



## REPORT

Report Date: November 5, 2019  
Contact: Rick Cheung  
Contact No.: 604.873.7028  
RTS No.: 13433  
VanRIMS No.: 08-2000-20  
Meeting Date: November 26, 2019  
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TO: Vancouver City Council  
FROM: Fire Chief, General Manager of Vancouver Fire Rescue Services  
SUBJECT: Fire Permits and Services Fees and Fire Related Ticket Offences

### **RECOMMENDATION**

- A. THAT Council approve, in principle, increases to certain fees in Schedule D of the 2019 Fire By-law, to reflect the current costs of providing various permits and services;

FURTHER THAT the Director of Legal Services be instructed to prepare the necessary amending by-law, generally in accordance with Appendix A, to take effect on March 1, 2020.

- B. THAT Council approve, in principle, the addition of two new offences to the Ticket Offences By-law related to interference with firefighting equipment;

FURTHER THAT the Director of Legal Services be instructed to prepare the necessary amending by-law, generally in accordance with Appendix B, to take effect on March 1, 2020.

### **REPORT SUMMARY**

A recent review conducted by staff on the costs of providing fire permits and services to the public has shown that they are administered at below cost recovery once all direct and indirect costs are considered. Staff are proposing increases for a number of Fire permit and services fees in order to align revenues as close as possible to cost.

The Ticket Offences By-law is proposed to be amended by adding two offences of the Fire By-law to the Ticket Offences By-law to provide a more effective deterrent against unsafe and costly interference of firefighting equipment during firefighting operations.

### ***COUNCIL AUTHORITY/PREVIOUS DECISIONS***

Under Section 311 of the *Vancouver Charter*, Council may make By-laws to maintain acceptable standards for fire safety in buildings and facilities within the city and within the scope of the provincial Fire Services Act.

Section 306 (w) of the *Vancouver Charter* provides that Council may make by-laws adopting, by reference, any codes relating to fire safety.

Section 161A (1)(a) of the *Vancouver Charter* provides that Council may fix a fee for a permit.

Section 199 of the *Vancouver Charter* provides that Council, in addition to the powers specifically allotted to it, shall have power to do all such things as are incidental or conducive to the exercise of the allotted powers.

In July 2019 Council enacted a new Fire By-law to incorporate the 2018 British Columbia Fire Code with a schedule of changes to deal specifically with issues that are unique to Vancouver.

### ***CITY MANAGER'S/GENERAL MANAGER'S COMMENTS***

The City Manager recommends approval of the foregoing.

### ***REPORT***

#### ***Background/Context***

In 2019, VFRS is forecasting (department) permit fee revenues of approximately \$577K. This year, City staff undertook a review of fire permit fees charged for various VFRS services with an aim to propose an adjustment to fees to reflect full cost recovery. It is Council policy that fees and charges be established on the basis of the cost of providing the associated services.

During 2014, staff completed a benchmark study against a number of municipalities on similar services in which fees were charged. This study showed that some VFRS permit and service fees were set at the lower range when compared with other municipalities (Burnaby, Richmond, Surrey, Coquitlam, Calgary, and Edmonton). As part of this benchmark study, staff proposed increases (effective 2015) to a small number of fees to align them closer to other municipalities and not on the basis of cost. Most of the fees remain unchanged since 2000 or 2004. For the purpose of comparison only, a selection of fees currently charged by other municipalities is shown in Appendix C.

The 2019 Fire By-law was enacted by Council without any general increase in fees as this fee review was being conducted.

## ***Strategic Analysis***

### Fire Permits and Services Fees

The objectives of the fee and revenue review are to:

- Understand costs associated with each permit issued or service provided by the City,
- Consolidate or simplify fees where appropriate,
- Evaluate revenues in relation to costs to establish permit/service fee rates that reflect full cost recovery.
- Introduce new and adjust existing fees to reflect full cost recovery or to achieve various policy objectives, and
- Use analysis and information to inform other related business initiatives

For each of the permit issued or service provided, staff reviewed both direct (e.g. staff resources) and indirect (e.g. corporate support) costs in relation to the fees currently being charged by VFRS. This review found that VFRS is under-recovering on a number of Fire permit and service fees that should be set on a cost recovery basis.

Fire permits and services are estimated to be under-recovered by approximately \$75,000 annually. The proposed fee increase (effective March 1, 2020) reflects full cost recovery for the permits issued and services provided. Refer to Appendix D for a table showing the amount of the increases for the various permits and services provided by VFRS. The proposed increases include 2020 inflation adjustments.

