

Fire master plan could bring changes to the Stouffville Fire department

News Aug 14, 2018 by [Simon Martin](/yorkregion-author/simon-martin/490E70C3-22B7-471B-AA90-70DA0DF6209E/) (<mailto:smartin@yrmg.com>) Stouffville Sun-Tribune

A new fire master plan in the town of Whitchurch-Stouffville could bring some major changes to the town's fire department. The town has deferred a decision on the plan until the Aug. 28 council meeting.

As part of the report, the town is considering ending its mutual aid agreement with Central York Fire Services. Fire Chief Richard Renaud told council he was of the belief residents would be better served from the Ballantrae Station.

Members of council, including Ward 1 Coun. Ken Ferdinands, had some concerns, including the fact home insurance could go up for some residents if they were farther away from a fire station.

Central York Fire Services currently services a portion of the western end of the town. The retainer is \$180,000, with an additional \$4,800 per call. The plan said that although Central York provides an added level of response, it would be appropriate to examine if the contract should be cancelled or the terms could be renegotiated to something more reasonable financially. According to the report, the contract is up for renewal and there is a proposed increase to the contract to up it to \$215,000 for the retainer.

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"The question to be answered here is, does this agreement meet the overall needs of that portion of the community being serviced by CYFD?" the report stated. "If not, does the cost of hiring additional full-time staff present a more efficient and effective long-term alternative for the community?"

The master plan recommends increasing the fire suppression complement at the Ballantrae station over the next five years to achieve 24/7 coverage.

According to the report, the town is experiencing some difficulties with its volunteer base in Ballantrae. Due to the large homes and more senior residents living in the Ballantrae station area, the availability of volunteers is greatly reduced. Backup for the area comes from the Stouffville station, which is a 10 to 15 minute from Stouffville.

The large turnover in the force and decreased availability of volunteers crates a staffing shortage at night in Ballantrae.

In 2016, there were 16 times where volunteers were paged but were unable to leave the Ballantrae station due to the lack of a driver or officer. Response was ultimately provided from Stouffville with a significant delay.

The town had 24 suppression officers in 2008 when the population was 32,000. In 2017, they still had a suppression staff of 24 with a population over 47,000.

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The town is hiring two new fire staff this year. According to the report, the current challenge at the Ballantrae station is lack of drivers and officers. With the hiring of two new staff, they would be assigned to the Stouffville station night shift, bringing the normal complement up to five.

Once four additional staff are hired, a two-man night crew could be established at the Ballantrae station. According to the report, a two-person night crew at the station is not ideal, but would work temporarily. Ideally, the report recommends hiring six or more staff to provide a full night shift with four per night.

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