



Staff Report

Administration – Chief Administrative Officer

Report To: Committee of the Whole Meeting
Meeting Date: September 27, 2022
Report Number: FAF.22.153
Title: Follow Up to Request to Waive Fire Service Charges for April 10, 2022 Rescue
Prepared by: Shawn Everitt, Chief Administrative Officer

A. Recommendations

THAT Council receive Staff Report FAF.22.153, entitled “Follow Up to Request to Waive Fire Service Charges for April 10, 2022 Rescue”;

AND THAT Council direct staff to proceed with the collection of the outstanding Fire Service charges for the April 10, 2022 rescue at Metcalf Rock.

or

AND THAT Council direct staff to waive an additional ____% of the outstanding Fire Service charges for the April 10, 2022 rescue at Metcalf Rock.

or

AND THAT Council direct staff to waive the Fire Service charges for the April 10, 2022 rescue at Metcalf Rock.

B. Overview

This report is being provided, as directed by Council, in order to supply additional information regarding the [August 29, 2022 Deputation](#) that requested the fire services charges associated with a rescue performed at Metcalf Rock on April 10, 2022 be waived.

C. Background

On August 29, 2022, Council received a deputation from three (3) individuals regarding a rescue that was performed by The Blue Mountains Fire Service in the general location of Metcalfe Rock Trail System on April 10, 2022.

As a result of the deputation, a number of questions were posed by Council to staff to assist Council in their decision regarding whether or not to waive the invoiced fire services fees associated with the rescue.

Before considering staff's review on this matter, it is extremely important to note that during an emergency, the use of 911 is the most effective method of notifying Police, Fire, and Emergency Medical Services (EMS). Although it is exceptionally helpful if the caller is able to provide the dispatcher with detailed information about the emergency, ultimately the dispatcher is responsible for determining the appropriate emergency services to notify to respond to the emergency.

In the case of the Metcalf Rock rescue on April 10, 2022, OPP would not have had the Personal Protective Equipment or rescue equipment (24 foot ladder) required to perform the rescue.

It is also important to remind Council and the public that Council's endorsement of the Fire Master Plan in 2022, suspended The Blue Mountains Fire Services performance of high angle rescue activities. In the case of the Metcalf Rock rescue on April 10, 2022, the use of a ground ladder allowed Fire Services to perform the rescue safely without the use of high angle rescue equipment. The decision to suspend high angle rescues was based on the insufficient number of trained composite firefighters consistently available to offer the service. It is anticipated that staff will be reviewing options with Council in future budget deliberations to consider the potential re-establishment of high angle rescues within The Blue Mountains.

The suspension of water rescues by the Town's Fire Services was also endorsed through the Fire Master Plan in 2022. The Blue Mountains/Collingwood OPP have a very effective and recently enhanced seasonal marine unit that patrols the waters of the Nottawasaga Bay and the Canadian Coast Guard also has a seasonally staffed post out of the Meaford Harbour.

D. Analysis

Staff have completed the follow up with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF) and OPP with regards to providing Council with additional information about the April 10, 2022 rescue at Metcalf Rock.

1. Ownership of the land where the rescue was performed

The Town does not own, manage, or operate the land the rescue was performed on, the land is Crown land owned by the province and its management is the responsibility of the MNRF.

The [MNRF website states](#): "**Crown land is generally unmaintained, remote and should be used at your own risk.**" MNRF staff noted that this messaging is also on the Crown Land Use Atlas and other areas of the website.

2. Are information signs posted at park entrances

Town staff have been advised by the MNRF that Crown land is not posted with "Use at Your Own Risk" signage due to the significant number of Crown land holdings in the province and

access to lands. A picture of the signage at the 10th Line parking lot where it was determined the individuals who were rescued had parked and accessed the property has been included as Attachment 1 to this report.

3. Additional information about “Crown Land”

Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF) staff provided the following information that may help Council and the public better understand the management and use of Crown land:

- Crown lands are generally unmaintained general use areas that support a variety of recreational and resource uses. The MNRF does not actively maintain infrastructure, facilities, or other park-like features as a part of Crown land management. The public accesses and uses these lands at their own risk.
- The MNRF manages Crown land under the [Public Lands Act](#) on a broad scale to support a variety of recreational and resource uses. Planning and management direction for Crown land is provided by area-specific land use policy (e.g., District Land Use Guidelines, Crown Land Use Policy Atlas, Niagara Escarpment Plan, etc.) and the Public Lands Act policies and procedures.

4. Rescue activities were initiated through the Non-Emergency (888) Line and proceeded to 911 Dispatch Services

After the August 29, 2022 Council meeting, staff provided the [meeting video](#) to The Blue Mountains OPP for their review and requested that follow up information be provided to provide insight as to the steps taken on April 10, 2022 from the OPP perspective and 911 dispatching processes.

OPP have reviewed the actual calls that were made on April 10, 2022 that were first initiated at 17:17:07 by Ms. Jenna Veenstra the “caller”. The initial call was made to the 888 non-emergency number. The caller identified that they were caving in the area and were now stuck in an area where there was ice and that they were unable to go up or down. The dispatcher also asked the caller whether there were any injuries, and it was confirmed that no one was injured.

Between 17:17:55 and 17:18:02, it was noted that there were no injuries, the dispatcher confirmed the caller’s cell number in case the caller did not make the call to 911, and the caller also noted there was 64% power remaining on the cellphone.

The key next step was to have the caller disconnect from the initial call to the non-emergency 888 number and shift to making the call to 911 to access more robust logistical abilities available for notifying and maintaining contact with first responders and other emergency services.

