



STAFF REPORT

To: Mayor and Members of Council
From: Meghan Townsend, CAO/Clerk
Meeting Date: May 13, 2025
Report Number: 2025-078
Subject: Fire Services for the Community

Recommendation

THAT Council receives Report – Fire Services for the Community,
AND THAT Council accepts the Level of Service presented in Table 1 as the Level of Service that would be provided by the Town of Grand Valley if the Board dissolves,
AND THAT Council directs the CAO to use this Level of Service in developing the requested costing of a Town department, the timeline to disband the fire board by the end of 2025, and a billing model proposal to recoup services fire areas outside the Town of Grand Valley's boundary.

Executive Summary

Purpose

To present a discussion and recommendations for fire services for Grand Valley and the neighbouring townships of East Garafraxa and Amaranth in order to establish the Level of Service that the Town of Grand Valley will provide.

Key Findings

Levels of Service for the Grand Valley Fire Department require discussion by Grand Valley Council to establish what service the department can provide. Then, discussions about the dissolution of the Board, transition to the Town of Grand Valley and funding model development can occur. Staff are unable to develop a funding model until a decision is made on what Level of Service needs to be funded.

This report will also go to the Councils for the Townships of Amaranth and East Garafraxa, along with any recommendations from Grand Valley Council. The CAO, Mayor and Chief will present this information directly to the Township of Amaranth, per their request. If East Garafraxa also requests a delegation, the CAO will coordinate that discussion with their staff.

Financial Implications

None at this time.

The data used to establish the Levels of Service will be used to create the funding model proposal for the Fire Department under the administration of the Town of Grand Valley.

Report**Background**

Dufferin County is in a period of change, with increasing population, increasing business attraction and retention activities, increasing need for efficiency in government balanced against increasing demands for services. Grand Valley is at the forefront of this change, as our population growth is expected to outpace the other Dufferin municipalities for the next 30 years.

One service – Fire Fighting, Protection and Enforcement (Fire Services) - has been at the centre of attention during conversations, meetings and planning exercises about our community. County Council identified Fire Services as an area of concern during their recent Service Delivery Review. Locally, the Town of Grand Valley's 2024 Community Risk Assessment (CRA) listed many challenges with the current fire service and

suggested areas for consideration and investigation. Then, the Grand Valley and District Fire Department Board of Management commissioned a Fire Master Plan, which presented many options in response to the CRA for progressing the fire service for this community.

In all of these reviews, assessments and plans, there were common themes, including:

- the changing requirements that the upper levels of government placed on fire services,
- the governance of fire services locally (board versus municipal oversight),
- the level of service in the community, and
- the skills and expertise a fire service must have in order to provide that level of service.

At their December 2024 meeting, Council for the Town of Grand Valley directed staff to prepare a report to include the operational implications, additional costing incurred bringing the fire board solely ran by the Town, proposed steps and timeline to disband the fire board by the end of 2025, and a billing model proposal to recoup costs of servicing fire areas outside the Town of Grand Valley's municipal boundary. Since then, questions have been brought forward around the liability of a board or council for the decision they make regarding fire service, the consequences for different alternatives chosen, the need for change and the urgency to start implementing modernization of the service. Additionally, Grand Valley Council recently denied a request from the Fire Board to hire three full-time firefighting staff as Town employees due to concerns related to cost, demonstration of need, timing and discrepancy on the urgency to hire. This denial, combined with the questions, suggested to staff that Grand Valley Council is not in agreement on the future of the fire department and the services that it provides, whether operated by the Board or by the Town. This report will attempt to answer the questions. Staff require a decision by Council on the services that the fire department will provide.

Provincial Regulations for Fire Services

In Ontario, Fire Services are regulated under the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997 (the Act). In that Act, “fire department” means a group of firefighters authorized to provide fire protection services by a municipality, group of municipalities or by an agreement. Sections 2, 5 and 6 define municipal responsibilities for fire service:

PART II

RESPONSIBILITY FOR FIRE PROTECTION SERVICES

Municipal responsibilities

2 (1) Every municipality shall,

- (a) establish a program in the municipality which must include public education with respect to fire safety and certain components of fire prevention; and
- (b) provide such other fire protection services as it determines may be necessary in accordance with its needs and circumstances.

Methods of providing services

(2) In discharging its responsibilities under subsection (1), a municipality shall,

- (a) appoint a community fire safety officer or a community fire safety team;
or
- (b) establish a fire department.

