

Supports Item No. 6
CS&B Committee Agenda
December 11, 2007



CITY OF VANCOUVER

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Date: November 15, 2007
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Meeting Date: December 11, 2007

TO: Standing Committee on City Services and Budgets

FROM: General Manager of Engineering Services

SUBJECT: Enhanced Enforcement of Street Usage at Construction Sites Through
Additional Staffing and Technological Improvements

RECOMMENDATION

- A. THAT Council approve:
- i. the creation of two (2) new regular full-time Engineering Technician I positions and one (1) Permit Clerk position at an estimated annual cost \$166,500 (2008) including benefits, subject to the review and classification by the General Manger of Human Resources;
 - ii. a one time office and equipment cost of \$5,000; and
 - iii. the allocation of \$41,000 from the Truck and Equipment Plant Account to add two (2) Smart Fortwo vehicles to the Engineering Services vehicle fleet to be repaid through annual charges of \$11,900.

Total funding of \$183,400 to be fully offset by the revenue generated from enhanced enforcement of Street Occupancy permits with no increase in fees.

- B. THAT Council approve:
- i. a one time cost of \$60,000 to provide 6 handheld wireless tablets and associated technological upgrades for the Building Site Inspectors and an annual operating cost of \$8,500; and

- ii. an estimated annual cost of \$11,200 to replace the 7 handheld wireless tablets in a 5-year replacement cycle commencing 2011.

Funding to be fully offset by the revenue generated from enhanced enforcement of Street Occupancy permits with no increase in fees.

- C. THAT Staff report back in 2008 with By-Law changes to improve the Street Occupancy Permit process and clarify authorities.

GENERAL MANAGER'S COMMENTS

The General Manager recommends approval of recommendation A, B and C. This new initiative is fully offset by revenue. Approval of the recommendations will allow Engineering to begin filling the positions and acquiring equipment early in 2008 and start the enhanced enforcement as soon as possible.

COUNCIL POLICY

Council approves all increases in service levels, including additional regular full-time staff positions and vehicle and equipment to the fleet. In addition, Council approves expenditures from Reserves including the Truck and Equipment Plant Account.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to obtain Council approval for the creation of 3 new staffing positions in Engineering Services in order to improve enforcement of Street Usage at construction sites. Should Council approve the new staffing positions, the cost of these positions will be covered by new revenues through enhanced enforcement of Street Occupancy Permits without an increase in permit fees. In addition to the new staff positions, this report requests approval for wireless tablets that will enable our inspectors to improve their in-field efficiency, reduce paper waste, improve data management and free up office space.

BACKGROUND

All construction of new buildings and most major renovations require some use of City Street to provide access to the private property and sometimes to provide additional area for construction staging and materials management. This activity is monitored to a certain degree by 5 Building Site Inspectors in Engineering. However, with increased building activity on more challenging building sites, with less experienced contractors and more demand for street space by pedestrians, bikes and transit, our traditional approach to building site inspection is not producing adequate compliance.

The Building Site Inspectors currently have the following general responsibilities:

- ensure that safe and accessible passage for both pedestrian and vehicular traffic is provided for the general public around the building site.
- enforce Street Use Permits that provide for the temporary use of City Streets;

- provide inspection of the ongoing use of City property throughout construction;
- review and document the condition of City property prior to commencement of work on an adjacent building site;
- direct the property owner/developer on restoration of any damage incurred due to construction activities or on any improvements required to City property as per conditions of the Development Permit approvals; and
- review the state of cleanliness of City property around the construction site.

All of these duties serve to protect the City's infrastructure and services as well as protect the public from unnecessary inconvenience due to one property owner's use of public City Streets. In addition to the field work required, the inspectors support their work with time in the office to digitally reproduce and file their reports.

While Engineering has the authority to issue Street Use Permits, Division C Section 1A.10 of the Vancouver Building By-Law (9419) grants authority to the Chief Building Official to issue Street Occupancy Permits. The difference between the permits is that Street Use permits are for the temporary use of a street while the Occupancy permit is for on-going occupation of the City Street for construction purposes, such as refuse bins or hoarding. Currently, Engineering staff review and provide preliminary approval for the Street Occupancy permits but do not actually take payment or provide the client with a permit. This overlap creates inefficiencies.

