

# Report

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Date December 12, 2023

File:

Subject Net New Staffing Request; Engineering Administrative Assistant.

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## PURPOSE

To consider hiring an Administrative Assistant for the Engineering Department to provide additional administrative capacity, reducing the administrative workload on management and technical staff.

## BACKGROUND

Management undertook a capacity assessment for the department in 2020/2021. One of the key findings was that there was a significant need for more administrative support for the Engineering Department. Additional administrative support would better enable management and technical staff to focus on higher-priority work. In addition, engineering administrative staff also support the Subdivision & Environment group, which has no administrative staff support.

## DISCUSSION

### Alignment with Council's Strategic Plan

Administrative support for the Engineering Department inherently supports all of Council's Strategic priorities that the Department is focused on. This position will relieve other staff of some more administrative duties, allowing them to focus on undertaking tasks within their expertise. The activities that this position would support are summarized below.

Alignment with Council's Strategic Plan:

1. Environment:
  - a. Strengthen environmental policy in all land use planning (Subdivision Bylaw Update, Engineering Standards).
  - b. Relocate the Joint Utility Board Sewage Outfall (support Director with the implementation of special projects).
2. Economy:
  - a. Attracting local businesses, and the requisite opportunities and talent, requires that there are basic municipal services available (water, sewage collection and treatment, roads, etc.) (Asset Management, Water & Sanitary Models Update, DCC Bylaw Update).
3. Community:
  - a. Update subdivision bylaw (Subdivision Bylaw Update).
  - b. Encourage appropriate development charges and amenities to support great development (Water & Sanitary Models Update, DCC Bylaw Update).
  - c. Improve pedestrian safety on Boys Rd (support the Director with the implementation of special projects).
  - d. Continue to implement existing neighbourhood plans (support Land Development staff

with off-site development impacts).

### Request Rationale: Service to the Public

Engineering deals with a significant number of requests from the public. Some of which are relatively straightforward to deal with. Others are more significant in nature. Engineering currently has 358 outstanding issues tracked in its Calls for Service (CFS) system. Referring to Figure 1, approximately 274 of the 358 CFS items (or 77%) concern traffic transportation-related infrastructure. This position will provide significant support to management and technical staff to ensure that all correspondence back and forth between ratepayers and North Cowichan is properly diarized and tracked, that CFS items are followed up on promptly, and to generally manage the CFS list.

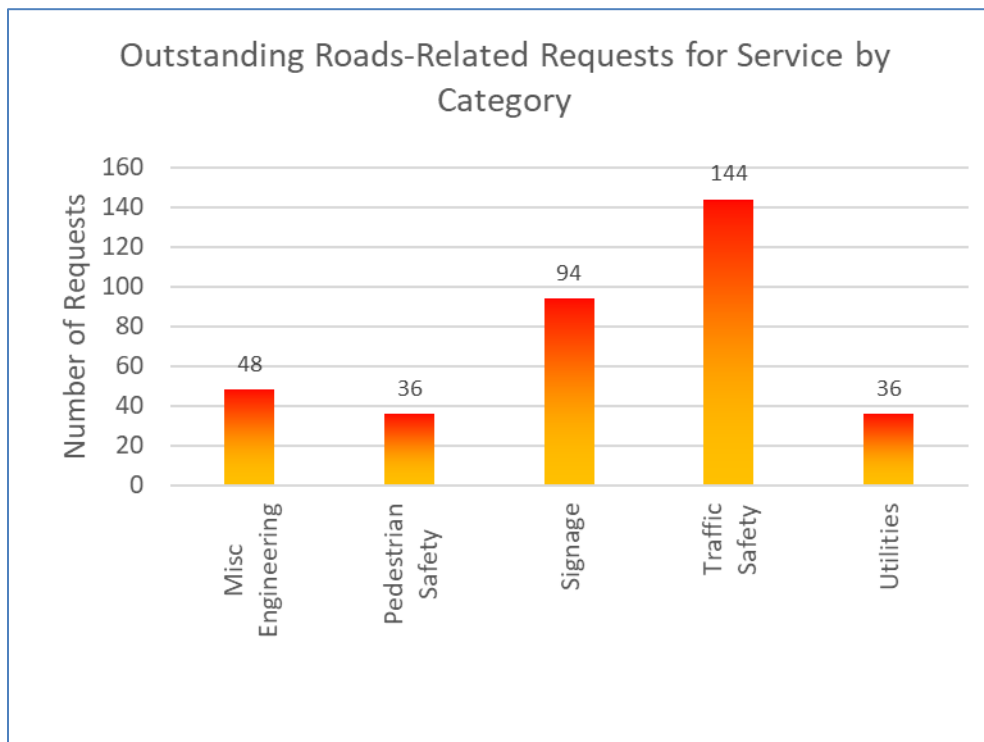


Figure 1 Calls for Service statistics.