Services to be provided

(3) In determining the form and content of the program that it must offer under clause (1) (a) and the other fire protection services that it may offer under clause (1) (b), a municipality may seek the advice of the Fire Marshal.

Shared responsibilities

(4) Two or more municipalities may appoint a community fire safety officer or a community fire safety team or establish a fire department for the purpose of providing fire protection services in those municipalities.

Services outside municipality

(5) A municipality may, under such conditions as may be specified in the agreement, enter into an agreement to,

- (a) provide such fire protection services as may be specified in the agreement to lands or premises that are situated outside the territorial limits of the municipality; and
- (b) receive such fire protection services as may be specified in the agreement from a fire department situated outside the territorial limits of the municipality.

Automatic aid agreements

- (6) A municipality may enter into an automatic aid agreement to provide or receive the initial or supplemental response to fires, rescues and emergencies.

Review of municipal fire services

- (7) The Fire Marshal may monitor and review the fire protection services provided by municipalities to ensure that municipalities have met their responsibilities under this section and, if the Fire Marshal is of the opinion that, as a result of a municipality failing to comply with its responsibilities under subsection (1), a serious threat to public safety exists in the municipality, he or she may make recommendations to the council of the municipality with respect to possible measures the municipality may take to remedy or reduce the threat to public safety.

Failure to provide services

- (8) If a municipality fails to adhere to the recommendations made by the Fire Marshal under subsection (7) or to take any other measures that in the opinion of the Fire Marshal will remedy or reduce the threat to public safety, the Minister may recommend to the Lieutenant Governor in Council that a regulation be made under subsection (9) (*powers of the Fire Marshal*).

Municipalities may establish fire departments

- 5** (0.1) The council of a municipality may establish, maintain and operate a fire department for all or any part of the municipality.

Fire departments

- (1) A fire department shall provide fire suppression services and may provide other fire protection services in a municipality, group of municipalities or in territory without municipal organization.

Same

(2) Subject to subsection (3), the council of a municipality may establish more than one fire department for the municipality.

Exception

(3) The council of a municipality may not establish more than one fire department if, for a period of at least 12 months before the day this Act comes into force, fire protection services in the municipality were provided by a fire department composed exclusively of full-time firefighters.

Same

(4) The councils of two or more municipalities may establish one or more fire departments for the municipalities.

Section Amendments with date in force (d/m/y)**Fire chief, municipalities**

6 (1) If a fire department is established for the whole or a part of a municipality or for more than one municipality, the council of the municipality or the councils of the municipalities, as the case may be, shall appoint a fire chief for the fire department.

Same

(2) The council of a municipality or the councils of two or more municipalities may appoint one fire chief for two or more fire departments.

Responsibility to council

(3) A fire chief is the person who is ultimately responsible to the council of a municipality that appointed him or her for the delivery of fire protection services.

Fire chief, territory without municipal organization

(4) If a fire department is established in territory without municipal organization under subsection 3 (2), the agreement shall provide for the appointment of a fire chief.

Powers of fire chief

(5) The fire chief may exercise all the powers assigned to him or her under this Act within the territorial limits of the municipality and within any other area in

which the municipality has agreed to provide fire protection services, subject to any conditions specified in the agreement.

Delegation

(6) A fire chief may delegate his or her powers or duties under sections 14, 19 and 20 and such other powers and duties as may be prescribed to any firefighter or class of firefighters, subject to such limitations, restrictions or conditions as may be prescribed or set out in the delegation.

Municipal Service

Generally, municipal councils establish and fund fire departments to deliver local fire protection and prevention services, including:

- running local public fire safety education and fire prevention programs
- providing fire suppression services, such as firefighting
- conducting inspections to enforce the *Fire Code*, which may result in tickets, fines and prosecution

The Office of the Ontario Fire Marshal oversees these services through reports and investigations as needed.

Municipal fire departments may provide other services that are necessary depending on the needs and circumstances of the communities they serve. For example, additional services a fire department might provide include:

- emergency medical response
- automobile extrication
- fire, water or ice rescue
- hazardous materials response

The Level of Service that a municipality provides is chosen by that municipality, considering its community's needs, its financial position and the availability of assistance from other sources. The Level of Service chosen determines the type of equipment purchased and maintained, the skill set of employees, and the cost to run the service. For instance, a municipality might decide that it does not need to provide ice rescue services, so it does not buy equipment for ice rescues nor train its staff for conducting rescues on ice, but partners with another fire department to assist if a

rescue is needed. Other municipalities may choose to train staff and provide equipment for shore-based rescues only, while others provide equipment and training so that staff specialize in ice rescues and can go out onto ice to perform rescues.

