

Consultants help King create Fire Master Plan

By Mark Pavilons

Backed by "exceptional leadership," King Township is well on its way to creating a comprehensive, up-to-date Fire Master Plan that will guide it for the next decade.

King councillors received an update from Darryl Culley, a consultant with Emergency Management & Training Inc., regarding the plan's progress.

Calling Fire Chief Jim Wall's leadership "exceptional," Culley said this plan will take the fire department to 2027. Just as communities evolve over time, the fire and emergency services needs to grow, too.

There three main thrusts regarding local fire services "public safety education, code enforcement through inspections, and emergency response.

The consultants have reviewed the 2006 plan and also looked at the three stations serving King. Regarding vehicles, Culley said King has a "fleet that you should be proud of."

He offered some operational and strategic recommendations for the 10-year period.

Recent tragic events brought awareness to the forefront. Culley said all fire departments need to develop an awareness strategy for rental properties, bringing both tenants and landlords up to the speed. A fire department doesn't stand alone, but safety is a "community responsibility," he said, pointing to a need for home sprinkler systems. This has been talked about for some time and requires action by homeowners, builders and municipalities.

Mayor Steve Pellegrini noted home sprinklers have been "on the table for a long time," noting this pays for itself in the long run for both insurance breaks and personal safety. "Nobody's doing it," he said, adding perhaps the developers should at least offer them as an option for new builds. That way, at least some buyers will take advantage of it, he pointed out.

Culley also observed that ongoing training is vital and he recommends that King looks into hiring a full-time training officer. King Fire and Emergency Services boasts one of the best training records around. By the fall of 2016, the service logged more than 9,025 staff hours of training through 250 classes. KFES is ranked as one of the top volunteer services in the province.

Culley further recommended that all officers (captains) be trained as fire inspectors.

While there are no established expectations on average response times, Culley said they should set some benchmarks. Typical in most municipalities is nine minutes.

The master plan will continue to evolve and be presented to council this spring for adoption.