



Town of Huntsville Staff Report

Meeting Date: October 25, 2023

To: General Committee

Report Number: OPS-2023-51

Confidential: No

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Subject: Operations and Protective Services Divisional Capital Projects Updates

Report Highlights

Report for Committee's Information providing an overview of the Operations and Protective Services Division including a summary of Capital Projects that have been budgeted for completion in 2023. Presenting Committee with status and rationale for challenges to completing projects.

Recommendation

For Information Only.

Background

The Operations and Protective Services Division is a division of the Town that has seven (7) lines of business:

- Roads Operations
- Parks Operations
- Cemeteries Operations
- Fire Services
- Town Fleet and Operations Facilities Services
- Town Engineering Services
- Town Transit Services

2023 Budget

The total council-approved annual operating budget for the division in 2023 is \$6,948,488 and the approved capital budget is \$5,551,245 for a total 2023 budget of \$12,499,733.

Operations and Protective Services represents **65%** of the **total Town of Huntsville** 2023 budget (\$19,408,056).

Operations and protective services is responsible for and maintains approximately \$221 million of Town Capital assets out of a total Town Capital asset value of \$316 million or 70% of total Town Capital assets (2020 values).

Staffing

All services provided by Operations and Protective Services are provided with total approved staffing of 43 Full-time, 19 Part-time/seasonal, and 60 volunteers (volunteers are in fire services only).

Roads Operations

Roads operations delivers roads maintenance and repair activities throughout the year. Roads operations must maintain 418 km of roadway over a geographical area of 711 square kilometers.

Staffing in Roads Operations includes 18 full-time operator positions (union), 5 seasonal positions, 1 Operations Foreman, and 1 Operations Manager.

During the winter control season, from November 1 through April 30 of each year, roads operations is responsible for:

- Snow clearing including plowing, sanding, salting, and clearing drainage (ditches, culverts, and catch basins).
- Snow removal - removing snow banks.
- Basic roads maintenance such as pothole and shoulder repairs.

Winter control operations operate 24 hours per day, 5 days a week with on-call crews available weekends.

During the summer season, from May 1 through October 31, roads operations is responsible for:

- Sweeping
- Pothole repair
- Roadway shoulder repair and maintenance
- Brushing
- Ditching
- Culvert replacements
- Road/drainage stabilizations
- Catch basin clearing and cleaning
- Grading of gravel roadways
- Light asphalt roadway repairs
- Equipment and yard maintenance
- Supporting all capital works projects, i.e., roads operations crews work with contractors to complete gravel replacement, road repairs, etc.
- Receive, inspect, and plan repairs based upon public service requests and Councilor inquiries

Maintenance work and road capital work (reconstruction works) are completed using both Town staff as well as contracted services. Contracted services are required for specialty expertise, knowledge, and equipment as well as to supplement regular Roads Operations crews in emergencies. Emergencies may include staff availability, significant weather events, major infrastructure challenges, and volume of work (to ensure compliance with mandatory, legislated standards).

Parks Operations

Parks operations delivers parks maintenance, set-up, cleaning, user-group support, special events support, and repair activities throughout the year. Parks operations must maintain 65 Parks (including McCulley-Robertson Recreation Park, River Mill Park, and Pitman's Bay) and 16 gardens spread over the Town's entire 711 square kilometer geographical area and are also responsible for waterfront support such as the town docks and water access points.

Staffing in Parks Operations includes 4 full-time parks attendant positions, 12 seasonal positions, 1 Lead Hand, and 1 Parks/Cemeteries Manager (overseeing both Parks and Cemeteries Operations - shared resource).

During the winter control season, from November 1 through April 30 of each year, using 4 full time parks attendants and 1 lead hand, parks operations is responsible for (7 days per week):

- Sidewalk condition monitoring.
- Sidewalk plowing, sanding, salting, and snow removal (23 km).
- Plowing Town parking lots.
- Shoveling Town walkways at community halls.
- Clearing Kent Park.
- Creating and maintaining Lion's Lookout outdoor skating surface.
- Shoveling and snow clearing of cemeteries.