To help establish appropriate fire insurance rates for residential and commercial properties in Grand Valley, insurance companies need reliable, up-to-date information about a community's fire-protection services. Fire Underwriters Survey provides that information through the Public Fire Protection Classification (PFPC) and Dwelling Protection Grades (DPG) insurance grading systems. Grand Valley is routinely assessed, and PFPC and DPG grades are calculated by Certified Fire Protection Specialists, Engineering Technologists and Professional Engineers. This information is then published in the online Fire Insurance Grading Index. The information published in the online Fire Insurance Grading Index is used by insurers to determine their underwriting capacities and to help set property insurance rates for our community. When Grand Valley improves its PFPC or DPG, insurance rates may be reduced, and underwriting capacities may increase. Every insurance company has its own formula for calculating their underwriting capacities and insurance rates; however, the PFPC and DPG classifications are extremely useful to insurers in determining the level of insurable risk present within a community.

A first step for the Grand Valley community, therefore, is to obtain consensus on the level of service that the Grand Valley Fire Department will provide. This consensus is needed before discussing board dissolution agreements or creating a timeline for establishing the department within the Town of Grand Valley's structure and before a budget and funding model can be determined.

This Report

These next sections will discuss what is required under law and regulation, what has historically been provided, the current situation for fire services from the Grand Valley and District Fire Board, and the impact that these past and current situations have on the fire service. This report will conclude with recommendations for the future Level of Service, seeking Council agreement on this Level of Service so that this Level of Service can be presented to the Townships of Amaranth and East Garafraxa. Once

Grand Valley Council makes a decision on these recommendations, a timeline for transition and a billing model can be developed.

Discussion

Requirements for Fire Services

Historical

Fire services started as concerned community members who wanted to create a community-based service to help neighbours fight fire or perform rescues on their property. The men who volunteered to help did so using their own resources, relying on their intuition and courage to go into dangerous situations to save people and possessions without getting injured.

Eventually, enough of them wanted to help out that a group was formed to get together to practice different scenarios and decide what types of equipment they thought could help them. Once the money was found to buy the equipment, or if someone donated the equipment, they would practice using the equipment.

The people involved came from East Luther Township, the Village of Grand Valley, the west side of Amaranth Township and the northwest corner of East Garafraxa Township. They wanted to ensure that a fire service was within a reasonable distance from their properties, so they worked together to make it happen. Fire Chiefs were appointed, paid a small annual stipend, and were delegated the authority and responsibility to run the Grand Valley Volunteer Fire Department.

In the 1970s and 1980s, Canada and Ontario began adopting regulations on how buildings would be built in order to mitigate fire risks and how communities could provide fire services. As these regulations evolved, they started to include training recommendations, equipment specifications, safety considerations, and eventually some mandatory requirements were placed on fire service providers.

As of 2025

Fire Services are regulated under the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997 and its supporting regulations, including the Fire Code (O. Reg. 213/07) and a new regulation, Firefighter Certification (O. Reg. 343/22). Firefighting is now being managed a

professional service, and municipalities are working on modernizing their operations accordingly.

In Grand Valley, the Fire Chief is working to modernize and professionalize the department. In addition to training, equipment upgrades, and creating plans for future growth, the department works in collaboration with other local departments. Grand Valley provides services and receives services through Automatic Aid agreements and Mutual Aid arrangements. These are discussed in the Act as follows:

Automatic aid agreements

(4) For the purposes of this Act, an automatic aid agreement means any agreement under which,

(a) a municipality agrees to ensure the provision of an initial response to fires, rescues and emergencies that may occur in a part of another municipality where a fire department in the municipality is capable of responding more quickly than any fire department situated in the other municipality; or

(b) a municipality agrees to ensure the provision of a supplemental response to fires, rescues and emergencies that may occur in a part of another municipality where a fire department situated in the municipality is capable of providing the quickest supplemental response to fires, rescues and emergencies occurring in the part of the other municipality.

Same

(5) A mutual aid plan established under section 7 does not constitute an automatic aid agreement for the purposes of subsection (4). 1997, c. 4, s. 1 (5).

Fire co-ordinators

7 (1) The Fire Marshal may appoint fire co-ordinators for such areas as may be designated in the appointment. 1997, c. 4, s. 7 (1).

Duties

(2) A fire co-ordinator shall, subject to the instructions of the Fire Marshal,

- (a) establish and maintain a mutual aid plan under which the fire departments that serve the designated area agree to assist each other in the event of an emergency; and
- (b) perform such other duties as may be assigned by the Fire Marshal.

