

Committee: Administration & Finance - Budget Meeting # 4

Date: February 20, 2020

Department: Administration

Topic: Spring 2020 St. Lawrence River Response Plan Development

Background: Despite deviations to Plan 2014 and extended and prolonged high volume water flow outputs through the Moses Saunders dam, the latest information indicates water on the majority of the Great Lakes are close to or at record levels for this time of year. So the question is not so much whether high water levels will occur along the St. Lawrence River this Spring, it is more about the higher extent of levels compared to 2017 and 2019 and whether the 2020 response plan requires adjustment.

The 2017 Township response was reactionary in nature, similar to many municipalities and residents on both sides of the border, leading to more questions than answers. Was this a one-off anomaly not to be repeated or a warning of a potential future trend? In 2017 we pulled staff off their normal duties to secure and fill sandbags to assist private residents along the water mainly at Bay Lane, Tuttle Point and Hilltop Rd. Loads of sand and bags were delivered to Tuttle Point and Port of Johnstown for convenient access. Staff also secured fencing and barricades to prohibit and protect public infrastructure at the Waterfront Parks, boat launch and construction of a berm at the Water Treatment Plant (WTP). There were (11) eleven properties identified as adversely impacted through a partnered field analysis conducted by SNC and TWPEC staff during the 2017 event. The (11) properties consisted of the WTP, (6) six seasonal and (4) primary residents.

The 2019 high water level witnessed similar activities performed by Township staff. However, some lessons learned from 2017 were incorporated into a more effective 2019 response plan. This included our staff modifying the conveyor system on the dump box to allow faster, more efficient filling of sandbags. In addition, through combined efforts with South Nation Conservation, funding was secured to conduct LiDar mapping along the St. Lawrence River and to construct a permanent berm at the WTP in the fall of 2019.

The 2020 response plan is under development and endeavours to be more proactive in the following areas to provide support resources to those likely to be impacted by the high water levels this Spring.

Improved Communication Strategy

Communication activities are scheduled to commence during the last week of February. A flood information package will be prepared and delivered specifically to those residents identified in the 2017 field assessment that were affected by high waters flood. Information will include how to properly construct a berm, electrical, septic system and well safety related to flooding. Emergency access concerns should be addressed if access to a road(s) becomes flooded, a basic contact list for pump/generator rental, local contractors and the locations of when and where sand and bags can be accessed. This package will be posted on the Township website and weekly status updates through social media will be posted.

Improved Supply Allocation and Tracking

The past two events, staff delivered material and placed pre-filled sandbags on pallets during normal Monday to Friday business hours. Quantity levels were monitored through the workweek and additional material or bags were replenished as required. One of the obstacles with this method is maintaining stock and tracking the destination of product as most residents accessed these resources during evening and weekends. Staff will begin production of pre-filled sandbags, as time allocates, starting the last week of February to have a base stock available by the middle of March. Loads of sand will be directly delivered by contractors to pre-determined fill locations (TBD). Five hundred empty sand bags will be initially dropped off to the residents identified in the 2017 field assessment.

People Helping People Network

A form could be inserted into the interim tax bill where residents have the option to fill out, sign and return with their contact information to help with flood protection activities. The contact information would be distributed to flood impacted residents for them to coordinate the assistance.

Instituting these additional refinements should free up staff to focus on potential public infrastructure flooding events and our core Spring activities.


Initial Questions for Committee Discussion

Is committee willing to continue to fund these activities out of general taxation?

Is committee prepared to have frontline staff work overtime hours filling bags and/or tracking product?

Is committee interested in investing in a shared capital purchase of a sandbag filler with neighbouring municipalities along the St. Lawrence?

The 2017 flood expense costs were \$15,192.00, in 2018 \$5052.00 (bulk was LiDAR mapping) and \$4912.00 in 2019 (bulk of expense was labour to construct temporary berm at WTP prior to permanent berm). There is \$2,000 allocated to flood expenses in 2020. How much additional financial support commitment does committee want to make?



CAO/CEMC