

District of Barriere

REPORT TO COUNCIL

Request for Decision

Date: March 9, 2026	Agenda Item: 5a
To: Council	From: Fire Chief
Re: Vacant Parcel – 4976 Barriere Town Road	
Recommendation: THAT Council directs staff to undertake wildfire mitigation (FireSmart treatment) to the vacant, undeveloped parcel at 4976 on Barriere Town Road; AND THAT Staff bring back low-cost options to utilize the property as a “FireSmart Showcase”.	

Purpose

For Council to consider wildfire mitigation (FireSmart treatment) of the municipally owned property, currently designated as parkland, at 4976 Barriere Town Road and to explore future opportunities for FireSmart use.

Background

The District of Barriere is classified as Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) Risk Class 1, the highest provincial risk category, as identified in the Community Wildfire Resiliency Plan (CWRP). The vacant lot at 4976 Barriere Town Road is District owned and has not undergone fuel mitigation. Current fuel loading and vegetation continuity increase the potential for fire spread to adjacent residential homes and nearby infrastructure, particularly during the extended wildfire season (late May–September). Either way, this lot needs to be mitigated, but it also allows the FireSmart Program an opportunity to showcase to residents how aesthetics can be maintained while using FireSmart Principles.



Current Risks

Potential ignition sources include:

- Human-caused ignitions (cigarettes, debris, sparks, campfires)
- Ember cast (2–5 km highly probable during wildfire events)
- Lightning strikes

Without treatment, fire could spread rapidly to adjacent homes and infrastructure and contribute to fire spread and worsening fire behaviour.



(Current conditions demonstrating fuel continuity – after snowmelt in February 2026)

Proposal – Phase 1: FireSmart Mitigation

As a first step, Staff is proposing to:

- Reduce surface and ladder fuels
- Prune and thin vegetation
- Create fuel breaks (potential future walking paths)

Financial Impact:

\$0 to the District. Labour costs are covered under the Community Resiliency Investment (CRI) funding stream. A local horticulturist has volunteered to assist in ensuring ecological sustainability.

Future Opportunities – To Be Explored

Staff are also recommending exploring other FireSmart related uses for this vacant District-owned property. At present, there has been limited interest within the community regarding implementing FireSmart principles for properties as the common assumption seems to be that by FireSmarting a property the beauty will be lost. As such, this highly visible, District-owned property may provide a great opportunity to showcase the FireSmart principles to the community. If Council is in support, Staff would investigate the following low-impact and low-cost options to provide an educational environment for the public, which may aid in the adoption of the FireSmart program:

- Educational FireSmart signage
- Partnerships with local mills, contractors, or community groups
- Small walking trail development
- Benches or picnic tables
- Low-maintenance xeriscape design
- Community education sessions
- Exploration of gathering space options (picnic tables – if they can be donated etc.)
- Introduce FireSmart/xeriscape vegetation for long-term resilience

The outcome could be to have an educational space that is self-sustainable and will require little or no District money outside of the FireSmart funding stream, while equally providing partnership opportunities with other community partners.

Summary

Council is asked to consider for Staff to undertake wildfire mitigation activities on the vacant, District owned lot at 4976 Barriere Town Road, while at the same time exploring options to potentially create a FireSmart showcase to support FireSmart educational activities for the community.

Benefits or Impact

General

Wildfire mitigation of District-owned property. Exploring other FireSmart educational activities.

Finances

No costs to the District at this point as funding is provided through the FireSmart program for any mitigation activities.

Strategic Impact

Potential Partnership with Simpcw and other community groups, such as, but not limited to, Trails Society, Men Shed, etc.

Risk Assessment

Compliance: FireSmart Funding agreement, Community Wildfire Resiliency Plan (CWRP)

Risk Impact: Low – if the property is mitigated. Otherwise, a higher risk level will continue to exist.

Internal Control Process: Staff are following standard processes.

Next Steps / Communication

- If approved, wildfire mitigation will commence at once.
- If approved, site assessment for potential future low-cost educational purposes will be undertaken while FireSmart activities are under way.
- A follow up report with potential showcase opportunities will be presented to Council at a future meeting for consideration.

Attachments

N/A

Recommendation

THAT Council directs staff to undertake wildfire mitigation (FireSmart treatment) to the vacant, undeveloped parcel at 4976 on Barriere Town Road; AND THAT Staff bring back low-cost options to utilize the property as a “FireSmart Showcase”.

Alternative Options

1. Council could determine to only mitigate for wildfire at this time and not to explore options for other uses of the vacant lands.

Prepared by: Fire Chief, A. Hovenkamp

Reviewed by: D. Drexler, CAO