Winter control operations operate 5 days per week and on-call as needed on weekends and overnight.

During the summer season, from May 1 through October 31, with both full-time and seasonal staffing, parks operations is responsible for:

- Horticulture including all flowers and planters
- Watering plants
- Gardening in all 16 Town gardens including weeding throughout season
- All flags across Town in public spaces (except Town Hall)
- Walking trails maintenance (including repairs)
- Mowing grass on sports fields and parks
- Line painting on sports fields
- All nets and courts for pickleball, basketball, volleyball, and tennis
- Cleaning all washrooms
- Placement and inspection of portable toilets
- Placement of chairs, benches, and picnic tables in all public spaces, parks, and other Town properties including bringing outdoor furniture in for winter
- Placement of all Town outdoor garbage receptacles and emptying of garbage at all locations
- Cleaning and maintaining pavilions
- Preparing parks/outdoor event spaces for special events including cleaning up after event
- Coordinating and overseeing contracted capital parks projects
- Completing installation, and repair work in parks as needed

Parks operations activities are completed using both Town staff as well as contracted services. Contracted services are required to create the capacity to be able to maintain all Town parks and public spaces 7 days per week through the peak summer season. Contracted services are also required for specialized and specific parks capital projects. The 2024 budget submission is

requesting additional parks attendants positions. With the addition of parks staff, the number of contractor hours can be reduced.

Cemeteries Operations

Cemeteries Operations cares for and maintains all 15 cemeteries in the Town of Huntsville.

Cemeteries Staff prepare graves for burials in addition to all regularly scheduled work required to maintain cemeteries. The cemeteries staff perform approximately 75 - 100 burials per year, which is approximately 1 burial every 2 days during the peak summer season.

Cemeteries Staffing includes 1 Parks/Cemeteries Manager (overseeing both Parks and Cemeteries Operations - shared resource), 2 full-time cemeteries attendants (Union - summer season only - support winter roads operations during winter control season), and 1 part-time/seasonal laborer.

Cemeteries work includes:

- Preparing graves and gravesites for burials
- Installation of monuments and headstones
- Mowing and maintaining cemetery grounds
- Repair of cemeteries grounds
- Maintaining records of burials, permits, mapping, and cold storage related to all burials and interments
- Filing paperwork related to burials with appropriate authorities
- Working as experts on cemeteries property matters
- Building and maintaining pathways, roadways, and walkways in cemeteries
- Coordinate funeral arrangements with funeral homes
- Sales of cemetery plots and columbarium locations

Cemeteries are heavily regulated and are subject to two specific Provincial Acts among all other requirements under law. Cemeteries work requires very particular skill sets in dealing with grieving families and friends.

Fire Services

The primary responsibilities of fire services are fire prevention, public education, and fire suppression, responding to emergency calls for service. Fire services has responded to an average of 520 calls for service in each year for the last 3 years (2023 projected based on year to date volumes). These calls occur across 711 square kilometers. Fire services also respond in neighboring communities as required by mutual and automatic aid agreements.

Fire services has a full-time staff of 6 providing emergency services and fire prevention activities support to both the Town of Huntsville and the Township of Lake of Bays.

Emergency Calls include:

- Structure fires
- Wild and grass fires
- Other fires (e.g., transformers, garbage bins, etc.)
- Water and ice water rescues
- Motor Vehicle Collisions
- Supporting paramedic services during medical emergencies
- Other rescues and emergency situations working together with police, paramedics, and other responders

Throughout the year, fire services also provides:

- Public education regarding fire and life safety
- Burn restrictions, permitting, and enforcement
- Fire Inspections
- Fire and building code enforcement activities
- Review of fire and life safety plans
- Firefighter training including new recruit on-boarding, and continuing education and response preparedness of existing members
- Equipment checking, testing, and maintenance activities to maintain emergency response preparedness

Fire Services is responsible to the Councils of both the Town of Huntsville and the Township of Lake of Bays and their work is impacted by volumes of calls and fire prevention activities in Lake of Bays as well.

