

Town of Riverview

COUNCIL REPORT FORM



Presented to: Mayor, Town Councillors

Department: Human Resources & Communications and Riverview Fire & Rescue

Date: July 10, 2023

Subject: Alert System Notification

BACKGROUND Staff were given directions by council to research an alert system for residents in relationship to winter parking bans, allowing residents to be notified on nights when a ban will be implemented. As an upgrade to our alerting system is being considered, it is important to consider other uses of the alerting system, which includes public alerts during emergency events or disasters. Emergency public alerts are fortunately uncommon, but when they are needed, they need to be effective. Therefore, it is strongly recommended that any change to the means of public alerts in the Town of Riverview take into consideration an EMO perspective alongside other stakeholders. Additionally, some providers of public alerting systems as part of their platform incorporate other features of incident management which can be used during emergency events or disasters. As staff is conducting a cost/benefit analysis of alerting systems, we should factor in other components that may bring benefit to the town, specifically in managing the activities of an EOC.

CONSIDERATIONS An alert system that can be used to notify residents of multiple public alerts not withstanding winter parking bans, emergency events or disasters, and public service announcements. Residents will be required to sign up for alert system, in which they will be notified by email and/or text.

CURRENT PUBLIC ALERTING OPTIONS In Canada, *Alert Ready* is the national emergency alerting system that works by transmitting lifesaving alerts to Canadians through television, radio and LTE connected and compatible wireless devices (<https://www.alertready.ca/>). This system was used in New Brunswick on nine occasions in 2022, for tornado warnings, civil emergencies, and amber alerts.

The Town of Riverview, however, does not have direct access to *Alert Ready*. The Province of New Brunswick, through NB EMO, is an authorized user. Thus, if the Riverview EOC desired to utilize *Alert Ready*, it would be necessary to channel this request through our Regional Emergency Management Coordinator for Region 7, or the NB EMO on-call duty officer. As there

has been very limited experience with municipalities requesting the province to utilize *Alert Ready*, it is not known how long a request may take to action.

The Town of Riverview also currently operates an e-mail alert subscription service through the town website. Currently out of 3,518 subscribers, 2,741 users are signed up to receive emergency alerts (approximately 12% of the Riverview population). E-mail is not an ideal alerting option under emergency conditions as many people do not receive notification of e-mails, or alternatively they may overlook an e-mail due to the high volume of e-mails they are receiving. The current e-mail alert system may be adequate for notification concerning community events, waste and recycling notices, or similar notices that are not time sensitive. E-mail notification alone is not suitable for time sensitive life-safety messaging.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

There is a need within our municipality for an emergency alerting system that the Town of Riverview has ownership of, which will effectively reach residents during a disaster or emergency event.

The system should include the following components:

- Multiple forms of communication with the public but should include SMS (Short Message/Messaging Service) to ensure the public receives the message.
- An alerting system that remains current. Automatic requests should be sent to subscribers to ensure their information remains current and remove subscribers that do not verify their information in a prescribed period.
- A public dashboard (one central location) for current information and advice from the Riverview Emergency Operations Centre (EOC).

The Town of Riverview is committed to the use of the Incident Command System (ICS) to manage emergency events or disasters outside the normal capacity of First Responders. ICS Canada does provide robust training, operating principles, and support resources by way of standardized forms that can be used to manage an incident.

ICS Canada does not however provide an incident management platform for use within an Emergency Operations Centre (EOC). As a result, everything done within the EOC would be manually executed. For instance, to create a log of events within the EOC this would have to be captured on a form by a person within the EOC. Likewise, information gained by the EOC would have to be manually updated on a website to make the information publicly available.

A virtual Incident Management System platform would increase efficiency in the operation of an EOC and provide the option to operate an EOC virtually.

In terms of efficiency, incident management system platforms allow for automatic updating features, and facilitate information sharing. For instance, information updated on a database within the EOC could automatically feed into the public dashboard, reducing workload and eliminating the risk of human error.

Importantly, all information and transactions (i.e. work assignments, communications, etc.) on the platform would be captured, and reportable. Reports should ideally be populated automatically, with data selected by the EOC.

Lastly, an Incident Management System platform will ideally be integrated with the municipal public alerting system as communication to the public is a key component of any Incident Management System. Additionally, the municipal management team uses a plethora of virtual platforms in their day-to-day work. Having separate platforms for incident management and public alerting would add to the burden of trying to maintain proficiency in the use of multiple platforms (under stressful conditions).

RECOMMENDATION

Staff are recommending we proceed with QIT Canada, which will provide a system called Guardian IMS. This system would provide cloud-hosted, mobile-ready technologies to efficiently manage the recording of incidents, audit logs and provision of effective dashboard summaries as well as evidence-based reporting for record-keeping and review.

Guardian IMS provides a “single point of truth” public dashboard for current information updates and advice from the Emergency Operations Centre. This is an informative web page, which keeps the community informed of real time information updates.

Currently the City of Moncton is also using Guardian IMS for its Emergency Management needs. QIT Canada has worked with the City of Moncton since 2020. This is the system Moncton uses to update its residents on the winter parking ban, which we will be able to use this system for that purpose as well.

If the project is approved, it will proceed in short order in July with appropriate rollout in September in advance of the winter parking ban season.

COST ANALYSIS

The stated costs for 2023 including initial set-up and configuration would be \$20,977.28 (plus HST).

On-going annual costs are stated at \$15,292 (plus HST), as well as a cost per SMS (text) blast estimated to be \$20 per alert.

Item	Details	Duration	Details	Cost
Guardian IMS	Setup, configuration	10 days	One time amount	6 000.00
Guardian IMS	Maintenance	July 15 - Dec 31	10 292 x 46.3	4 662.28
Dashboard	Setup, configuration one time fee	July 15 – Dec 31	8 000	8 000.00
Hosting cost	Annually recurring		5 000 x 46.3	2 315.00
Total, 2023 (+ HST)				20 977.28
Annually recurring SaaS (+HST)				15 292.00

The staff is proposing the following solution for this unbudgeted system. - \$12,000 will come out of the Capital budget, as a project for a boardroom upgrade will be pushed out to 2024. The remainder will come out of the EMO operating budget.

Legal: N/A

Financial: This item is before council for consideration as it is an unbudgeted project. Total cost for 2023 is \$20,997 (\$12,000 will come out of Capital budget, as the boardroom upgrade will be pushed out to 2024. Remainder will come out of the EMO operating budget).

Stakeholders: Council, Town of Riverview Staff, Residents, EOC, Riverview Fire and Rescue, Public Works and Engineering, Human Resources and Communications Department, Finance and Information Technology and Development and Legislative Services

Strategic Plan: Safe & Inclusive Community and Service Excellence

Interdepartmental Consultation: the proposal has been reviewed by all departments.

Communication Plan: Registration and Education Campaign for residents to sign up for alerts, multiple sources of delivery will be used to increase registration for residents.

RECOMMENDATION FROM STAFF :Human Resources & Communications Department and Riverview Fire & Recue recommends that Town Council approve the purchase of QIT Canada, the Guardian IMS Alert System in the amount of \$20,997.28 for 2023.

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