For strategic reasons, some fees are proposed to remain unchanged. For example, re-inspection fees will remain at \$200. This fee is triggered when violation of the Fire By-law is observed, and a re-inspection is required to verify the violation was resolved. This fee is used as a tool for the fire department, and is considered as a “soft approach”, to gain compliance from a property owner who has unresolved violations. When compliance from an owner is found to be difficult to obtain, the fire department will then use a harder approach such as issuing municipal tickets, which carry a range of fines between \$500 and \$750 per day, or commencing long form prosecution.

### Amendment to the Ticket Offences By-law

The Ticket Offences By-law includes several infractions of the Fire By-law on which a municipal ticket information (MTI) can be served by the Fire Chief or designate, or a Police Officer, on a person violating the Fire By-law. At recent incidences at structure fires, citizens were seen driving their vehicles over fire hose and interfering with the water supply for firefighting while firefighters were actively engaged in firefighting, causing damage to fire hose and couplings. Sudden interruption of the water supply while firefighting can cause serious injury to the firefighters as their water spray protection against the heat from the flames they are fighting is also interrupted.

Staff propose to add the following two offences to the Ticket Offences By-law where the Fire Chief or the Police can issue municipal ticket information (MTI) to violators of the Fire By-law. The immediacy of receiving an MTI which carry a fine of \$750 for each occurrence would serve as a deterrent to inappropriate and dangerous behaviour of bystanders at a structure fire.

Fire Chief	Interfere with fire truck or equipment	1.2.1.11.(1) Division C	\$750.00
Police Officer	Park vehicle on fire hose	1.2.1.11.(2) Division C	\$750.00

**Implications/Related Issues/Risk**

**Financial**

Based on current application volume projections, the proposed fee increases are projected to generate \$75,000 of additional revenue on an annual basis. This incremental revenue represents an increase of 13% (including 2% inflation adjustment) on the aggregate fees presently collected by VFRS. The additional fee revenue generated will offset the direct and indirect permitting and service costs incurred by the City.

**Legal**

Legal Services concurs with this report.

**CONCLUSION**

A fee review was conducted by staff in relation to permitting and services performed by VFRS. It was concluded that fees currently charged for certain permits and services were not adequate to provide for full cost recovery. Staff propose an increase in certain fees in Schedule D of the 2019 Fire By-law, to reflect full cost recovery.

Further, staff propose adding two offences to the Ticket Offences By-law related to interference with firefighting equipment in order to facilitate firefighting and to protect firefighters' safety.

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**DRAFT By-law to amend Fire By-law No. 12472  
regarding 2020 fee increases**

*Note: A By-law will be prepared generally in accordance with the provisions listed below, subject to change and refinement prior to posting.*

1. This By-law amends the indicated provisions of Fire By-law No. 12472.
2. Council strikes Schedule D (Fee Schedule) attached to the Fire By-law, and substitutes for it the Schedule D (Fee Schedule) attached to this By-law.

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**SCHEDULE D**  
**FEE SCHEDULE**

**PERMIT FEES**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Fee</b>	<b>GST applicable</b>
1	Open-air burning (each occurrence)	240.00	-
2	Open-air burning by registered non-profit group (each occurrence)	24.00	-
3	Selling fireworks (wholesale) - annual permit	240.00	-
4	Fireworks vendor - annual permit	500.00	-
5	Firing of display fireworks or explosives (each event)	300.00	-
6	Firing of display fireworks by registered non-profit group (each event)	24.00	-
7	Firing of explosives for blasting operations (per day per project)	240.00	-
8	Installation, removal or abandonment of storage tank (other than single family dwelling)	300.00	-
9	Removal or abandonment of storage tank (single family dwelling)	300.00	-
10	Installation of fuel dispensing station	300.00	-
11	All other permits	300.00	-
12	Extension of permit (each extension)	120.00	-

**INSPECTION AND RECORD FEES**

Item	Activity	Fee	GST applicable
13	Record search of property (reporting letter), for each civic address on a property (maximum charge 780.00)	130.00	-
14	Record search regarding incident responded to by Fire Department (for each hour or part thereof)	130.00	-
15	Each inspection additional to the first inspection for a permit application	120.00	YES
16	Special event plan check or site inspection (for each hour or part thereof)	150.00	YES
17	Re-inspection (for each hour or part thereof)	200.00 first hour or part thereof, plus 100.00 per hour for each subsequent hour or part thereof	YES
18	For installation, modification, or relocation of a lock box	130.00	-
19	Special inspection or plan check (per site) to determine compliance with By-law, in respect of which no specific fee is otherwise prescribed in this Schedule (for each hour or part thereof)	150.00	YES

