

**GABRIOLA FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT
GENERAL MEETING - February 07, 2024**

A General Meeting of the Gabriola Fire Protection District was held February 07, 2024 with seven Trustees, Corporate Officer and Fire Chief in attendance.

Attendees: Paul Giffin (Chair), Diana Moher, John Moeller, Chris Windess, Charleen Wells, Kent Moen, Erik Johnson, Jessie Longo (Corporate Officer), Will Sprogis (Fire Chief)

The meeting was called to order at 4:03 p.m. by Chairperson Paul Giffin.

Chris Windess gave the opening greeting, "The GFPID acknowledges that we are gathering within the traditional lands of the Snuneymuxw Nation"

Motion #24-G1 Kent Moen motioned to accept December 06, 2023 minutes. Erik Johnson seconded. CARRIED.

Motion #24-G2 Diana Moher motioned to accept December 20, 2023 minutes. Chris Windess seconded. CARRIED.

Correspondence:

The Chair advised a resident from the Whalebone area raised concerns about having a second entrance to the area in case of emergency. It was asked by the resident to have their concern noted in the meeting.

Financial Report: N/A

Communications Committee:

Discussion took place and the draft Communications Policy was read aloud.

Motion #24-G3 Erik Johnson motioned to accept the communications policy. Charleen Wells seconded. CARRIED

Planning Committee:

Motion #24-G4 John Moeller motioned to accept this survey as it is to go out to the public. Chris Windess seconded. Discussion. Kent Moen amended the motion to amend the survey header to Gabriola Fire Protection Improvement District Board. Diana Moher seconded. Motion as amended was CARRIED.

Trustees requested the minutes to reflect that the Long Range Planning Committee has certain things they have no control over, for example replacing trucks. The purpose of the survey is to get Community input so as the plan is created there is Community input and this is the first of probably many steps to create the plan.

Motion #24-G5 Charleen Wells motioned to have for up to \$300.00 to spend for printing if necessary. Diana Moher seconded. Discussion. CARRIED.

Finance Committee:

Trustee Moher wished to add an item, re: communications officer. There was no objection from the Board.

In the interim of appointing a Communications Officer, Chairperson, Paul Giffin has accepted the request to act as such in the meantime.

Business Email Committee:

Draft policy almost done, and hoping to present at the next meeting.

Election Committee:

The draft elections policy is to update the current elections policy in place. The Last two elections have been conducted using certain forms; the policy is being updated with those.

Motion #24-G6 Erik Johnson motioned to accept the policy. Chris Windess seconded. Discussion. John Moeller motioned to amend the policy to include the eligibility of the nominator as it reflects in the sample document. Chris Windess seconded. Discussion. CARRIED.

Motion #24-G7 John Moeller motioned to amend the title on Appendix Form E to Poll Clerk Declaration. Erik Johnson seconded. CARRIED.

Motion #24-G8 Erik Johnson motioned to accept the election policy as amended. Kent Moen seconded. CARRIED.

Fire Chief Report:

Calls for the Month 58

First Responder – 42

MVI – 3

Misc Fires – 1

Hydro related fires – 2

Wires Down – 5

Gas spills – 2

Alarms activated - 3

562 calls for 2023 and the busiest month was 86 calls. Big Thanks to our membership for their dedication and efforts that go towards that high level of service.

-UMBC Volunteer Training and Equipment Grant. Successful for the 30K which goes towards purchase of SCBAs. We were able to lock in the SCBAs with a 5% savings at the end of December.

Thank you to Oliver Bussler for organizing this grant.

-Deputy Fire Chief. Pushed for the deputy previously, we advertised throughout the province and locally. When it came down to recruiting the deputy there were qualified candidates who refused it and we had to go back to the drawing board. The big thing we need is to ask the Trustees to unlock some of the money we earned over deployment. I ask the Trustees to unlock \$26,000.00 to increase the Deputy salary to \$75,000.00. The position would become full time. These recommendations were noted in the Operational Review by Jay Brownlee suggesting we should have a full time deputy as well as a training officer.

I will be asking the Trustees for a motion at the end of my report.

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- New Engine. Engine was approved for the urban interface engine. This will be built by Fort Garry. First meeting with design and engineering staff. Chassis will be shipped to Fort Gary for August 2024. The Truck should be finished production in August 2025. It will serve two purposes; One as a bush truck and it will also be a certified engine for the Superior Tanker Shuttle Accreditation.

