



# REPORT

To: Chair and Directors

Report Number: CS-BRD-055

From: David Sturgeon, Protective Services Manager

Date: February 17, 2021

**Subject: Function 305 911 Emergency Telephone System 2021 Budget**

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## **RECOMMENDATION #1: [Corporate Weighted]**

That the Regional Board approve the supplementary request to rebuild the first responder communications system throughout the Peace River Regional District to bring it to the National Fire Protection Association 1221 standard for the installation, maintenance, and use of emergency services communication system.

## **RECOMMENDATION #2: [Corporate Weighted]**

That the Regional Board include the draft 2021 budget for Function 305 - 911 Emergency Telephone System in the 2021 Financial Plan.

## **BACKGROUND/RATIONALE:**

The 911 Emergency Telephone System Budget provides for the 911 emergency call center/dispatch service for the entire Peace River Regional District and Fire Department Dispatch and communication services for the Fire Departments in the Regional District.

Service is provided through agreement between the Peace River Regional District and;

- Telus Communications (BC) Inc. Agreement and NorthWest Tel to provide Provincial 9-1-1 Service, effective 2001.
- E-Comm Emergency Communications for BC Inc. Call Answer Centre Service Contract, May 17, 2017, until December 31, 2021 to be extended from January 1, 2022, until January 1, 2024 per Board approval.
- North Island 9-1-1 Corporation. 9-1-1 Call Answer Centre Service Agreement, May 19, 2017, until May 8, 2022.

Requisition as per bylaw No. 1263, 1999 – 911 Emergency Telephone Extended Service Establishment is based on improvements only and is a regional function and there is no maximum tax rate.

## **Overall Budget**

The overall proposed budget for 2021 is \$1,255,132, an increase of \$560,195 or 80.61% from 2020. Increases to this budget are due to the following factors:

- The Radio and Repeater Master Plan for \$60,000, which is scheduled for the spring of 2021. This master plan will determine what type of system needs to be implemented and the viability of the current equipment and tower sites. The fire chiefs, who are the end users of the system, will be consulted in this process.

- The repairs and maintenance associated with running the current 911 telephone infrastructure and the Emergency Radio Dispatch Equipment are also contributors to the increase of this budget.
- The Interconnect service went from \$137,800 to \$140,556; due to the costs associated with Northwestel and Telus's 911 interface.
- The E-Comm 911 answering and dispatch agreement and the North Island 911 fire dispatch agreement have increased from \$268,512 to \$275,276 due to predetermined contracts for service.

The radio dispatch system uses analog repeaters, interconnects, and handheld/mobile very high frequency (VHF) radios to dispatch fire departments to emergencies and serve as a primary communications connection between the incident and the dispatch center. With large areas of the Peace Region not having reliable cellular service, the VHF radio system is often the only emergency communications that fire departments have in an injury or accident. PRRD staff and independent industry experts have identified that while the current radio dispatch system is working, it needs upgrades and replacement. For example, Hudson's Hope's radio tower collapsed recently, leaving staff to scramble for alternative options with little success. Further, although a new tower was budgeted in 2020 for replacement, the site cannot support additional towers and thus PRRD staff are looking for other viable options.

#### **Supplemental Item - Repeater Upgrades**

The operating budget includes the funds to contract a communications engineer to complete a full assessment of the current equipment and develop a Radio Repeater Master Plan to be implemented over the next three years, which will address the issues facing the existing radio network.

One of the critical components of the Master Plan is to ensure that as radio equipment is replaced, it will be both compatible with the current VHF analog system as well as the P25 Digital Radio Network that has become the industry standard for its versatility, security, and safety features in the emergency services, meeting or exceeding the requirements of NFPA 1221.

#### **ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS:**

1. That the Regional Board provide further direction.

#### **STRATEGIC PLAN RELEVANCE:**

- ☒ Not Applicable to Strategic Plan.

#### **FINANCIAL CONSIDERATION(S):**

Draft 2021 Budget

Highlights of funding source increases and decreases in the draft 2021 Emergency Telephone System budget include:

- Requisition – increase of \$274,339
- Surplus – decrease of \$14,144
- Capital requisition – increase of \$191,736
- Transfer from Capital Reserve – increase of \$300,000

Net sum of the above increase in overall revenue is \$560,195.

- Wages & Benefits – Increase of \$820
- Insurance – decrease of \$819
- Studies, Plans and Assessments – increase of \$45,000
- Allocations – decrease of \$10,828
- 911 Emergency Telephone system – increase of \$184
- Dispatch – increase of \$6,764
- Capital – increase of \$491,736

Net sum of the above increase in overall expense is \$560,195.

**COMMUNICATIONS CONSIDERATION(S):**

None.

**OTHER CONSIDERATION(S):**

None.

**Attachments:**

1. Function 305 911 Emergency Telephone System Draft 2021 Budget and Tax Rate.
2. F305 – Supplemental – Repeater Upgrades.