DISCUSSION

With the increasing level of construction activity over the last few years, including everything from single family homes to major towers in the downtown core, our inspectors have been challenged to provide the level of service that is requested by the development community and the public. Our traditional enforcement does not adequately deal with the increasing competition for street space.

There are a number of improvements that we are seeking in this report that will enable Engineering Services to provide an improved level of service to benefit both the development community and the general public. The first of these improvements involves adding staff to the Engineering Building Site Inspectors' team. Adding Inspectors will allow us to make several improvements, namely;

1. Increased Inspection and Response

Increasing the number of Building Site Inspectors from 5 to 7 will allow better coverage and increased inspection and response for construction sites that will benefit the development community and the general public.

2. Increased Scope of Inspection Authority

Currently Division C Section 1A.10 of the Vancouver Building By-Law (VBBL) (By-Law 9419) grants authority to the Chief Building Official (CBO) to issue permits for the temporary occupation of City Street for construction purposes. The CBO can delegate his authority, as allowed within the VBBL, to, in addition to his own inspection staff, the City Engineer and his delegates. As Engineering inspectors are already at all

construction sites inspecting the use of City Street, it is a logical process improvement to have them also look at the temporary occupancy of Street for construction purposes. Improved inspection in this area will allow the City to better enforce bylaws regarding street use including overall safety, inappropriate use of hoarding for 3rd party advertising, use of catch basins, and street cleanliness.

3. Improved Permitting Process

With the delegation of authority to inspect the temporary occupancy of City Street, it also makes sense to have the Engineering Client Service Centre issue the VBBL required Street Occupancy Permits. This will effectively create a one stop shopping experience for all contractors looking for information and various permit approvals for use of City Street. This will not only improve service levels, but also compliance. Staff anticipate recovery of an additional \$220,000 per year that is currently not recovered due to construction sites not obtaining the proper permits for temporary occupancy of City Street for construction purposes. The additional Permit Clerk staff position sought as part of Recommendation A will provide the required office support in order to issue Street Occupancy Permits.

In addition to the increases to staff, this report also seeks authority to provide the Building Site Inspectors with wireless tablets in order to improve their efficiency and the time spent in the field. Over the past year one of our building site inspectors has been developing a paperless system for documenting construction inspection using a handheld wireless tablet. This system has proven to be a huge improvement with benefits including increased field time, reduced requirement to travel to and from City hall for filing purposes and information collection, reduced paper waste and improved data storage. We hope to transfer all of the building site inspectors to this new wireless tablet system to compound the benefits over the entire staffing group. This wireless tablet initiative has been primarily staff created and driven and the involved staff should be commended for their commitment to improving the process and their incredible efforts to date.

Both of these initiatives will be fully funded by the anticipated additional revenue resulting from better enforcement and a streamlined permit application process. These improvements will result in an increased level of service without an increase to the long term operating budget of the City or an increase to permit fees.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The budget for the two (2) Engineering Technician I (GR 021) positions and the one (1) permit clerk (GR 015) position is estimated at:

Annual costs -

Salary including fringe benefits (2008)*	\$ 166,500
Annual charges for two (2) vehicles	<u>\$ 11,900</u>
Total	\$ 178,400

One time costs -

Two (2) vehicles	\$ 41,000**
One (1) workstation	\$ 5,000
Total	\$ 46,000

*These positions are subject to the review and classification by the General Manager of Human Resource Services.

**This cost will be funded from the Truck and Equipment Plant Account.

At present, there is only one handheld wireless tablet being used by one of the Building Site Inspectors. To provide all Building Site Inspectors with wireless tablets will require a one-time cost of \$60,000 (\$10,000 per tablet) and an annual operating cost of \$8,500. These wireless tablets have an estimated useful life of approximately 5 years. Hence, approximately \$11,200 will be required annually starting 2011 to replace the tablets in a staggered approach.