The Act continues with several sections on provincial duties, rights to enforce fire safety requirements, firefighting labour relations, and liability and indemnification for firefighters.

Additionally, the Province has mandated that all municipal fire services must increase their firefighting capabilities to meet the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) standards. The Province has stipulated timelines for compliance, and section 2(8) of the Act states that the Fire Marshal can manage issues of non-compliance through regulation, as stated previously in this report.

The Grand Valley and District Fire Department provides the following services to the community:

- Exterior fire suppression and vehicle firefighting
- Interior search and rescue and interior fire suppression
- Grass, brush and wild-land firefighting
- Emergency pre-hospital medical care
- Vehicle accident extrication where vehicle on its wheels

These services are managed locally under the Establishing and Regulating by-law, attached to this report.

When the level of response required for a call exceeds the department's capacity, the neighbouring fire services attend to assist. Neighbouring fire services or external private contractors also provide the following services that GVDFD cannot provide:

- Water or ice rescue services - all
- Ladder Truck
- Rope rescue
- Confined space or trench work/rescue
- Hazardous Materials beyond very small spills

Implications

The Grand Valley and District Fire Department has started the process of bringing the service into compliance with NFPA standards. That process will continue under the Board, as shown in their decision to recruit full-time employees and their other actions taken to date.

Unlike municipal programs which are optional or less regulated, Fire Services have evolved such that, if a municipality wants to provide the service through its own department, it must fund it to achieve compliance with the standards in effect.

Governance of Fire Services

Historical

The Village of Grand Valley provided fire services through the Grand Valley Volunteer Fire Department to the surrounding community, then, starting in the late 1980s, formalized this arrangement under agreements to provide fire services to East Luther, East Garafraxa and Amaranth townships. These three townships did not form their own fire services.

The Village's fire department also participated in the County's emergency service program. For a time, an agreement also existed to provide services to West Garafraxa Township.

In 1990, the four municipalities decided to change the governance of the fire department. As of January 1, 1991, the Grand Valley and District Fire Department was formed, creating a joint Fire Department operated under agreement between the municipalities. The four municipalities passed by-laws to establish the Fire Department. The Board was tasked with creating its own regulations, policies and procedures to administer the Department. Fire services for this community have been provided through this Board and its operating agreements since then.

In 2020, the County of Dufferin set out to explore ways to modernize services within the County. The subsequent review included all services, not just the ones under County jurisdiction. The report from that review included recommendations to:

- improve the process of annual reporting to local municipalities from the respective fire boards,

- identify performance targets and work to address variations in service,
- seek opportunities for collaboration between departments, and
- review governance of the fire services regarding Fire Board oversight by municipal staff and the skills required to adequately oversee a fire service.

Further to this review, County Council commissioned a Service and Governance Review of services in Dufferin and included fire services as a service area for greater improvement or change. This review concluded that Fire Services required its own review, and County Council requested an investigation specific to the governance of fire services in the broader community. This report – the Multijurisdictional Fire Prevention and Protection Modernization Plan – gave a summary of fire service governance across the County and gave four options for improving governance, including:

1. County-run Fire Department (single service)
2. Single Fire Department (Orangeville) for the entire County
3. Municipal Operations
4. Status Quo with Recommendations

Upon receipt and review of this Plan (see the November 26, 2024 agenda), Grand Valley Council passed the following resolution to support the Town assuming management of fire services in this community:

2024-11-24

Moved by Rentsch, Seconded by Dart

BE IT RESOLVED THAT Council receives the Report – Response to Dufferin County Fire Modernization Plan

AND FURTHER THAT Council supports Option #3, a fire department run by the Town of Grand Valley

AND FURTHER THAT Grand Valley Council requests that no further County tax dollars be spent on this matter.

