



Report to Council

Department: Community Services
Division: Fire and Rescue Services
Date: September 15, 2025
Prepared by: Jason Pillon, Fire Chief
Report Number: Fire and Rescue Services – 2025-09
Subject: Fire Engine 3 – Pre-Budget Funding Request
Number of Pages: 6

Recommendation(s)

That Fire and Rescue Services Report – 2025-09 entitled Fire Engine 3 – Pre-Budget Funding Request prepared by Jason Pillon, Fire Chief dated September 15, 2025, be received, and

That Council approve the pre-budget approval, in the amount of \$1,300,000.00 including non-refundable H.S.T. to replace Fire Engine 3 at Fire Station #3 to be funded from the Town's Asset Management Reserve.

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to request pre-budget approval of \$1,300,000.00 to initiate the procurement process for the replacement of Fire Engine 3, which will reach 20 years of service in 2026. This funding will support the development and issuance of a Request for Tender (RFT), with full payment due upon delivery of

the new apparatus in 2026. As this expense falls prior to the approved 2026 Capital Budget, Council approval is required.

Background and Discussion

Engine 3, currently stationed at Fire Station 3, will reach 20 years of service in 2026 and is due for replacement. According to Fire Underwriters Survey (FUS) guidelines, frontline pumpers shall be replaced at the 20-year mark to maintain operational reliability and insurance grading standards.

Engine 3 is an American LaFrance model manufactured by a company that is no longer in production. As a result, many of its replacement parts have become obsolete, making them increasingly difficult and time-consuming to source. The limited availability of these components has also led to rising costs. This situation has created ongoing challenges during the vehicle's annual Ministry of Transportation (MTO) inspection, as well as during regular servicing and maintenance.

In recent years, when Engine 3 has required service, it has frequently been out of operation for extended periods due to delays in obtaining parts. There is growing concern that a future mechanical failure could involve a critical component that is no longer available, potentially rendering the apparatus permanently inoperable. A notable example involved the failure of the pump engagement switch, a critical component that enables the truck to deliver water through its plumbing system. As the original part was obsolete, a workaround had to be implemented using a

switch typically intended for vehicle headlights, a solution that underscores the limitations and risks associated with continued operation of this aging unit.

Maintenance costs for Engine 3 have continued to rise, reflecting its aging condition. In 2023, repairs totaled \$9,100.00, including towing, due to an electrical failure. In 2024, costs reached \$6,500.00. For 2025, following pump testing, several additional repairs have been identified. These repairs include a discharge valve replacement where the existing part is now obsolete and an alternative solution is being sought as well as a light replacement and a drain valve repair with an estimated total cost of approximately \$4,000.00, subject to technician availability.

Looking ahead, Engine 3 may require a full set of tire replacements in 2026, depending on the results of the 2025 MTO inspection. This would represent an additional estimated cost of \$7,000.00, an expense that could be avoided if the truck is replaced prior to that time. Based on previous inspection history, the 2025 MTO assessment is expected to cost between \$4,000.00 and \$5,000.00. In 2026, the projected cost for maintenance and any related repairs is anticipated to range between \$12,000.00 and \$15,000.00.

Ordering a new fire engine in 2025, with delivery anticipated in early to mid 2026, would significantly reduce operating and maintenance expenses for that year. A new vehicle would arrive with a valid MTO inspection and certified pump test, reducing the service burden and relieving pressure on the 2026 operating budget. Currently, Engine 3 accounts for approximately 35% of all repair and maintenance costs at Station 3, which houses five apparatus in total.

Engine 3 also plays a critical operational role as it is the primary response unit at Fire Station 3, being the municipality's busiest station. From 2022 to the present, the station has responded to over 580 calls, highlighting the importance of ensuring this apparatus is reliable and available for emergency response.

The replacement of Engine 3 has been planned as a 2026 capital project and has been included in the Town's five-year capital forecast since 2021. This reflects the long-standing recognition of the need to modernize the fire fleet to maintain public safety and service reliability.

A growing industry-wide challenge in fire apparatus procurement is the current shortage of cabs and chassis, which has led to significant delays in production. Depending on manufacturer and build specifications, lead times can range from 18 to over 30 months. Engaging in the procurement process within the 2025 calendar year would allow the Town to secure a build slot and lock in current pricing, avoiding an anticipated 6% (or \$78,000.00) price increase in 2026.

While some stock units are expected to become available in 2026, they are in limited supply and already in high demand. Manufacturers have advised that early commitments are necessary to secure these units, as other departments are already reserving build slots. Delaying the Request for Tender (RFT) process until mid-2026 would increase the risk of further delays, potentially pushing delivery into 2027 or beyond.

Procuring early will help mitigate potential cost increases. While there are currently no tariffs in place, the future of tariffs remains uncertain and unpredictable. Early action will also help secure availability and ensure the Town continues to meet its public safety responsibilities with reliable, frontline apparatus.

Financial Impact

Approval of \$1,300,000.00 in 2026 pre-budget capital funding is requested to initiate the procurement process for the replacement of Engine 3. The Request for Tender (RFT) will specify that final payment for the apparatus will be deferred until delivery in 2026. Fire Administration is seeking Council approval for this funding to be allocated through the 2026 Capital Projects and aligned with the Town's Asset Management Plan. The Town has an Asset Management Reserve intended for capital assets such as this, which currently has sufficient balance. The Asset Management Plan recommends annual increases in the transfers into this Reserve to assist in funding end-of-life assets.

Consultations

Jackson Tang, Assistant Manager Business Services

Ann Marie Unis, Manager, Finance and Business

Jake Morassut – Director, Community Services

Kate Giurissevich – Chief Administrative Officer

Link to Strategic Priorities

- Embrace asset management best practices to build, maintain, and continuously improve our municipally owned infrastructure.
- Leverage our Town's competitive advantages to promote jobs and economic investment.
- Take care of our natural environment and strengthen the sense of belonging to everyone who makes Essex "home".
- Deliver friendly customer service in an efficient, effective, and transparent manner while providing an exceptional working environment for our employees.
- Build corporate-level and community-level climate resilience through community engagement and partnership and corporate objectives.

Report Approval Details

Document Title:	Fire Engine 3 – Pre-Budget Funding Request.docx
Attachments:	
Final Approval Date:	Sep 10, 2025

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



Jake Morassut, Director, Community Services - Sep 10, 2025 - 9:11 AM



Kate Rowe, Director, Corporate Services - Sep 10, 2025 - 9:19 AM



Kate Giurissevich, Chief Administrative Officer - Sep 10, 2025 - 1:45 PM