

Subject: 344 Beacon Hill Drive Tax Refund Request**APPROVALS:****Jamie Doyle**_____
Director_____
Chief Administrative Officer**Recommended Motion:**

THAT the request by the former Owner for a refund of the post 2016 wildfire cleanup costs and penalties in the amount of \$35,588.77, for the property located at 344 Beacon Hill Drive be denied.

Summary:

Administration received a request on June 17, 2021, from the former Owner for a refund of cleanup costs plus penalties in the amount of \$35,588.77 for the property located at 344 Beacon Hill Drive which was destroyed by fire on May 3, 2016. It is recommended that this request be denied as it has not been deemed as equitable. As per the *Municipal Government Act (MGA)*, Section 347(1) if Council considers the refund equitable it may, with or without conditions, cancel or refund all or part of a tax.

Background:

On May 3, 2016, the residence at 344 Beacon Hill Drive was destroyed by the Horse River Wildfire. As part of the efforts to support the community recover from this event, the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo (RMWB) issued an Order to Remedy Dangers and Unsightly Property (Order). To ensure residents were made aware of the Order, the RMWB posted on the Municipal website, mailed a copy to each mailing address on file for the tax roll, and advertised the Order in local newspapers for two (2) weeks. All cleanup costs that were not completed in the timelines set out by the Order, were charged back to the Owner.

Pursuant to Section 304(3)(b) of the *MGA*, a property owner must provide written notice of a mailing address to which notices may be sent. On June 27, 2016, the owner confirmed that mail forwarding with Canada Post was established and would further update their mailing address online. A copy of the Order was mailed to the property address on the tax roll on August 2, 2016. As of October 1, 2016, the property owner had neither taken action to clean up the site nor appeal the Order. The RMWB retained a third party to "demolish the structure and level the site" on October 18, 2016. On July 21, 2017, the homeowner was sent an invoice detailing the demolition cost.

On January 12, 2018, the cleanup cost for the property was transferred to the Owner's property tax account pursuant to Section 553 of the *MGA*. The tax account statement was updated and mailed to the Owner on January 15, 2018, and the outstanding balance was included in their tax bill commencing June 2018.

Prior to the property being sold in 2021, all arrears and penalties were paid in full.

Budget/Financial Implications:

Should Council elect to refund the cleanup cost and penalties to the former Owner, this will result in a net reduction in the amount of \$35,588.77.

Rationale for Recommendation:

The underlying explanation does not meet equitable justification to refund the Owner pursuant to Section 347(1) of the *MGA*.

Strategic Priorities:

Responsible Government