

**VILLAGE OF HARRISON HOT SPRINGS
MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF COUNCIL**

DATE: Friday, November 8, 2024
TIME: 10:00 a.m.
PLACE: Council Chambers, Memorial Hall
290 Esplanade Avenue, Harrison Hot Springs, BC

IN ATTENDANCE: Mayor Fred Talen
Councillor Leo Facio
Councillor Allan Jackson
Councillor Mark Schweinbenz
Councillor Michie Vidal

Chief Administrative Officer, Tyson Koch
Chief Financial Officer, Scott Schultz
Community Services Manager, Christy Ovens
Director of Operations, Jace Hodgson
Fire Chief, Curtis Genest
Thomas Redden, Local FireSmart Representative

ABSENT:

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Talen called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.
Mayor Talen acknowledged the traditional territory of Sts'ailes.

2. INTRODUCTION OF LATE ITEMS

None

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Moved by Councillor Jackson
Seconded by Councillor Schweinbenz

THAT the agenda be approved.

**CARRIED
UNANIMOUSLY**
SC-2024-11-01

4. COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING – ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

Moved by Councillor Facio
Seconded by Councillor Vidal

THAT Council resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole.

**CARRIED
UNANIMOUSLY**
SC-2024-11-02

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(a) Community Wildfire Resiliency Plan

Deb Zemanek from B.A. Blackwell and Associates provided a PowerPoint Presentation on feedback and questions received regarding the Community Wildfire Resiliency Plan (CWRP).

Council discussed the CWRP in relation to the 2017 Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) as follows:

- The steep east-facing slopes above town are rated as moderate fire behaviour threat in both reports
- The East Sector Lands rate as a low threat, where they were previously rated low, moderate and high
- The CWPP had eleven local sites whereas the CWRP has only five

Deb Zemanek clarified that the field assessment was conducted in the same way as it was in 2017 and that the plots, although a convenient way to share information, are not the basis for the whole assessment. Fire threat is assessed through a combination of spatial components. The two reports consider many of the same categories such as fuel type and topography, however, there has been an evolution in understanding of how to model fire threats in a mixed-wood forest such as the ones surrounding the Village, particularly the East Sector. In 2017, the threats were understood to be higher than they would be today. Completing the report in any given season does not affect the study. This technical change produces a more realistic result based on the percentage of conifer.

Council and Deb Zemanek continued to discuss the CWRP, making the following points:

- The East Sector Lands are wet
- McCombs Drive acts as a buffer between the East Sector Lands and residential areas
- Not all risk can be reduced in an area and there will always be a residual risk of fire when living in an environment with trees
- The goal is to identify opportunities for meaningful reduction in risk
- The SenseNet technology did not affect the risk rating of the East Sector Lands, but is considered a positive
- There is a quantitative analysis of the plan where fuel type, topography and weather are used to create the threat map
- There is also a discussion portion where the analysis information is discussed with other considerations such as historical fires
- Wind direction did not factor into the recommendations as this is typically taken into consideration for planning proposed fuel treatments, which is not being recommended at this time
- BC Wildfire Service is recommending that communities not rely heavily on wind direction as winds can rotate during a storm event
- There has been a shift away from fuel management on public land to focus instead on FireSmart in the Home Ignition Zone and emergency preparedness
- There are several action items specific to providing information the public

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- Local fire threat analysis data is more reliable than provincial data which is considered a starting point for risk analysis

Council discussed protecting the current evacuation route and investing in equipment and training to ensure a smooth evacuation. Deb Zemanek noted that no concerns were raised regarding this, however, there are action items pertaining to evacuation modeling and emergency plan testing. The Chief Administrative Officer clarified that no concerns regarding the evacuation route have been identified, however, as FireSmart activities take place on the properties along the route, issues may be identified. If there was an issue and the road had to be closed, it would most likely be located in the District of Kent who is following their own Community Wildfire Protection Plan. Council discussed that this matter is consistently addressed by the Kent-Harrison Joint Emergency Program Committee who works closely with the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure. Current concerns relate to a bottleneck at the four-way stop where Hot Springs Road/Highway 7 meets Highway 9/Else Road. Council further discussed the process of issuing evacuation alerts and orders and the involvement of other agencies including Search and Rescue and the RCMP. Council discussed the merits of the secondary evacuation route.