Town Fleet and Operations Facilities Services

The Town of Huntsville has a fleet supporting all Town operations and services, which includes 104 vehicles (including trailers) as well as other equipment required for operations (e.g., small engine equipment - mowers, chainsaws, trimmers, etc.).

Town fleet services is also responsible for Divisional health and safety as well as divisional facilities that support operations, e.g., Madill Yard, Parks Quonset Huts, Fire Halls, etc.

Fleet services operates with 4 full-time staff including one manager, administrative support, and 2 mechanics (union).

The services provided includes:

- Divisional health and safety
- Operations facility cleaning and maintenance
- Operations facility capital projects and repairs
- Automotive parts inventory management including ordering parts required for repairs and maintenance
- Tracking and scheduling maintenance of all Town vehicles
- Scheduling repairs of all Town vehicles
- Capital asset management of Operations facilities
- Capital asset management of town fleet vehicles (including fire services)
- Capital asset management of small engine equipment and tools
- Inventory management at Town yards, including winter inventory of sand/salt and summer inventory of culverts
- Maintenance of vehicles and equipment
- Repair of vehicles and equipment
- Capital asset replacement including all vehicles and heavy equipment (including fire services)

Town Engineering Services

With a staff of two (2) full-time engineering technicians, the Town Engineering Services department provides support services to departments across the Town primarily supporting Roads Capital works, Road and Sidewalk Permits, Town Planning, and Parks Capital Projects.

Services include:

- Storm water system reviews and assessments
- Review of plans of subdivision and other planning applications
- Environmental impact assessments focused on storm water and drainage
- Performing and coordinating utilities and property survey locates
- Capital Asset Management of Town Road network
- Organize and oversee all capital road projects
- Road, bridge, culvert, storm system conditions assessments
- Entrance inspections
- Sidewalk and road occupation permits
- Municipal property surveys for many property matters
- Design and planning of all road construction projects
- Application processing and permit approvals for broadband installation (Provincial initiative)

Town Transit Services

Internally, there are no dedicated staff for Town Transit. Town Transit services are managed from the Director's Office by the Director and the Administrative Coordinator. Town Transit is provided by a contract services provider. The current contract provider is Campbell's Bus Lines.

Town staff are required to administer and report on transit services. Staff are also required to attend the Active Transportation and Public Transit committee (ATPTC). The ATPTC is discussing expansion of Town public transit services to include additional buses (capital acquisition by Town) and the creation and addition of supplementary routes to improve public transit services. Further initiatives being discussed relating to public transit in Huntsville include the creation of a transit hub and updates/upgrades to the fare payment system.

Staff are regularly required to:

- Monitor and report on bus ridership
- Ensure compliance with insurance and other contract requirements
- Analyze, change, and implement new stops and changes to bus routing
- Work with ATPTC on developing public transit service improvements and expansion plans

This work requires coordination and inclusion of resources from multiple departments within Operations and Protective Services and across the Town, e.g., GIS/Information Services. The work remains with the Director's office in Operations and Protective Services because of this need to coordinate across many departments.

Town Resourcing and Support Services

The Operations and Protective Services Division would not be able to complete either its regularly assigned work or its additional assignments without the help, support, and direct involvement of so many other staff members from across the Town.

Other staff routinely supporting Operations and Protective Services include:

- Human Resources - recruitment, selection, on-boarding, labor relations, performance management, organizational structure, job evaluations, job descriptions, salaries, benefits, payroll, among many other supports.

- Finance - budget preparation, budget reporting, financial analysis, financial transactions support, purchasing, risk management, insurance, contract management, asset management among many other supports.
- Community Services - essential partnership in delivery of Town programs, special events, user group permitting, facilities support, among other supports.
- Development services - working with planning, buildings, by-law, communications and marketing are essential supports and partnerships for effective delivery Divisional and Town services.

