

Municipality Of Chatham-Kent
Infrastructure and Engineering Services
Public Works
Information Report

To: Mayor and Members of Council
From: Ryan Brown, Director of Public Works
Date: June 1, 2021
Subject: Municipal Sand Bag Program - Update

This report is for the information of Council.

Background

At the August 12, 2020 Council meeting, the following Notice of Motion was approved:

It is recommended that:

1. Administration develop a Municipal Sandbag Program. The Sandbag Program should include:
 - a) Most cost efficient method of obtaining the sandbags (including bag and sand beside bag);
 - b) Available only during high water and flood warnings;
 - c) Available to the properties in the affected areas;
 - d) A bag limit of 85 bags per property;
 - e) The dollar amount be considered during 2020 budget not exceeding \$200,000;
 - f) Any left over dollars to be encumbered to following year; and
 - g) This program does not include disposal of sandbags.

Comments

In accordance with the Purchasing By-law, a Request for Proposal was posted on the Municipal website on April 3, 2020 for the supply and administration of a municipal sandbag program. A sole submission from Valley View Ventures Ltd. o/a Jacobs Bag Corp was received by the Purchasing Officer on April 22, 2020 and forwarded to Public Works for review. Upon review of the submission, it was determined that the bidder was only interested in providing empty sand bags, and not interested in committing to administration of the program. Therefore, the submission was rejected.

Since there were no qualified bidders resulting from the RFP process, the program has been managed internally with existing staff and resources. Local providers commented that they did not find the risk of liability acceptable to have residents shoveling sand into bags on their property in addition to concerns of theft and property damage.

Currently, when a local conservation authority declares a flood watch/warning/emergency, sand bags have been provided by the Lower Thames Valley Conservation Authority (LTVCA). Sand and sandbags are sourced and delivered by Public Works staff to an accessible location within proximity to the affected zone.

The current process presents several challenges including:

- **Tracking and Eligibility**

- Administration is unable to track how many bags have been used per resident or if they are picked up by eligible property owners. The 85 bag limitation cannot be confirmed.
- Since there is no site supervision, it is impossible to confirm or control if supplies are used for their intended purposes

- **Sandbag Disposal and Illegal Dumping**

- Sand and sandbags used for flood mitigation are considered contaminated and must be disposed of as refuse. Sand bags have a limited life and can become damaged or lost in extreme events, or damaged over time by direct sunlight.
- Property owners are responsible for proper handling and transportation in addition to applicable disposal fees at municipal disposal sites. If property owners choose to add spent bags to their residential curbside waste collection, it must be within the bag and weight limits specified by the Municipality of Chatham-Kent.
- Administration cannot confirm if contaminated materials have been disposed of properly.

While the current level of implementation has many challenges, it has been much more cost effective than the original plan to outsource the service. Public Works recommends continuing with the current program and will re-evaluate when the one-time funding has been exhausted.

Alternatively, if Council wishes to return to the original parameters of the program, administration recommends that the original motion be altered to provide filled sandbags to the public. Providing filled sand bags will make bidding on a new RFP more attractive to local businesses.

Consultation

The Lower Thames Valley Conservation Authority (LTVCA) was consulted with respect to the estimated number of sand bags contained in this report. Local providers of sandbags were also contacted during the RFP process.

Financial Implications

During the 2020 Budget deliberations, a one-time \$200,000 supplementary budget was approved for the implementation of a Municipal Sandbag Program.

To date, the Public Works Department has spent approximately \$5,000 in labour, equipment, and materials. Material costs are much lower than anticipated as all sandbags have been sourced free of charge from the LTVCA. The LTVCA estimates that they have supplied approximately 100,000 sandbags for Erie Shore Drive, the Village of Erieau, Shrewsbury, and Mitchell's Bay over the past 2 years.

It is anticipated the existing budget provided by Council will last until the end of 2022 given current lake level forecasts and anticipated purchase of sand bags.

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Attachments: None

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