we respond to, and to recover some response costs. Responding to false alarms, not only unnecessarily interrupts our volunteer firefighters' lives, but it ties up resources unnecessarily that may be required to respond to other emergencies.

Staff recently compared 8 surrounding municipal False Alarm By-laws, and like ours, most issue a warning letter with the second false alarm indicating a fee for service will incur with the next false alarm. Our current By-law's fee schedule is \$300 for the third false alarm, \$350 for the fourth and \$400 for all false alarms beyond the fourth. Although over the past 36 months we have had 76 false alarm calls involving 27 properties, only two properties have exceeded the two free response criteria. I highlight this as some of the by-laws we have researched have significant fees when 4th, 5th or subsequent alarms occur, but they have never had to issue this type of invoice. We have a property that has numerous fire monitored buildings involving local students, international students, faculty and some of their families. This unique situation generates an environment for mishaps, in turn creating numerous false alarms.

The approach we have taken for our updated fee schedule is to increase the fees, but with a reasonable approach to cover our response costs, without being excessive. Another change we have made, is to make the violations based on a rolling 12 months since last infraction, compared to a calendar year reset. The remainder of the changes are primarily administrative and can be found attached to this report.

Conclusion:

Our False Alarm By-law is pushing 20 years old, with 20-year-old rates. Our new By-law utilizes the Ministry of Transportation (MTO) rates, as we do with some other Fire Department responses. This rate typically changes annually and is set by the MTO for fire department response for motor vehicle collisions. Schedule "A" of the attached By-law demonstrates a fee structure after 2 false alarms to be 2 times the current MTO rate and for the 4th, and all subsequent false alarms will be charged 3 times MTO rate. The MTO rate at the time of this report is \$543.03.

Financial Impact:

Historically it costs us more to respond to false alarms than we recover through our current False Alarm By-law fees. By updating our By-law and fee schedule, it will mimic the principles the province indicates as a reasonable rate of response for fire apparatus.

The fee schedule, based on historic data will increase revenue approximately \$9000.00 annually. This will help offset the cost of automatic alarm response, both through automatic aid agreement costs and internal costs.

Strategic Plan Applicability: To ensure and enable an effective and efficient municipal administration.

Report Approval Details

Document Title:	False Alarm By-law.docx
Attachments:	- 2023-XX - False Alarm - FINAL.docx
Final Approval Date:	Oct 10, 2023

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

Martina Chait-Hartwig

Elana Arthurs