CARRIED

To make progress on Option 3, Grand Valley Council passed the following resolution at their December 2024 meeting:

2024-12-17

Moved by Latam, Seconded by Jonker

Whereas the Town of Grand Valley provides fire services to the area residents through the operation of a fire board with two other municipalities wherein Grand Valley contributes 60% of funding

AND WHEREAS the Grand Valley and District Fire Department undertook a third-party Fire Master Plan study in 2024 that provided numerous recommendations to the way fire services are delivered in Grand Valley and how the Grand Valley and District Fire Department should be overseen,

AND WHEREAS one of these recommendations was to disband the fire board and bring the fire department under the control of Grand Valley solely

AND WHEREAS municipal partners in the shared fire services board have expressed the interest to disband the board and for the Town of Grand Valley to take over running it

AND WHEREAS it is understood that disbanding the fire board will not be a cost saving measure to the Town of Grand Valley but rather will provide better oversight and operational effectiveness as the Town of Grand Valley looks to grow its urban centre

NOT BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Town of Grand Valley Council asks staff to explore the option of disbanding the fire board and running the fire department solely as the Town of Grand Valley

AND FURTHER THAT a report be brought back to Council in Q3 of 2025 with the help of the Grand Valley and District Fire Department staff, and such report include the operational implications, additional costing incurred bringing the fire board solely ran by the Town, proposed steps and timeline to disband the fire board by the end of 2025, and a billing model proposal to recoup services fire areas outside the Town of Grand Valley's boundary

AND FURTHER THAT this motion be forwarded to East Garafraxa and Amaranth Councils for their endorsement by the end of February 2025.

CARRIED

As of 2025

East Garafraxa has stated that they no longer wish to participate on the Board and want to explore receiving fire services from a fire department operated by the Town of Grand Valley. At their December 23, 2024 meeting, they passed the following resolution:

Moved By: Councillor Zukowski

Seconded By: Councillor Banfield

BE IT RESOLVED THAT: WHEREAS the Township of East Garafraxa is currently a member of the Grand Valley and District Fire Board;

AND WHEREAS the Township has determined that it is in its best interest to withdraw from participating on the Board and to negotiate an agreement for fire services with the Grand Valley and District Fire Department, Town of Grand Valley;

AND WHEREAS the Township endorses the Town of Grand Valley Council resolution regarding disbanding the Fire Board;

NOW THEREFORE the Council of the Township of East Garafraxa hereby provides formal notice of its intent to withdraw from the Grand Valley and District Fire Board, in accordance with the Board Agreement dated October 24, 2023, to be effective December 31, 2025;

AND THAT staff be authorized to take all necessary steps to facilitate the Township's withdrawal, and should the Board be dissolved, the terms of the Board Agreement shall be applied;

AND THAT this motion be forwarded to the Grand Valley and District Fire Board and the participating municipalities, being the Town of Grand Valley and the Township of Amaranth.

CARRIED

At a meeting in January 2025, Amaranth Council discussed Grand Valley's motion and requested additional information on the number of calls Grand Valley has responded to in the Amaranth catchment area. If the board is dissolved, Amaranth is interested in reducing the catchment area that would be serviced by Grand Valley. At the fire board, representatives from Amaranth indicated that Amaranth wanted to see the plan for

dissolving the board and draft service agreements before deciding whether or not to agree to the dissolution of the board.

Implications

East Garafraxa has requested a service agreement with the Grand Valley fire department, whether operated by the Town or by a Board, and will not continue to participate on the Board. Therefore, the governance of fire services is already changing. How that governance will evolve requires decisions from Grand Valley Council.

Director Liability

Whether the Board continues with Amaranth and Grand Valley, or if the Town assumes operations, the governing body will have decisions to make. To address questions of liability and coverage for those decisions, the following information is presented, from our insurance provider.

Grand Valley's Municipal Liability and Errors and Omissions' policies complement each other to provide the coverages needed by boards of the Town. Boards established by the Town are covered by these policies but any outside boards, (i.e., not under the oversight and control of the Town) would not be covered. Here is the definition of who is insured under the policy.

"Insured" includes the "Named Insured" and also the following "Additional Insureds" while performing their duties for or in association with the "Named Insured", but in no event shall the duties of an "Additional Insured" be interpreted to include sexual misconduct:

- (a) Any Board, Commission or Committee of Council.
- (b) Any Member of Council or of a Board, Commission or Committee of Council or Trustees of a Police Village.
- (c) Any statutory officer, officer or employee of any "Insured".
- (d) Any firefighter. Firefighters' duties are deemed to include all activities related to the occupation of a firefighter including rescue operations and his or her activities as a member of Firefighters' Associations or Clubs.
- (e) Any volunteer worker of any "Insured".

Decisions on Level of Service should be made with consideration of the liability that is placed on decision makers as they choose which option to select, but not based on the fallback position that insurance will defend or protect against a challenge to a decision. While insurance will cover costs for the defense of a decision, the Town may incur costs in a settlement situation, and would face increased premium costs from the impact that a claim would have on the Town's rating.

