

ST. JOHN'S

Report of Audit and Accountability Standing Committee

November 27, 2024

12:00 p.m.

Conference Room A, 4th Floor City Hall

Present: Boyd Chislett, Citizen Representative, Chair
Councillor Tom Davis, Acting Chair
Councillor Greg Noseworthy
Derek Coffey, Acting City Manager
Sean Janes, City Internal Auditor
Sean McGrath, Senior Internal Auditor
Danielle Parrell, Senior Internal Auditor
Jennifer Squires, Legislative Assistant

Others: Sherry Colford, Fire Chief/Director, St. John's Regional Fire Department

1. SJRFD Mechanical Division Internal Audit

Senior Internal Auditor Sean McGrath provided the Committee with background information and the recommendations for the St. John's Regional Fire Department (SJRFD) Mechanical Division Internal Audit. The Mechanical Division, located at Kent's Pond Fire Station, is responsible for the repair, maintenance, and testing of all fire apparatus and support equipment within the SJRFD. The division must also ensure all vehicles are in compliance with the Newfoundland and Labrador Highway Traffic Act and corresponding Regulations. The results of the audit show that Mechanical Division has a variety of effective and efficient processes in place to maintain its fleet of heavy-duty vehicles, but there are certain processes that are inefficient and inefficient. The Internal Audit division made recommendations to improve operations, and management have agreed with all proposed recommendations, providing action plans, and expected implementation dates for the enhancements to the division.

The focus of the audit was to ensure that SJRFD's heavy-duty vehicles weighing over 4,500 kg were obtaining valid inspection certificates by passing their regulated annual vehicle inspections at an Official Inspection Station as required. Other areas within the scope of the audit include the preventive maintenance program, the request for service process, staffing requirements, inventory storage and procedures, and an evaluation of governance related internal controls. Additional information on the recommendations, management response, and intended course of action may be found in the Audit Report as included in the agenda.

It was noted that the City had been cautioned by the Province to have all trucks certified. An update was requested on the status of the inspections. While all vehicles are inspected internally on a regular basis, there were 15 trucks lacking certification in April of 2024. Valid vehicle inspection certificates must be provided by an Official Inspection Station, and because Mechanical Division is not an Official Inspection Station the work must be outsourced to a third-party garage. At this point, only one vehicle remains to be certified. All vehicles should be certified by the end of 2024. It was asked if the City Depot could be used to certify the trucks, as it is an Official Inspection Station. While it is easier to coordinate the process with outside garages, coordination with the Depot could be considered moving forward.

Additional information was requested on the age of the fleet. The average age of the fleet is 11 years in active service. Once vehicles are retired, they may remain as part of the fleet as a spare for an additional period of time. Vehicles are generally retired from the SJRFD fleet around age 15. It was then asked who was responsible for the inspection of the equipment used by the fire department. The fire equipment maintenance technician is responsible for equipment inspection, and all testing of equipment is based on the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) standards.

Issue 1.3 - Annual Maintenance Hours and Required Resources was then discussed. Human resources are currently inefficient to fully maintain the fleet. Staff are currently running on a deficit of 1,428 hours, or the equivalent of 1.28 full time fire apparatus technician positions. Staff advised that the addition of an employee may not provide the expected benefits and work capacity due to workspace constraints at the facility. It was asked if an extension of the maintenance day had been considered, as it would alleviate workplace constraints. The addition of administrative staff may create further efficiencies in the division.

It was questioned if it would be cost-effective to invest in a new fleet at this point in time, rather than focus on preventative maintenance. Staff advised that there is a five-year fleet strategy, updated on an annual basis, which is followed to determine when vehicles should be removed from active duty based on the NFPA standards and the age of the vehicle. It was asked if measures were considered to reduce carbon usage. Newer trucks are equipped with a system that minimizes diesel particulates and a Nederman system is used to collect and remove diesel fumes from the station. Idling of vehicles is not permitted. When vehicles are required for non-emergency purposes, often the smallest truck is utilized to minimize diesel usage. Electric Vehicles may also be considered as things progress.

Councillor Noseworthy left the meeting following the approval of the Audit Report and associated action plans.

Recommendation

Moved By Councillor Davis

Seconded By Councillor Noseworthy

That Council approve the SJRFD Mechanical Division audit report and the associated action plans put forth by management.

MOTION CARRIED

CHAIR, BOYD CHISLETT