Engineering also deals with a significant number of permits. While the total number of permits is anticipated to be lower this year, the permits that consume the most resources are highway construction permits, which are expected to increase, and event permits. We are attempting to improve our level of service around event permits to ensure that the events proceed with minimal issues; particularly regarding traffic management. Many applicants lack the capacity and/or funding to plan their events.

Table 1 Permitting statistics.

Type of Permit	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023 <sup>[1]</sup>
<b># of permits processed in TOTAL</b>	<b>295</b>	<b>264</b>	<b>337</b>	<b>313</b>	<b>175 (233)</b>
# of driveway access permits processed <sup>[2]</sup>	5	4	18	19	7 (9)
# of highway construction/use permits processed	23	33	30	40	46 (61)
# of hydrant use permits processed	18	11	20	16	11 (15)
# of utility permits processed	170	172	188	150	68 (91)
# of blasting permits processed	10	6	15	17	7 (9)
# of service applications processed	48	32	58	51	21 (28)
# of event permits processed <sup>[3]</sup>	21	6 <sup>[3]</sup>	8 <sup>[3]</sup>	20	15 (20)
<b>Notes</b>					
[1] Based on current statistics (up to Sep 30/23; in brackets) extrapolated to Dec 31/23.					
[2] Excluding driveway access permits issued as part of a building permit review.					
[3] Numbers are lower due to COVID-19 pandemic.					

### Request Rationale: Support for Land Development

This position supports land development, which has increased in volume and complexity over the last few years. The number of multi-family residential applications has increased significantly. These applications tend to be more complex and consume more administrative staff time. This position would assist the Subdivision group by supporting many of the administrative tasks associated with land development.

### Analysis of Resource Requirements

Management worked with administrative staff to undertake a capacity assessment. The capacity assessment showed the department needs about 2.6 full-time equivalent (FTE) of administrative support. The department needs at least 1.0 FTE to support the Subdivision & Environment group (currently there is only one administrative assistant to help both the Engineering Department and the Subdivision & Environment group). From the assessment, it is clear that at least one additional administrative assistant is required.

The Department has identified several projects that would improve our business processes. These projects amount to an estimated 70 weeks of work. However, even with the additional administrative assistant, the Department will not be able to implement many projects intended to improve our business processes as both administrative assistants will be fully allocated to undertaking day-to-day administrative tasks in support of the Engineering Department and the Subdivision & Environment group.

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## The Role and Cost of This Position

The broad duties of this position are provided below.

1. General secretarial support to the Engineering Department and the Subdivision & Environment group.
2. Assist the current Engineering Administrative Assistant and support the Engineering Department and Subdivision & Environment group with the handling of administrative tasks.
3. Assist with managing various permits issued by the Engineering Department.
4. Acting as the first point of contact for Engineering counter inquiries.
5. Assist with the development and implementation of new business processes.
6. Assist with the day-to-day handling of calls for service.
7. Assist with coverage for the Planning & Building Department's front counter/secretarial positions.

The cost of this position is \$84,000 (including benefits). The position will be funded from the following sources: 23% from utilities and 77% from general taxation. The impact of this position on the 2024 operating budget is \$43,000.

## OPTIONS

### Recommended Option

THAT the Committee of the Whole direct staff to include a new Administrative Assistant position in the 2024 Operating Budget.

### Alternative Option

THAT the Committee of the Whole direct staff to bring forward the request for a new Administrative Assistant position to a future budget process.

## RECOMMENDATION

THAT Council direct staff to include a new Administrative Assistant position in the 2024 Operating Budget.

Report prepared by:



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Clay Reitsma, M.Eng., P.Eng.  
Director, Engineering

Report reviewed by:



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George Farkas  
Choose Director/Manager's Title.

**Approved to be forwarded to Council:**



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Ted Swabey  
Chief Administrative Officer