**SERVICE FEES**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Fee</b>	<b>GST applicable</b>
20	Fire watch at special event or filming (for each hour or part thereof, 4 hour minimum)	150.00	YES
21	Occupancy load certificate (for occupancy by 150 persons or less)	360.00	-
22	Occupancy load certificate (for occupancy by more than 150 persons)	600.00	-
23	Review of fire safety plan for high building (for each hour or part thereof, 3 hour minimum)	120.00	YES
24	Review of fire safety plan for all buildings other than high buildings (for each hour or part thereof, 2 hour minimum)	120.00	YES
25	Review of construction fire safety plan	130.00	YES
26	Responding to the third and each subsequent false alarm for the same address in a calendar year (for each occurrence)	216.00	YES

**DRAFT By-law to amend the  
Ticket Offences By-law No. 9360  
Regarding offences pursuant to the Fire By-law**

*Note: A By-law will be prepared generally in accordance with the provisions listed below, subject to change and refinement prior to posting.*

1. This By-law amends the indicated provisions of Ticket Offences By-law No. 9360.
2. Council strikes out Table 8.2 and substitutes the following Table 8.2:

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Column 1	Column 2	Column 3	Column 4
Fire Chief	Discard smoking or burning materials	2.4.2.3.(1) Division B	\$500.00
Police Officer	Light or maintain outdoor fire without permit	2.4.5.1.(1) Division B	\$500.00
	Smoking or open flame in tent/air-supported structure	2.9.3.3.(1) Division B	\$500.00
	Sell fireworks without a permit	5.7.1.1.(1) Division B	\$500.00
	Sell firecrackers, bottle rockets or roman candles	5.7.1.3.(2) Division B	\$500.00
	Sell fireworks to a person under 19 years of age	5.7.1.3.(3) Division B	\$500.00
	Point fireworks at any person/animal/building/thing	5.7.1.3.(4) Division B	\$500.00
	Possess or discharge fireworks by a person under 19 years of age	5.7.1.3.(5) Division B	\$500.00
	Sell fireworks to any person not holding a valid consumer fireworks permit	5.7.1.5.(1) Division B	\$500.00
	Possess fireworks without a consumer fireworks permit	5.7.1.5.(4) Division B	\$500.00
	Fail to comply with the conditions on the consumer fireworks permit	5.7.1.5.(5) Division B	\$500.00
	Fail to comply with Fire Chief order	1.2.1.1.(1) Division C	\$500.00
Interfere with fire truck or equipment	1.2.1.11.(1) Division C	\$750.00	

Column 1	Column 2	Column 3	Column 4
	Park vehicle on fire hose	1.2.1.11.(2) Division C	\$750.00
	Activation of fire alarm system when no fire	1.2.1.11.(3) Division C	\$500.00
	False report of fire	1.2.1.11.(4) Division C	\$500.00

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TABLE 2 COMPARISON OF PROPOSED FEES TO OTHER CITIES

Permits

item	ACTIVITY	Proposed Fee Vancouver	Burnaby	Richmond	Surrey	Coquitlam	Calgary	Edmonton
1	Open-Air Burning,	240.00	100.00	22.00 452.00 per truck w/o permit	24.00 for farms	25.00	55.00 (Annual 500.00)	133.00
4	Fireworks vendor - annual Permit	500.00	250.00	1000.00				97.00
5	Firing of Display Fireworks or Explosives (Each Event)	300.00	100.00	125.00	100.00	100.00	122.00 to 525.00	178.00
8	Installation, Removal or Abandonment of Storage Tank	300.00	50.00	80.00	29.00	0.00	212.00	317.00

Services

Item	ACTIVITY	Proposed Fee Vancouver	Burnaby	Richmond	Surrey	Coquitlam	Calgary	Edmonton
13	Record Search of property (reporting letter), for each civic address on a property. (Maximum charge 720.00)	130.00	105.60 sfd 158.35 per legal address	72.75	122.00	100.00	100.00	140.70 per address, max 4 addresses
16	Special event plan check or inspection or plan check (for each hour or part thereof)	150.00		1000.00 c/w fire watch	-	550.00 c/w fire watch	333.00	133.00