Skills and Expertise for a Fire Service

Historical

Grand Valley's fire service was started with a group of people wanting to help their community.

- Community men fought fires, and the women brought supplies to the scene and to the department to care for the men during a response
- Community and/or volunteer ladies' auxiliaries held fundraisers for equipment and facilities, and only recently did property taxes begin helping cover costs
 - o If the fundraiser did not raise enough, the fire fighters would buy what they needed within what they could afford
- A large proportion of the department's volunteers worked in the immediate area and could respond from work if a call came in
- Fire fighters voluntarily repaired the buildings and maintained equipment
- Community rallied to support the fire services as they were able
- Men were exposed to serious risks during responses because of lack of equipment, lack of training and the willingness to put themselves in danger without proper gear or training
- Men died and continue to die younger due to exposure to carcinogens and other life-threatening substances

Fire Chiefs have been "making do" with what they have. People would show up to a scene, even though they were not on the department or had retired, and the Chief would put them to work. The community would just "do" the rescue or just get the hazardous material dealt with as they saw fit, or just do what they wanted even if not trained or equipped.

The expectation was that the Fire Chief be an expert in all matters related to fire fighting, rescue, management, human resources, inspection, public education, while overseeing training, recruitment and administration of the department. When there were no expectations for standardized training or reporting or health and safety mandates,

and when inspections were not required, and when public education was not something provided, this expectation was fine. Times have changed, though.

In 2016, the Province adopted National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) standards under Ontario Regulation 343/22, stating the requirements for training and a time frame in which firefighters must be certified in order to continue providing services.

Departments must attain certification for the core services by 2026 and non-core services by 2028.

Historically, when an incident occurred, insurance providers would be satisfied with the department's reports, and documentation was minimal.

As of 2025

Firefighting is now a professional trade, rather than an informal, ad hoc community service. The Grand Valley & District Fire Department provides services under the following categories, as stated in the Establishing and Regulating By-law:

1. Fire Prevention
2. Firefighting
3. Fire and Life Safety Education
4. Training
5. Communications
6. Apparatus and Maintenance, and
7. Fire Administration

Because the department relies on Volunteer Firefighters, the department cannot guarantee that they will always have enough people attend a call, and due to the limited budget provided for the department, fire service provision is limited and relies on assistance from other departments.

Fire services are to maintain adequate records of their activities to respond to allegations of negligence, or to assist inspectors or insurance providers with their investigation of incidents. Inspectors do not take department reports at face value anymore and will not tolerate poor record keeping.

Municipalities are obligated to provide training to the prescribed standard. No more discretionary training, no more informal training. The Fire Chief cannot be an expert in all matters related to fire fighting, rescue, management, human resources, inspection,

public education, while overseeing training, recruitment and administration of the department.

The following excerpt states provincial expectations:

Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997

ONTARIO REGULATION 343/22

FIREFIGHTER CERTIFICATION

Mandatory certification

2. (1) Every municipality, and every fire department in a territory without municipal organization, must ensure that its firefighters perform a fire protection service set out in Column 1 of Table 1 only if, on or after the corresponding day specified in Column 3 of that Table,

(a) the firefighter performing the fire protection service is certified, at a minimum, to the corresponding certification standard set out in Column 2 of that Table; or

(b) this Regulation provides that the certification standard referred to in clause (a) does not apply with respect to the firefighter.

(2) The certification must be,

(a) provided by the Fire Marshal; or

(b) an accreditation from the International Fire Safety Accreditation Congress (IFSAC), or a Pro Board seal, that is recognized by the Fire Marshal as equivalent to the certification provided by the Fire Marshal.

Training has to take place with each new recruit, then be maintained over their career. If a firefighter resigns, the process starts again. In house training allows the department to maintain a training program and addresses the following issues:

- Firefighters want to be trained in order to be safe
- There is a provincial curriculum for standardized training, and training is moving to meet NFPA Standards across North America
- Firefighters want protective equipment to keep them safe during a response and to protect their long-term health. Municipalities have to provide equipment to the standard.
- Firefighters want to be compensated fairly for their knowledge, skill and willingness to go into dangerous situations.
- Families want their loved ones to be safe on the job and to be compensated for time away from family in addition to their full-time jobs

- Insurance coverage for firefighting will look to ensure that municipalities provide equipment and training to meet standards
- Lawsuits by firefighter families are becoming more frequent as people decide that their loved ones have been affected due to perceived negligence on the part of the municipality
- “doing your best” isn’t good enough if you don’t meet the standard

The public also requires a professional fire service for the money that they spend to fund the service:

