

MEMO

To: Mayor Robert Small and Members of Council

From: Greg Jones, Director, Fire Services

Date: March 17, 2025

Subject: **Artistic Painting of Fire Hydrants**

We received an inquiry as to whether or not fire hydrants could be painted in an artistic way in the Town of Amherst. While painting hydrants in an artistic way has the potential to be eye-catching, there are a number of issues to consider when evaluating the concept of painting fire hydrants in an artistic way.

Fire hydrants are considered emergency equipment and as such need to be accessible and fully operational to firefighters at all times. It is critical that the painting of a fire hydrants does not interfere with the hydrant threads, the operation of the main stem nut screw, or somehow cause interference with the operability of the hydrant.

It is also important for emergency responders that fire hydrants remain visible. Hydrants must be highly visible as fire crews approach them in an emergency, to avoid any delay in obtaining an effective water supply. Currently, with all public hydrants colored yellow and visible with a standing sign, fire crews have a consistent color to look out for from a distance on arrival at a fire scene. This provides firefighters with the ability to recognize fire hydrants easier and reduce the identification time on scene.

Using the right paint is crucial for both durability and safety. Reflective, oil-based paint is often recommended for durability and visibility. Reflective paint helps firefighters see hydrants in low-light conditions, and oil-based options withstand harsh weather.

While using the hydrants for emergency needs or performing maintenance, it is likely that these actions may mark up any artistic painting with hydrant wrenches or when water supply appliances are hooked up. Unfortunately, this may necessitate the need for touch-ups from the artist. Further, expectations would need to be determined regarding the maintenance of the art; touch-ups would need to be made by the artist, and conditions would need to be set to determine when the hydrants are to be returned to the standard yellow color.