There are several other essential support services across the Town that are needed. The list above represents the most common, day-to-day operational support services.

A Final Note About Divisional Staffing

The staffing numbers above, are provided based on the approved staffing. This staffing varies throughout the year due to attrition, particularly among seasonal staff as well as roads operations staffing. This staff turnover is a normal part of business of this nature. Staffing turnover is impacted by many factors outside the Town's control. The economy, availability of full-time opportunities, retirements, advancements, and many other factors - including the nature of the work - all create a relatively high, normal, baseline turnover rate among the front-line labor positions.

A Note About Listed Duties and Responsibilities

These tasks lists represent only the routine, recurring, and daily activities within the Division. There are many other initiatives undertaken by the Town, at the Direction of Council or based on Public requests that are not listed here for the interest of keeping the report easier to understand. These additional tasks often involve significant work including reporting to Council, developing workplans, design work, tendering work, working directly on special projects and much more. This work is either directly undertaken by Division staff or Operations and Protective Services staff play an important role in supporting work in other Divisions and departments. The daily work represents the majority of work but these additional assignments often significantly impact the ability of staff to carry-out everyday functions.

Discussion

Each budget year, the Operations and Protective Services Division recommends to Council that Council allocate resources and approve many Capital Projects. These Capital projects range from ongoing construction work needed to rebuild the municipal road network, to repair and replacement of parks playground equipment, to sidewalk replacement, to various user group amenities requests, just to mention a few.

Divisional Organization

The overall Divisional organization continues to be evaluated working together with Human Resources and the CAO. The organizational structure has been viewed through a lens of what services are delivered primarily for and through the Operations and Protective Services Division and what services are support services across the Town of Huntsville organization, i.e., supporting all Divisions and departments across the Town.

There are three broad categories of services delivered by Operations and Protective Services:

1. Direct services delivery to the community (requiring support from other Town departments, e.g., HR, Finance, Development Services, Community Services, etc.):

- Roads Operations
 - Parks Operations
 - Cemeteries Operations
 - Transit Services
2. Services supporting all Town Divisions and Departments:
- Engineering Services
 - Town Fleet and Operations Facilities
3. Protective Services in partnership with Lake of Bays Township

- Fire Services

The organization of the division reporting lines have been adjusted to reflect the primary services delivery customer(s). This reporting structure has developed efficiencies that focus departmental objectives while bringing the Divisional Team together to build on and leverage team strengths. Improving on the inter-divisional communications has resulted in additional operational improvements.

Position Vacancies

There have been several key vacancies throughout the year. These vacancies, coupled with market-related recruitment challenges, have slowed progress and the ability of the Division to achieve and deliver on several important goals and projects planned in 2023.

Vacancies have occurred for a variety of reasons. Vacancies have ranged from illnesses (short-term and long-term), to regular attrition, i.e., retirement, to resignations, to performance-related. Vacancies have been both temporary and permanent.

Front Line Vacancies

Front-line staff turnover is common in the service industry, particularly in general and skilled labour positions. 35% of Canadian companies have reported increased turnover in 2022 up from 24% in the prior year. This presents several challenges.

The first is maintaining productivity. Regularly having vacant positions mean that the remaining staff need to perform more work, picking up for absences. Next, with many companies across industries having vacancies, the number of available, qualified people will be low - it is difficult to attract and recruit applicants (low number of applications). The final factor, related to the high vacancies, is that companies are increasing their total compensation offered to compete for low numbers of workers in the market.

The bottom line: among Operators and Attendants in the front-lines, high turnover rates are expected and vacancies will be regularly occurring. This will impact productivity of both front-line (lack of work resourcing) and in management (busy with hiring and filling in other positions).

Management Vacancies

It is more important to focus on hiring a team fit than it is simply to hire someone into a role because they are qualified when an organization, like the Town, is building on the strengths of its existing team.