- Public Education is needed
 - “Why didn’t you tell me about this?” is their defense for not being prepared
- New technology can be problematic if not understood or implemented properly (e.g., smoke detectors with covered battery still need maintenance and replacement)
- False information and opinions detract from facts
- Knowledgeable inspection and enforcement personnel, willing and able to enforce by-laws and safety regulations
- Families of members with disabilities require additional safety strategies
- Proactive inspections and enforcement so facilities are safe and the public is assured of that safety (e.g., gas stations, restaurants, industrial facilities)
- Some facilities require annual inspections, conducted by trained personnel (e.g., care homes, group homes)

Additionally, fire personnel are being asked to participate in municipal development plans, and require the skills and knowledge, as well as the time and resources, to provide meaningful input. Then, they need to plan for the service to adapt to development, both in size and in the type of response required. Industrial lands require different response capabilities than urban subdivisions or rural hamlets.

Implications

The Level of Service chosen by the municipality will determine the skills and training required for its firefighters. The training will inform the budget and the long-term costs for the fire department.

Funding Fire Services

Historical

At the beginning and for several years after, firefighting was funded by donations and fundraising. Labour was provided by volunteers willing to put themselves at risk for their community. Materials and supplies were donated or paid for through donations.

By the 1960s, the fire chief and deputy chief were given a small annual stipend in recognition of their hard work. Firefighter Associations and Ladies' Auxiliaries held fundraisers. Repair work was done by volunteers and supplies for the repairs were provided by donation.

Fire services have been funded by municipal tax levies for many years, and donations and fundraisers have dwindled as costs increased and competing pressures took donor resources elsewhere. The Board and municipalities also recover costs through fees and charges. The 2024 operating budget for the Grand Valley and District Fire Department was \$684,204, and an additional \$1,008,154 was collected to cover capital repairs and equipment and vehicle upgrades.

As of 2025

Budgets and levies are determined by the services provided and by the direction of the Board. Member municipalities' by-laws determine what cost recovery programs the municipality will operate to assist with covering the levy.

Implications

Disagreement about the level of service means that future firefighting costs cannot be determined. With confirmation on the Level of Service, staff can present a rationale for the preferred funding model to achieve that Level (e.g., cost/benefits, staff versus outsourcing, proactive inspection and public education costs, funding operating and capital and growth, etc.).

Once the level of service is finalized, Establishing and Regulating by-laws can be revised, costs and revenues can be estimated, a funding model can be created and contracts to uphold that model can be executed.

Recommended Level of Service to be provided by Grand Valley

This report has highlighted the development of the fire service and the implications of managing the service. Council needs to consider many factors when deciding what Level of Service to provide. Factors have been discussed above or at other meetings/settings, and include:

- Risk to the community
 - Reviewed under the Town's Community Risk Assessment
- Frequency of events
 - Reports presented to the Fire Board, demonstrating an increase in call volumes for vehicle accidents as our roads get busier and a continued demand for fire suppression services
- The capacity of the department and the community
 - The department will need to be trained and equipped to meet standards to address the risks
 - The community is growing and will need to have a fire service that matches their size
- The options to address the above
 - Options have been reviewed in the reports mentioned above. The reasonableness of those options has also been deliberated in those reports.

Staff recommend that Council approve the following as the Level of Service for the Grand Valley Fire Department, to be in effect at the time of board dissolution. To meet these standards, the department must continue to train all staff and increase the level of training in certain situations.

Definitions of the level of response that the department can provide:

"Awareness level" means that Fire Department personnel will recognize risks and hazards, adopt a defensive position, secure the area, and call for specialized assistance.

"Operations level" means that Fire Department personnel will take action to contain and control the incident and seek assistance from outside agencies equipped to mitigate the incident if required.

"Technician level" means that Responders will be exposed to the same hazards as the victim while initiating rescue and bringing the incident under control and to an end.