It is anticipated that additional permit revenue of approximately \$220,000 will be realized due to improved compliance with required Street Occupancy Permits. It is expected this improved level of service and inspection will result in an ongoing self funding initiative with the potential for net revenue. The one time costs in 2008 will be fully offset by salary savings for the duration of time it will take to fill the new positions.

PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

This report recommends the creation of three (3) new regular full time positions to support an increased level of service.

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Upon approval of these recommendations, staffing and the wireless tablets would be added over the course of 2008 to allow proper time for training, integration and adjustment to the new process. Changes will also need to be made to the Electronic permitting system AMANDA to allow engineering staff to issue the Street Occupancy Permits. Finally staff intend to investigate both the VBBL and the Street and Traffic By-Law and report back with and recommended changes to support the improvements and clarify the authorities.

CONCLUSION

Our inspectors provide an invaluable service to the development community as well as to the general public who without this service may experience unnecessary inconvenience, access issues and safety concerns on City Streets adjacent to construction sites. Approval of these recommendations will facilitate an improved level of enforcement of street use at construction sites. The improvements will also increase service for developers and contractors while ensuring that the appropriate permits are obtained, as currently required by the Vancouver Building By-Law, and that the use of City Street is allowed without undue impact on the general public.

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APPENDIX A

Section 1A.10 Temporary Occupancy of a Street for Construction Purposes

1A.10.1. General Requirements

1A.10.1.1. Permit Required

1) A person wanting to temporarily occupy a street, or part thereof, or occupy the air space above a street or part thereof, in connection with, or incidental to the construction or maintenance of any building, shall make application for a permit for temporary occupancy to the Chief Building Official.

1A.10.1.2. Liability Disclaimer

1) An application for the temporary occupancy of a street for the purpose described in Article 1A.10.1.1. shall contain, in a form satisfactory to the Director of Legal Services, an undertaking of the owner to save harmless the City against all claims, liabilities, judgements, costs and expenses in consequence of, or in any way incidental to the granting of such occupancy.

1A.10.1.3. No Occupancy Without Permit

1) No person shall occupy any street or part thereof for the construction, or maintenance of any building without a permit issued by the Chief Building Official.

2) The fees payable for the issuance of a street occupancy permit shall be as set out in the Fee Schedule.

1A.10.1.4. Occupancy Restriction

1) The Chief Building Official shall not authorize the occupancy of any part of a street, or the air space above a street, which is more than 6 m from a property line.

1A.10.2. Overhead Construction

1A.10.2.1. Permit Required

1) The occupancy of the air space above a street by a swing scaffold or construction hoisting device shall be subject to the requirements of Subsection 1A.10.1.

1A.10.2.2. Prevention of Public Entry

1) The street under such swing scaffold or construction hoisting device shall be fenced, roped off or otherwise protected against public entry in a manner approved by the Chief Building Official.

1A.10.3. Public Safety

1A.10.3.1. Public Protection Required

1) No person shall construct, alter or repair any building unless a fence or covered way as required in Part 8 of Division B for the safety of the public has been first erected to the satisfaction of the Chief Building Official.

2) The Chief Building Official may modify the requirements of Sentence (1) when satisfied that the location of the construction is sufficiently protected or remote from public areas.

1A.10.3.2. Barricade Permit Required

1) If the barricades described in Sentence 1A.10.3.1.(1) are to occupy part of the street, the requirements for a permit in Subsection 1A.10.1. shall apply.

APPENDIX B

Applicable excerpt from Fee Schedule...

2007 FEE SCHEDULE

Building Bylaw - #8057

PART A - BUILDING

1	The fees hereinafter specified shall be paid to the City with respect to and upon the application for the issue of a PERMIT as follows:	Current Fees
	(c) For a PERMIT for temporary OCCUPANCY of a part of a STREET, or of the AIR SPACE immediately ABOVE a part of a STREET, in accordance with Section 1A.10 of this By-law, the fee shall be for each 10 m ² or part thereof, of STREET or of AIR SPACE immediately above such STREET to be occupied Subject to a minimum fee of.....	\$2.05 \$68.10

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