Discussion ensued surrounding the installation of fire hydrants near the Fire Hall. It was determined that this matter is being dealt with internally between the Chief Administrative Officer, the Chief Financial Officer and the Fire Chief as part of budgetary discussions. Further, it was noted that FireHall Park has had FireSmart activities conducted on it, with fuels having been removed and trees laddered. Additionally, the Director of Operations confirmed that drawings are in progress for additional fire hydrants along the East Sector Lands. Once complete, staff will be looking for funding to install them.

Council discussed the impact of provincial logging on wildfire risk/resiliency and to watersheds. It was determined that this matter is outside the scope of the plan, however, it was noted that harvesting can leave surface fuels and there is a legal requirement to abate wildfire hazard. Council considered that it may be beneficial to address this in a resolution to UBCM, a meeting with the Minister of Forests and Lands, or potentially bringing this forward as a resolution to the LMLGA.

Discussion took place on the secondary evacuation route, with the following comments being made:

- Having two evacuation routes is an accepted standard as primary routes can become blocked for several reasons
- The proposed secondary route through Sasquatch Park could be unsafe and could increase back country uses and logging activities
- It is not ideal for commuter cars
- The Village should focus on protecting the current evacuation route
- The secondary route has been in discussion for 20 years and does not just involve the Village, but also the District of Kent and Seabird Island Band and the decision on it will be up to the province

Council discussed the fact that the CWRP states the majority of fires are human-caused ignition from recreation, gunfire, campfire and residential burning, however, there is no recommendation to limit or restrict back-country users from accessing the area during

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extreme fire conditions. Deb Zemanek clarified that the BC Wildfire Service or the Ministry of Forests can restrict high risk activities and open burning, therefore, this plan recommends more signage but did not determine that there was a need for increased advocacy by the Village with already high awareness on a regional/provincial level. The plan can be amended by adding wording regarding working with the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure and BC Parks about restricting access to Rockwell Drive for backcountry activities. It was noted that the Village has closed trailheads in the past.

Discussion ensued on residential FireSmart activities and why evacuation planning is still an important recommendation. It was noted that the Local FireSmart Representative has conducted an assessment on all Village owned buildings and critical infrastructure. Many recommendations came out of those that will be taken into consideration during budget planning for the rest of the FireSmart grant intake and the 2025 general operating budget. Council discussed the free FireSmart assessments available to residents and potentially obtaining a chipper for residents to dispose of excess green waste.

Council discussed data regarding forest thinning and Deb Zemanek indicated that a study in Whistler spoke about creating holes in the canopy which can dry out the forest and surface fuels. Therefore, thinning wouldn't be recommended in an area like Spirit Trail.

The Local FireSmart Representative commented that half the homes assessed resulted in recommendations and half did not require any FireSmart activities. As people continue to participate, more become engaged and having a green waste drop off is helpful to residents.

Moved by Mayor Talen

THAT the meeting be adjourned for recess at 11:32 am and reconvene at 11:45 am.

**CARRIED
UNANIMOUSLY**
COW-2024-11-01

MEETING RECONVENED AT 11:45 A.M.

(b) Civic Lands Master Plan Update

Lindsey Jerke of Modus provided a PowerPoint presentation on the current Civic Lands Master Plan progress including site observations, summary from the October 24, 2024 Community Open House and next steps. A public "Pin-Up" event is proposed for either November or December. 130 comments were received at the Open House which is a great level of engagement and such an early stage. The top theme was an indoor space where residents could gather. Modus will be looking to expand on the program lists initially contained in their proposal based on this feedback. Council discussed the ability of residents to downsize their homes, obtain rental housing and retain the community's workforce. Council also discussed that if something were to be built in the currently vacant lands, it would result in a loss of parking that needs to be addressed.

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Moved by Councillor Facio
Seconded by Councillor Jackson

THAT the Committee of the Whole rise and report to Council; and

THAT Council adopt the report of the Committee of the Whole.

CARRIED
UNANIMOUSLY
SC-2024-11-03

5. QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

Questions from the public were entertained.

6. ADJOURNMENT

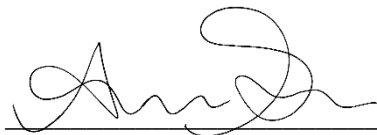
Moved by Councillor Jackson
Seconded by Councillor Schweinbenz

THAT the meeting be adjourned at 12:18 pm.

CARRIED
UNANIMOUSLY
SC-2024-11-04



Fred Talen
Mayor



Amanda Graham
Corporate Officer