Table 1 – Level of Service Recommendations

Type of Service	Level of Service	Description
Exterior Fire Suppression and Vehicle Firefighting	NFPA 1001 Level 1	This is the basic firefighter level of training. Fire suppression operations from the exterior of the building only and auto extrication rescue when vehicle is on its wheels. All staff currently receive this level of training to provide this level of service.
Interior Search and Rescue and Interior Fire Suppression	NFPA 1001 Level 2	This is the second part of basic firefighter training. Fire suppression operations that enter the interior of the building and can perform rescue and automobile extrication rescue. All staff currently receive this level of training to provide this level of service.
Grass, Brush and Wild-land Firefighting	NFPA 1143	The department is working to achieve full training to this standard. Service is provided until the capacity of the department is reached.
Emergency Pre-hospital Medical Care	As part of the Tiered Response Agreement	The department trains to respond to non-fire, non-vehicle medical calls, to assist prior to paramedic transport to hospital.
Hazardous Materials Response	Operations Level, Mission Specific: responding to emergencies involving hazardous materials at the Operations Mission Specific Level.	The department is currently not at this level. They are only trained to the Awareness level and must call in others for all HazMat responses. Training required to ensure that this service is available in our area
Vehicle Accidents, Extrication and Response	Technician level (NFPA 1006) for Common Passenger Vehicles and for Heavy Rescue	The department is not yet certified at the Technician level, which means they cannot assist with heavy vehicle responses nor if a vehicle is off its wheels.
Rope Rescue	Operations: rope rescue at the Operations Level.	The department is not currently at this level. They must call in others for responses where rope rescue is needed.

Even with the training and equipment necessary to achieve this Level of Service, the department will continue to rely on services from others for the following:

- Surface/swift water and ice rescue
- Confined space and trench rescue
- Structural collapse response

While not considered a Level of Service, municipalities are required to provide public education, building and business inspection services, development proposal reviews, and enforce by-laws and Fire Code provisions. How these are provided and funded is up to the municipality.

In order for this Level of Service to be achieved, Grand Valley's fire department requires a full volunteer firefighting complement that is trained and administered by full-time staff, including the full-time Training Officer/Firefighter and full-time Administrator/Firefighter. The department also requires a Public Educator who is also cross-certified as a Fire Inspector for inspection and enforcement duties, so that the Chief and the other staff can conduct their responsibilities fully. These full-time positions are in addition to the part-time Chief who manages the department, oversees human resources, manages the finances of the department and collaborates with other service providers and stakeholders. The Grand Valley and District Fire Board have directed the Chief to proceed immediately with the recruitment of these three full-time positions, after receiving Council's decision that the Town would not hire ([Report – Firefighter Recruitment](#)).

Staff are seeking Council's agreement on the level of service presented in the table above, so that staffing and funding can be considered for a future report. The decision of Grand Valley Council will not affect the Board's actions in increasing their staff resources, but will be a major factor in discussions and agreements related to the dissolution of the Board.

Alternatives do exist, but are not recommended because they do not demonstrate good risk management or planning for the future.

- ❖ Disband the fire service and enter into agreements with all neighbouring departments
 - Would not save money because we would need at least four agreements, and each department would want to be adequately compensated for adding Grand Valley to their service
 - Would increase response time throughout the Town
- ❖ Transition to a department managed by the Town but with no change in services or response capability

- Rely on volunteers and the generosity of community members
- Stay the same until forced under an order or directive from senior government or the courts
- Risk of jeopardizing the Fire Rating, continuous turnover of volunteers, lack of skilled and committed workforce
- ❖ Remain Status Quo
 - Maintain a Board with Amaranth
 - Allow the Board to plan for the community and change only if ordered.

Financial Impact Summary

- Fire services may become more expensive, but a funding model could include insurance recoveries, fees for service and charges from enforcement matters.
- Property insurance will not increase as much as it would if the fire service did not modernize.
- Property taxes will need to incorporate the costs of modernizing the fire service.
- The municipalities will be able to demonstrate that they are doing their best to meet standards, mitigate risks in the community, mitigate risks for the firefighting service providers, and provide an efficient service that meets the requirements of the community, thereby reducing liability and costs associated with not managing risks.
- Municipalities can consider how the cost of this service can be covered and by-laws to reflect charge backs and recoveries can be updated.

Consultations

- Grand Valley and District Fire Department Board
- Chief Justin Foreman
- Dufferin County's Multi-Jurisdictional Fire Prevention and Protection Modernization Plan
- Town of Grand Valley 2024 Community Risk Assessment
- 2024 Grand Valley and District Fire Department Fire Master Plan
- Fire Underwriters Survey site, through Verisk, at fireunderwriters.ca/grading/grading--recognition.html

Attachments

Attachment 1 - By-law 2024-14, By-law to Establish and Regulate the Grand Valley and District Fire Department and to repeal By-law Number 2023-17.

This report was submitted by

Meghan Townsend, CAO/Clerk
mtownsend@townofgrandvalley.ca.

This report was approved by
Meghan Townsend
Chief Administrative Officer/Clerk
519-928-5652 extension 222