

*Presentation*

*Mr. Wayne Tepper*

*Board of Trustees*

*26 September 2016*

### **Fire Board Mandate 2**

Eighteen months ago 4 new Trustees were elected to the 7 member Fire Board. Since then 3 of the original Board members resigned and in a December Bi Election, 3 new Trustees were elected.

ALL of these Trustees were elected based on their promise to accomplish 3 necessary goals:

1. Cut and Manage the Fire Dept's budget to a budget comparable to a community of similar size to Salt Spring Island without losing quality of service.
2. Review the Fire Dept's policies and contracts and implement the recommendations of the Walker Report.
3. Build a New suitable Fire Hall.

Our present Fire Board Trustees were elected after our Island resoundingly defeated the proposed \$6Million Fire Hall construction to be located at Brinkworthy. We still desperately need a New Fire Hall. Without a Municipal Government to help guide what type of fire hall is necessary and where this fire hall should be located, this critically important task falls on the broad shoulders of our present Fire Board exclusively.

During these past 18 months our Trustees have formed 5 new Committees, with members of the public volunteering and participating for the first time – Finance, Human Resources, Facilities and Plant, Strategic Planning and Development, and Marketing and Communication. They have also implemented many new policies that have greatly clarified our Fire Dept's operations and procedures and have created a level of accountability that hadn't existed before.

Salt Spring's Fire Dept budget has basically tripled over the past 10 years, going from less than \$1Million in 2006 to approx. \$2.525Million this year with a proposed budget for next year of

\$2.658Million, and yet the incidence of fires on the Island has been on the decrease. This incredible rise in Fire Dept budget is due, for the most part, to a contract negotiation with the Firemen's Union that happened many years ago by previous Fire Board Trustees. This contract with the Firemen's Union has put us in this untenable financial situation and, in my opinion, it needs to be severely reviewed and potentially amended. Within this year's \$2.6 Mill budget the line item for Wages & Benefits alone was Approx \$2 Mill or 76% of the Entire Budget. In order for our Trustees to alter this line item and other items properly, the Board of Trustees must have a Clear Mandate from the SSI community to do one of 3 things:

1. Fix the Budget for Fire Services at this year's 2016 level – with No Further Increases.
2. Increase the Budget, year to year, based on the present Union Contract demands and other necessary expenses.
3. Reduce the Budget below the 2016's level to a level they believe is proper.

All done without losing Quality of Service

The contract with the Firemen's Union expires at the end of this year. I propose that the Fire Trustees have an Island wide Referendum, an absolute mandate from the Island; to decide what the Island truly wants the Trustees to do. With this Mandate our trustees can feel confident that their actions are supported by the Island and then be able to decide the best way to proceed on our Island's behalf.

Wayne Tepper & Karen Stene  
Vesuvius