-Recertifying FUS for commercial as well as residential. Gabriola has the best residential rating it can get with the Superior Shuttle Accreditation, which is a C3. Recertification should take place on a weekend in March.

-Congratulations to the new platoon leaders. At the end of the month they run one practice that is just in the platoon, and follow-up with the platoons to make sure they have adequate support. A big thanks to the lieutenants for providing that leadership.

On a frustrating note. Our Fire Department works very hard to support the level of service that we do. The members come out all hours of the day to support this department and community. I'm all for Freedom of Information reports, and information being provided to the public, but there is nothing more frustrating than seeing our budget starting to get sacrificed. Our level of service will start to be sacrificed as well as memberships morale as the attacks keep continuing on the Improvement District and Fire Department. I ask the Community to start attending these meetings, and to understand what is happening. This shouldn't happen when we have such a strong Fire Department and when we have volunteer Trustees who dedicate their time to make this such a strong Department.

Training Report:

Topics discussed:

- 24 month training schedule
- Engine Boss Course in Errington
- Officer Training

Discussion took place around the savings residents receive by the Fire Department receiving the Superior Shuttle Accreditation as well as what trucks would go assist with wild fires if the department was Deployed.

Motion #24-G9 The Chief asked the Trustees for a motion to release \$26,000.00 from the deployment funds. Erik Johnson made the motion. John Moeller seconded. Discussion points:

Money to attract a deputy, as the previous salary was too low.

Funds spent only if successful in obtaining a deputy.

Not many departments without a deputy.

\$75,000.00 is quite low for a deputy salary.

The increase in salary money is there via deployment funds.

Motion CARRIED.

Association: N/A

Old Business:

Privacy Act Requests:

Report to Community read aloud by Chairperson Paul Giffin:

Privacy Act and the Gabriola Fire Protection Improvement District.

The Gabriola Fire Protection Improvement District is required to comply with the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

This Act is administered by the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner. Otherwise known as the OIPC.

The Act requires that the "head of the body" as noted in the Legislation is identified. In our case it is the chair.

The Act specifies the following:

- The maximum charge for any FOI request is \$10.00.

- The first 3 hours of searching are not billable.

- Should any material not be in electronic format and need to be photo copied a fee may be levied.

- Every attempt should be made to release information in an electronic format.

- Redacting costs of the documents are borne by the Board.

The procedure. A person applies for the information and once the \$10.00 fee is received a cursory search is done for the information requested. This results in a cost estimate for the production of the documents. This cost is then forwarded to the applicant (requestee) and once a response is received from them, action based on that response is taken. Either the request is completed or abandoned.

Here is a review of Freedom of Information Act (FOI) requests received as of Friday February 2, 2024.

The first request in the history of the department was received in May 2022 .

An early request resulted in 900 pages of documents being released.

The last request was received on Feb 1, 2024.

A total of 4 people have made requests . Three of these folks have had their issues resolved .

One person has made 9 FOI requests, made a further 14 requests for information via email, and has submitted in excess of 40 + emails.

Of note: in the 9 FOI requests for information submitted there are usually two or three bullet points and in those bullet points are more requests.

Most of the responses provided have resulted in a complaint to the OIPC by the applicant and an investigation has resulted.

As a result of the investigations some requests have been modified.

Once the OIPC is involved that increases the time it takes to resolve the request as all the material must go to Victoria for review.

These requests have been for documents that in some cases are in excess of 20 years old, and/or expired.

Effect of the Requests.

All these requests have had a negative impact on the Board, the Corporate Officer, and Fire Department.

Some examples are:

- Impeded the training of the new Corporate Officer
- Delayed implementation of new accounting procedures
- Has resulted in increased and unbudgeted costs in the form of fees and overtime
- Has caused harm to the Board and the Fire Department in that disinformation has been published that the board cannot respond to due to confidentiality restrictions

Response of the Board.

The Board has made multiple requests to have a meeting with this individual in order to facilitate the resolution of the issues they may have. These have all been rebuffed.

When the initial requests were received the Board did not charge the \$10.00 fee. Charges were levied for photocopying. There is no provision to charge for time redacting documents.