Item	ACTIVITY	Proposed Fee Vancouver	Burnaby	Richmond	Surrey	Coquitlam	Calgary	Edmonton
17	Re-inspection (For each hour or part thereof).	200.00 first hour plus 100.00 after	100.00	86.00	122.00	-	-	-
18	For installation, modification, or relocation of a Lock Box	130.00	-	-	-	25.00	-	-
19	Special Inspection or Plan Check (per site) to determine compliance with By-law, in respect of which no specific fee is otherwise prescribed in this schedule. (For each hour or part thereof)	150.00	100.00	218.00 to 756.00 per floor	107.00 to 284.00	124.00 fire investigation over 4 h	-	-
20	Fire Watch at special event or filming (For each hour or part thereof)	150.00	-	-	-	550.00 c/w truck	-	-
21	Occupancy load certificate (for occupancy by 150 persons or less)	360.00	-	-	365.00	89.00	141.00	135.00
22	Occupancy load certificate (for occupancy by more than 150 persons)	600.00	-	-	609.00	89.00	141.00	135.00
23	Review of fire safety plan for high building -(for each hour or part thereof, 3 hour minimum)	120.00	300.00	243.00 flat	186.00	300.00	0.00	386.00
24	Review of fire safety plan for all buildings other than high buildings (for each hour or part thereof, 2 hour minimum)	120.00	150.00	183.00 flat	186.00	150.00	0.00	386.00
25	Review of construction fire safety plan	130.00	-	-	200.00 to 400.00	-	-	386.00

Item	ACTIVITY	Proposed Fee Vancouver	Burnaby	Richmond	Surrey	Coquitlam	Calgary	Edmonton
26	Responding to the third and each subsequent false alarm for the same address in a calendar year (for each occurrence)	216.00	100.00 after 2 alarms 150.00 after 3 alarms 300.00 after 4 or more	504.00 per vehicle if no owner present after 30 min 122.00 to 364.00 else 0.00 if program in place	-	180.00 after 2nd alarm 240.00 after 3rd alarm 360.00 after 4 <sup>th</sup> alarm	-	Resid/Comm 85.00/326.00 after 1 alarm 416.00/649.00 after 2 alarms 829.00/1295.00 after 3 alarms

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**TABLE 1. CURRENT AND PROPOSED FIRE PERMITS AND SERVICES FEES**

**PERMIT FEES**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Current Fee</b>	<b>Proposed Fee</b>
1	Open-air burning (each occurrence)	200.00	240.00
2	Open-air burning by registered non-profit group (each occurrence)	20.00	24.00
3	Selling fireworks (wholesale) - annual permit	200.00	240.00
4	Fireworks vendor - annual permit	250.00	500.00
5	Firing of display fireworks or explosives (each event)	150.00	300.00
6	Firing of display fireworks by registered non-profit group (each event)	20.00	24.00
7	Firing of explosives for blasting operations (per day per project)	200.00	240.00
8	Installation, removal or abandonment of storage tank (other than single family dwelling)	300.00	300.00
9	Removal or abandonment of storage tank (single family dwelling)	300.00	300.00
10	Installation of fuel dispensing station	300.00	300.00
11	All other permits	200.00	300.00
12	Extension of permit (each extension)	100.00	120.00

**INSPECTION AND RECORD FEES**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Current Fee</b>	<b>Proposed Fee</b>
13	Record search of property (reporting letter), for each civic address on a property (maximum charge 720.00)	100.00	130.00
14	Record search regarding incident responded to by Fire Department (for each hour or part thereof)	100.00	130.00
15	Each inspection additional to the first inspection for a permit application	100.00	120.00

16	Special event plan check or site inspection (for each hour or part thereof)	100.00	150.00
17	Re-inspection (for each hour or part thereof)	200.00 first hour or part thereof, plus 100.00 per hour for each subsequent hour or part thereof	200.00 first hour or part thereof, plus 100.00 per hour for each subsequent hour or part thereof
18	For installation, modification, or relocation of a lock box	100.00	130.00
19	Special inspection or plan check (per site) to determine compliance with By-law, in respect of which no specific fee is otherwise prescribed in this Schedule (for each hour or part thereof)	150.00	150.00

**SERVICE FEES**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Current Fee</b>	<b>Proposed Fee</b>
20	Fire watch at special event or filming (for each hour or part thereof, 4 hour minimum)	150.00	150.00
21	Occupancy load certificate (for occupancy by 150 persons or less)	300.00	360.00
22	Occupancy load certificate (for occupancy by more than 150 persons)	500.00	600.00
23	Review of fire safety plan for high building (for each hour or part thereof, 3 hour minimum)	100.00	120.00
24	Review of fire safety plan for all buildings other than high buildings (for each hour or part thereof, 2 hour minimum)	100.00	120.00
25	Review of construction fire safety plan	100.00	130.00
26	Responding to the third and each subsequent false alarm for the same address in a calendar year (for each occurrence)	200.00	216.00

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