With the benefit of a review of the call transcript, OPP verified that once the dispatcher confirmed that there were no injuries and that the caller did not have the “[What 3 Words](#)” app, the dispatcher asked the caller to hang up and call 911. At 17:18:11 the call was disconnected

and a call to 911 was made. Again, the reason for this is that the 888 non-emergency number does not have GPS location tracking capabilities. By having the caller call 911, GPS location tracking capabilities in many instances determine the specific location of the caller. It was also confirmed through the call transcript that less than thirty (30) seconds elapsed from the time of the 888 non-emergency line call disconnection to the 911 call connection with the caller.

At 17:24:36 the 911 dispatcher and the caller began working via phone call to download the “What 3 Words” app onto the caller’s cellphone and also used a variety of methods to determine the caller’s specific location. These methods included getting the specific location where the individuals entered the area, confirming that they had parked at the 10th Line entrance, and having the caller explain that they had taken the first trail from the parking lot across the bridge and on the blue trail. At 17:36:47 OPP used sirens to try and locate the caller asking through the dispatcher if the caller could hear the sirens. At 17:36:48 the “What 3 Words” app was still only 1 quarter downloaded, however at 17:36:55 the caller acknowledged that they could hear the sirens.

At 17:37:45 OPP Officers started to enter the trail on foot, at 17:38:50 dispatch noted that the caller was playing loud music on their cellphone to help with location efforts. At 14:42:18 the caller advised dispatch that they could see the OPP Officers.

At 17:42:56 OPP Officer acknowledges that they were with the caller.

At 17:56:31 Fire Services attempted extraction with a ladder. At 18:22:22 OPP advised dispatch that the parties were rescued and back at the 10th Line Parking Lot. OPP, Fire, and EMS cleared the scene at 18:31:48.

The Towns Fire Services were paged out at 17:25 and arrived on the scene at 17:44. Staff confirmed that an off-duty firefighter was on the scene prior to the responding Fire Fighters from the Fire Hall as noted in the deputation. However, the off-duty firefighter was without any Personal Protection Equipment required to actively participate in the rescue.

The initial call was placed at 17:19:12 and the scene was cleared at 18:31:48.

5. OPP “Hero” Statement

Staff also requested that OPP review the comments relating to the “Hero” statement that can be heard at 16:30 timestamp portion of the August 29, 2022 Council meeting video recording. After meeting with The Blue Mountains OPP regarding this specific concern, staff are satisfied that this information has been appropriately reviewed and considered internally by the OPP. In addition, staff confirmed that OPP Officers on scene had informed the individuals rescued that they could be billed by Fire Services for the rescue. The Fire Chief also confirmed that, while on the scene, he had also informed the individuals rescued that fees would be applied for the services provided by Fire Services.

6. Were the rescued individuals on the normal or marked pathway or trail

Based on staff's review, it has been determined that the three (3) individuals who required rescuing were not on the marked trail section of the property. In addition, the equipment that was required to safely perform this rescue included the use of a twenty-four (24) foot ground ladder at full extension. A photo of the actual rescue location is included as Attachment 2 to this report and identifies the ledge the three individuals were rescued from.

E. Strategic Priorities

1. Communication and Engagement

We will enhance communications and engagement between Town Staff, Town residents and stakeholders.

2. Organizational Excellence

We will continually seek out ways to improve the internal organization of Town Staff and the management of Town assets.

3. Community

We will protect and enhance the community feel and the character of the Town, while ensuring the responsible use of resources and restoration of nature.

4. Quality of Life

We will foster a high quality of life for full-time and part-time residents of all ages and stages, while welcoming visitors.

F. Environmental Impacts

None.

G. Financial Impacts

The total fees that were calculated for Fire Services are based on the approved Fees and Charges.

The full amount of the approved fees totaled \$5,079. This amount if it had been billed would have been divided by three (3) for each individual rescued, resulting in an invoice in the amount of \$1,693 for each individual.

The Fire Chief, using their delegated authority to reduce the fees, sent invoices to each of the individuals rescued in the amount of \$933.26 (a combined total of \$2,799.78) which reflected a 55% reduction of the approved fees. This reduction was applied prior to any discussions with the individuals rescued.

To be clear, the initial billing was at the rate of \$933.26 for each individual. However, if the actual fees would have been invoiced, this would have resulted in a \$1,693 fee for each individual.

The estimated cost associated with staff time used to research and prepare this report back to Council is \$400.

H. In Consultation With

The Blue Mountains OPP

The Blue Mountains Fire Services

Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry

I. Public Engagement

The topic of this Staff Report has not been subject to a Public Meeting and/or a Public Information Centre as neither a Public Meeting nor a Public Information Centre are required. However, any comments regarding this report should be submitted to Steve Conn, Fire Chief fire@thebluemountaions.ca.

J. Attached

1. 10th Line Parking Lot Signage
2. Rescue Location Photo

Respectfully submitted,

Shawn Everitt
Chief Administrative Officer

For more information, please contact:
cao@thebluemountains.ca
519-599-3131 extension 234

Report Approval Details

Document Title:	FAF.22.153 Follow Up to Request to Waive Fire Service Charges for April 10, 2022 Rescue.docx
Attachments:	- Attachment-1-10th-Line-Parking-Lot-Signage.pdf - Attachment-2-Rescue-Location-Photo.pdf
Final Approval Date:	Sep 15, 2022

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

Shawn Everitt - Sep 15, 2022 - 9:46 AM