Over the course of the last many months hundreds of volunteer hours have been spent dealing with these requests.

These requests have strained relations between contractors and the GFPID.

The Board has dealt with seven different investigators at the OIPC thus far.

Requests have been made to have one investigator at the OIPC deal with this individual and the related requests. To date we have not had a response to this request.

The matter of frivolous and vexatious requests has been addressed twice to which the OIPC has advised "you are not there yet."

On Dec 11, 2023 the Board held an in-camera meeting to discuss this issue. While the standard for in-camera meetings are for legal, land and personnel, this meeting was held in-camera due to the confidentiality requirements of the Freedom of Information Privacy Act. The negative impact these FOI requests was having on the operations of the fire department were reviewed. Given the nature and volume of work these requests were having enquiries were conducted prior to the meeting with respect to getting some assistance. Discussion ensued and it was decided to hire Privacy Works. The cost of this firm was roughly 1/3 the cost of a lawyer.

It should be noted that the use of Privacy Works will not totally relieve the pressure on the Corporate Officer as she will still have to find the documents in question but it will relieve both myself and the Corporate Officer of trying to keep up with ongoing evolution of what can and cannot be legally released or redacted. They will also create the necessary correspondence and deal with the Privacy Commissioner.

As of February 5, 2024 the Board received an invoice for \$4,526.00 for services.

New Business:

AGM date:

Motion #24-G10 Charleen motioned Wednesday April 24, 2024 be the date for the AGM. Kent Moen seconded. Discussion. CARRIED.

Late Items:

Diana Moher asked to bring up a late item. No objection from the Board.

Diana Moher read aloud:

Gabriola's first Fire Protection District In 1967, the informal group of volunteer fire fighters on Gabriola acquired an old firetruck from Diamond Improvement District. An official Gabriola Fire Protection District was first proposed that year, and, as always on this island, controversy and rumours of hidden agendas abounded. A "Special Notice to Gabriola Ratepayers re: Gabriola Fire Protection District appeared in the Sandstone News in September 1967, stating: In recent weeks rumours have been circulating the island that the proposed Fire Protection District is: a) hiding other local improvements behind fire protection b) making an installation costing \$40,000. NEITHER OF THESE STATEMENTS ARE FACT Your organizing committee when circulating the petition will seek your consent to apply to the Provincial Government for Letters Patent to incorporate our district for Fire Protection Only.....the length of the island precludes a single Firehall and some costs will be high because of the duplication; for example land, firehalls, and alarm systems.... In May 1968, 35 men and women adopted a constitution for the Volunteer Fire Department, its training to be organized under Lt. Tom McDonald of the Nanaimo Fire Dept.7 Harrison "Burk" Burkholder was elected as Chief, and Gerry Rowan and Ted Easthom as Captains. Volunteers raised money to pay for and maintain their firetruck, planning to hand it and its equipment over to an Incorporated Fire District, when it was formed. However, a referendum that summer about forming "Gabriola Fire Protection District" failed. People at the north end of the island voted 147 to 42 in favour, but those at the south end voted 73 to 23 against. After two years of conflict, amidst petitions and counter-petitions, the North Gabriola Fire Protection District was established by plebiscite in August 1969(187 to 47 in favour, as reported in the Sandstone News). The District covered only the portion of Gabriola "lying north of a line drawn from the top of Brickyard Hill Road in the West, to the centre of the island on the Gulf side". Victoria notified the North Gabriola Fire Protection District that their equipment could not be moved out of their own district (except by the Civil Defence or Department of Forestry), though nothing could prevent individual firefighters helping to fight a fire outside of their district. Peter Boorer told me that when there was a fire at the south end, they would take the firetruck to the edge of their territory, then "chuck all the gear into the back of a truck" and just go fight the fire unofficially. Betty Castell, who arrived on Gabriola in 1967, said in a taped interview that she remembers thinking this north-south division was absurd, saying: "this island's three miles wide, ten miles long and they have a division!"

Chairperson Paul Giffin wished to correct an omission. The AGM is set for April 24, 2024 and voting hours are to be noon to 7pm. 7pm is the AGM.

Motion #24-G11 Charleen Wells motioned to adjourn. John Moeller seconded. CARRIED.

Adjournment: 4:58 p.m.

Minutes approved at the March 06, 2024 General Trustee Meeting