



FORMAL REPORT

To: Mayor Strathdee and Members of Council

Prepared by: Jed Kelly, Director of Public Works

Date of Meeting: 12 September 2017

Subject: **PW 47-2017 Quadrant Tree Pruning Budget Variance**

PURPOSE

To approve a budget exceedance for the completion of the 2017 Southeastern Quadrant Heavy Tree Pruning.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT PW 47-2017 Quadrant Tree Pruning Budget Variance be received; and,

THAT Council approve an additional \$25,000 for the completion of the Southeastern Quadrant Heavy Tree Pruning.

BACKGROUND

The municipal forestry management goal is to create a healthy urban canopy throughout the Town which adds to the quality of the overall community. The forestry management approach Public Works has adopted can be categorized in 4 key areas.

- Planting – Either through direct replacements for removed trees or development of new lands. The annual goal is to replace removed trees with 2-3 replacements.
- Pruning & Shaping of Younger trees – Light ground based pruning activities to ensure tree growth is directed up away from road allowance and sidewalk clearances.
- Heavy Quadrant Pruning & Inspection – Removal of awkward or dead limbs to reduce overall loading on the tree. This can reduce loads on root system and / or reduce force loads from wind storms
- Removals – Removal of hazardous trees at the end of their life

Unfortunately, the approach outlined above has not been rigorously followed for a number of years. Staff estimate that proactive heavy quadrant pruning was largely discontinued around 2009, most likely due to staff turnover and large volumes of Ash tree removals. Reactive pruning / removals on complaint basis was the service standard for 8-9 years, this translates into a program deficit which will require some retroactive effort to resolve.

REPORT

For the 2017 operating year, Public Works has resurrected the historical processes of forestry management tactics of Town owned trees as outlined above. The overall goal is program sustainability, risk mitigation, and accurate budget trending.

The Town has been divided into four sections, North, Southeast, Southwest and West areas. Each quadrant will have heavy pruning completed on a four year rotation. By establishing a quadrant system, Town staff, with assistance from a qualified contractor, systematically reviews all sections.

This is opposed to sporadically responding to identified hazardous trees across Town. This process reinforces the department's strategy to provide services proactively rather than reactively, thus reducing the likelihood of possible harm and damage resulting in litigation.

The Southeastern quadrant has been chosen as the first section to be addressed by the program in 2017 due to the high density of older larger trees. As above, heavy pruning has not occurred for a number of years and there has been more pruning required than was originally anticipated.

As a result of this high degree of maintenance, the 2017 budget allocation for this function has been exhausted and the quadrant heavy pruning for this part of Town is uncompleted. Because of this, the potential for hazardous trees remain as heavy pruning allows for close inspection and great level of condition assessment that can be delivered from a ground level drive-by inspection program.

In recent months it has been noted the quadrant approach to heavy pruning of trees has demonstrated to be advantageous. This is evident as areas where pruning has been completed to date have had less damage during wind storms due to a reduced number of tree limbs lost. Town trees that are inadequately maintained have the possibility of causing damage and harm, and exposes the Town to risk of litigation and its consequences if damage is caused to private property by Town trees.

It is staff's suggestion that completing pruning in the Southeastern quadrant will put the Town in the best position with respect to tree maintenance and risk. Given that the 2017 budget for quadrant pruning has been fully spent, staff are requesting Council's approval for a budget variance to complete the full scope of pruning that is required in the Southeastern quadrant in 2017.

SUMMARY

The Town has implemented a quadrant heavy prune & inspection program to identify and maintain hazardous or potentially hazardous trees. The Southeast quadrant was selected for 2017, due to the age, density and size of the trees, the costs associated have been greater than anticipated causing a potential budget deficit for this item. Due to financial constraints, the department has been unable to complete the review and maintenance of this section.

To prevent potential damage and harm that could lead to litigation, it is recommended that Council reallocates funds to this program to ensure hazards are removed.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

An additional \$25,000 will be required to complete the 2017 heavy quadrant pruning & inspection

2017 Budget Allocation (Contractor Tree & Stump Removals)	\$40,000
Projected additional required funding	\$25,000
Total Projected 2017 Forestry Program Contracted Services	\$65,000

It should be noted the Southeast & North (core area) quadrants have been identified as having the oldest tree inventory. Accurate budget forecasting is difficult as this is a new program for 2017-2018 and baseline service level is still being developed. It is expected that West & Southwest quadrant's costs will be reduced since the tree inventory is primarily younger and ultimately healthier.

Staff have engaged previous public work administration, they have advised that a similar scenario played out in 1992, but eventually the proactive quadrant defined approach should make the program viable over the long term with greater budget forecasting and reduced overall claims due to damages.

The additional cost of \$25,000 will be a variance within the department and if not offset by Town wide surplus at year end, to be funded from a roads reserve transfer.

STRATEGIC PLAN

This initiative is supported by the following priorities, outcomes, and tactics in the Plan.

- Pillar #4:
 - Outcome: St. Marys' parks are not only a prized asset, they are also a natural gathering place that can be optimized and incorporated into enhancing the cultural profile of St. Marys.
 - Tactic(s): Investigate implementing a forestry and tree management policy for the Town.

OTHERS CONSULTED

Bruce Grant, Director of Public Works, Town of St. Marys, 1992-2003

John Hahn, Parks Operator A, Town of St. Marys

Jo-Anne Lounds, Risk Management Coordinator, Town of St. Marys

Jim Brown, Treasurer, Town of St. Marys

Tim Holley, ISA Certified Arborist, District Manager, Davey Tree

ATTACHMENTS

Tree Pruning Quadrant Map

REVIEWED BY

Recommended by the Department



Jed Kelly
Director of Public Works

Recommended by the CAO



Brent Kittmer
CAO / Clerk