With key roles being vacant (Roads Operations Manager, Yard and Fleet Coordinator, Parks and Cemeteries Manager) throughout the year, the ability to focus on new capital projects was diminished in 2023. Staff needed to turn their attention to delivering core services.

Moving forward, as of October 2023, progress has been made to address concerns related to staffing:

- Most Operator positions have been filled - hiring for remaining positions is currently continuing
- All full-time parks attendants positions are currently filled
- A Roads Operations Manager has started
- There are many applicants for Parks and Cemeteries Manager and it is anticipated that this position will be filled before the end of calendar year 2023
- Within existing staffing, a new Manager of Town Fleet and Operations Facilities, together with administrative support for this position have both been hired

Additional vacancies created by long- and short-term leaves have returned. The management and administrative positions within the Division, except for the open Manager of Parks and Cemeteries position, are all currently staffed.

Contractor Availability and Project Costs

Contractors have had several busy years in a row. These busy years have been complicated by persistent supply chain challenges both locally and globally. This combination of factors has driven costs of contracted services up significantly with the Division experiencing cost increases ranging from 67% to 212%. With capital budgets set in the year prior and public presentation of capital budget amounts on a project by project basis, contractors are typically bidding at or above budgeted amounts for each capital project.

The challenges with both contractor availability and the higher than expected costs of capital projects have required staff to re-evaluate several capital projects in terms of what to do and how to accomplish the Council approved capital projects. This has meant that each project has required significant extra effort, taking additional time. Additionally, once a contractor has been booked, the Town is often waiting for scheduled work. This again causes delays in achieving capital project goals.

The Need for Staff Support

The Division is experiencing a growth in workload that is being driven by development, population growth, and a shift in public expectations. There have also been a number of downloads from the Provincial government, of responsibilities for services that the Province formerly provided. Two examples are the broadband approvals and the environmental assessments of drainage plans for storm water management.

The growth has resulted in the need for increased service delivery and an increased workload, while maintaining existing staffing levels. There have been few, if any, front-line staffing increase. Any administrative staffing changes have occurred within existing, approved budgets and have been accomplished through position realignments.

This growth needs to be addressed by applying LEAN principles and finding efficiencies wherever possible. However, even after efficiencies have been identified and processes changed/implemented, people resources are still required.

The Need for Technological Support

The Town has invested in several powerful software and data analytics suites. The use of this software is an essential part of capital asset lifecycle management. In part, this software assists with developing capital and maintenance plans and scheduling this work.

There are new and emerging technologies whose value of service delivered far exceeds its cost in helping Town staff take a far more proactive approach to asset maintenance and management. Technologies such as AI used to scan roadways for deficiencies and traffic data capture and the analysis of this capture will help staff become far more efficient at addressing deficiencies in roadways. These are but two examples and staff are exploring technologies that will help drive efficiencies in all departments, e.g., upgraded GPS solution for fleet vehicles.

Conclusion

The 2023 calendar year have brought many challenges to the completion of Council approved capital projects within the Town. Staff are bringing forward several requests, through the 2024 Budget process to assist with completion of this approved work.

Staff will be requesting:

- Carry-forward of several capital projects and associated funding/approvals.
- Council investment in technology to assist with driving additional efficiencies within existing staffing.
- Additional key staff roles in front-line positions needed to address increasing workloads and to assist with freeing management resources to oversee capital projects.

Capital

The main Capital Impact is the carry-over capital budget approved in 2023 to the 2024 Capital budget, however funding for 2023 projects coming from reserves would remain in the reserve balances until used in future years.

The total OPS capital projects that were included in the 2023 capital budget which were not completed amount to \$2,746,360 and have been included in the draft 2024 capital budget.

Operational

There are no immediate operating budget impacts related to the Capital Budget carry-overs into 2024.

Respectfully Submitted: Tarmo Uukkivi, Director of Operations and Protective Services

Manager Approval (if required): _____

Director Approval: Tarmo Uukkivi, Director - Operations and Protective Services

CAO Approval: Denise Corry, Chief Administrative Officer

