

Supports Item No. 3
CS&B Committee Agenda
December 11, 2007



CITY OF VANCOUVER

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Report Date: November 16, 2007
Author: W. Johnston
Phone No.: 604.873.7515
RTS No.: 07042
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Meeting Date: December 3, 2007

TO: Standing Committee on City Services and Budgets

FROM: Chief Building Official

SUBJECT: Office of the Chief Building Official Resource Proposal - Green Building Engineer Position

RECOMMENDATION

THAT Council receive this report for INFORMATION and defer the following Recommendation to the 2008 Interim Operating Budget:

THAT Council approve the establishment of one regular full time Engineer position in the Office of the Chief Building Official, subject to review and classification by the General Manger of Human Resources, at an estimated cost of \$63,000 for 2008 and \$95,500 for 2009 and beyond (including benefits, at April 2006 rates), partially offset by an ongoing \$75,000 reduction from the Structural Review program. Approval and funding to be deferred to the 2008 Operating budget.

GENERAL MANAGER'S COMMENTS

The General Manager of Community Services recommends approval of the above recommendation.

CITY MANAGER'S COMMENTS

The City Manager recommends approval of the above recommendation.

COUNCIL POLICY

Council must approve all changes in permanent staffing levels.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to provide information to Council with respect to a resource proposal which will allow the Office of the Chief Building Official to continue with its efforts to further advance the City's Green Building Strategy through its building policy and regulatory work. This position is essential to the development of green building requirements in the Building By-law.

BACKGROUND

The Office of the Chief Building Official undertakes a wide range of policy, engineering research, and by-law development work aimed at regulations for the design and construction of buildings in the City of Vancouver. Through this work, the City has been a leader in developing a number of building regulations, many of which have eventually been adopted both nationally and provincially. Notable examples of this leadership are: mandatory sprinkler systems, energy efficiency, rain screen cladding, enhanced accessibility, upgrading of existing buildings, and now green building type requirements.

The recommendation contained in this report reflects Community Services Directors' judgement of the minimum required resource in the Office of the Chief Building Official to further the development of the City's Green Building Strategy. This proposed position is essential to the implementation and continued development of the City's Green Building Strategy.

In late 2005, Council approved a temporary full time engineer position for a period of one year to carry out the work required to further the advancement of the City's Green Building Strategy. The main purpose of this work is to reduce the environmental impacts that buildings have on the local environment as well as global climate change. Since the funding for this position expired earlier in the year, a resource from Development Services has been borrowed to assist the Chief Building Official with this work. Since this strategy has an impact on the processing of building permit applications, the resource must be returned to Development Services, and thus it is proposed that a regular full time engineer position be created in the Office of the Chief Building Official.

DISCUSSION

This proposed engineer position is required to further champion the City's Green Building Strategy, provide technical expertise, and develop Building By-law requirements to support the Green Building Strategy as well as coordinate the implementation of these requirements throughout the Community Services Group (CSG). Since there is a continuing need for this resource and this need is not expected to end for the foreseeable future, the Chief Building Official recommends that the proposed position be created so that Staff can meet Council's mandate with respect to the City's Green Building Strategy.

This new position will have a direct impact on the Chief Building Official's ability to support the City's Green Building Strategy. Without this position it is difficult for the City to act as a leader in the area of green buildings, stay on the leading edge of green building technology, and thus have an impact on climate change in our region.

It is proposed that the funding for this position be recovered through the elimination of the budget for the City's Structural Review Program. The Structural Review Program is used by the City to allow random independent third party audits of structural design drawings prepared by Professional Engineers. These drawings are submitted as part of building permit applications. Through this program, independent structural engineers are paid by the City to carry out random third party structural reviews of building permit applications to ensure compliance with the Building By-law.

Staff recognize that the elimination of this program may have an impact on the quality of structural designs for buildings in the city. However, with the adoption of the new Building By-law (By-law No. 9419) on May 1, 2007, higher qualifications for structural engineers are now required. As a result all structural engineers responsible for the design of major buildings must have a "Structural Engineer" designation from the Association of Professional Engineers and Geo-Scientists of British Columbia (APEGBC). This designation requires engineers practicing structural engineering to undergo more rigorous training and testing by APEGBC. With higher qualifications for structural engineers, the need to carry out random audits of structural designs is reduced. It should also be noted that APEGBC introduced higher qualifications for structural engineers in January 2007 and the City reinforced this requirement through our Building By-law shortly thereafter.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The cost of the proposed regular full time engineer position is \$95,500 (including benefits at April 2006 pay rates). If approved by Council, it is estimated that the position will be filled in May 2008, so the 2008 funding required is for 8 months (\$63,000). It is proposed that the bulk of the funding for this position be recovered through an annual reduction of \$75,000 in the budget allocation to the Office of the Chief Building Official for the Structural Review Program, beginning in 2008.

PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

This report recommends that a temporary full time position be converted to a regular full time position.

CONCLUSION

The new regular full time engineer position proposed in this report is aimed at ensuring the City act as a leader through our development of green building regulations while at the same time ensures our commitment to further development of the City's Green Building Strategy.

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