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TO:	CHAIR AND MEMBERS PLANNING & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE MEETING ON JULY 17, 2017
FROM:	JOHN M. FLEMING MANAGING DIRECTOR, PLANNING AND CITY PLANNER
SUBJECT:	STAFF RESOURCING TO SUPPORT THE NEW TREE PROTECTION BY-LAW

RECOMMENDATION

That, on the recommendation of the Managing Director, Planning and City Planner, Civic Administration **BE AUTHORIZED** to increase the staff compliment in Planning Services by one permanent full-time equivalent, using existing Operational funding, to support the ongoing administration of the City’s new Tree Protection By-law.

PREVIOUS REPORTS PERTINENT TO THIS MATTER
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Planning and Environment Committee – August 22, 2016. A report for the approval of the City’s new Tree Protection By-law.

BACKGROUND

Through the approval process for the Tree Protection By-law in 2016, Planning Services identified a potential staffing issue with the administration and enforcement of the expanded By-law to include all trees over 50cm trunk size. Council provided the following direction:

The Civic Administration BE DIRECTED to monitor the implementation of the Tree Protection By-law and provide a status report and any recommended amendments to the by-law within a period of one year.

Staff are monitoring the implementation of the By-law and have submitted a separate report to amend the by-law to correct a mapping issue. Staff will also be reporting back on our ability to administer the expanded by-law within our broader Urban Forestry mandate. We have been tracking all by-law application/permit statistics and will be compiling and analyzing those for a Q1 2018 report, after consulting with the public and industry stakeholders about any further by-law amendments. At this time, we can report that many other aspects of the Urban Forestry Program are delayed, due to the time commitment to application processing and enforcement of the By-law.

To support the front-end customer service and administration of the new By-law, Planning dedicated existing operational funding to the hiring of a temporary Customer Service Representative (CSR) in Urban Forestry. This position was not identified as a new Full Time Equivalent at the time. The funding had been secured through a previous Assessment Growth business case to support a growing Urban Forestry program.

After monitoring the implementation of the by-law since September 2016, it is clear that this temporary CSR position needs to be made permanent. This position is key to the Urban Forestry Program and the administration of the new by-law. This position provides an improved customer service experience for those seeking assistance regarding the by-law. It is a first point of contact that provides consistent information and reduces wait times in application processing. This position also helps utilize existing resources in a more effective manner, as routine and common questions can be answered without being forwarded to the Urban Forestry Technologists (Municipal By-Law Enforcement Officers). This is also the only CSR at the satellite office of Planning Services that houses Urban Forestry and the rest of the Environmental & Parks Planning staff (compliment of 13).

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The CSR carries out the following functions critical to the administration of the by-law:

Customer Service (50%)

- Receives the public who come into the office to make permit applications or meet staff
- Answers the Urban Forestry phone line for calls and monitors the email account associated with the by-law
- Fields questions about the by-law, answering them where possible, or directing them to appropriate staff
- Assists and educates customers with determining if the by-law applies to their property through looking up addresses in City Maps to determine if the address is in a tree protection area (TPA), or describing a “distinctive tree”

Administrative (50%)

- Assists staff with file opening, creation, and processing permits
- Collects, sorts and scans file documents to ensure complete and accurate file histories
- Enters permit data for tracking of permit progress and status
- Receives and processes payments under the new by-law
- Tracks payments and coordinates with staff for returns and/or deposits
- Tracks extended hours, call volumes, inquiry and permit numbers
- Provides coverage and overflow from other Planning Divisions
- Assists other staff in the Division

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Through previous assessment growth funding received in 2013, Urban Forestry in Planning Services currently has sufficient funding in the operating budget related to Urban Forestry management to accommodate this position on a permanent basis.

CONCLUSION

To support the Urban Forestry Program and the administration of the City’s new Tree Protection By-law, the temporary Customer Service Representative position is recommended to be converted from a temporary to a permanent position. This permanent position is especially key to the on-going customer service aspects of the new by-law. Funding for the position is available within the existing Urban Forestry operating budget.

PREPARED and SUBMITTED BY:
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