

# Minutes of the Trustee Meeting of the Salt Spring Island Fire Protection District

Meeting held: **February 15, 2016**  
Lower Hall, Ganges United Church

## **In attendance:**

Trustees: Chair Linda Lee, Howard Baker, Michael Craig, Mitch Forest, Andy Hildebrand, Derek Hill, Norbert Schlenker

Staff Members: Acting Chief Arjuna George, SSIFFA President Peter Address

Regrets: Corporate Administrator and Financial Officer Andrew Peat

Recording Secretary: Sarah Shugar

Others: 20 members of the public, Driftwood Reporter

These minutes follow the order of the agenda although the sequence may have varied.

**Called to Order:** 7:15 p.m.

## **1. Approval of Agenda**

A proposed agenda was circulated to trustees prior to the meeting.

The following additional item was presented for consideration:

7.5 RFP's for Information Technical Support and Web Site Design and Maintenance

**Motion** to accept the agenda as amended moved by Trustee Schlenker, seconded by Trustee Hill.

CARRIED

## **2. Board Minutes**

### **2.1 Receive and Accept the Minutes of the "town hall" meeting held January 18, 2016**

The minutes of the January 18, 2016 town hall meeting were distributed prior to the meeting.

**Motion** that the minutes of the January 18, 2016 town hall meeting be accepted as circulated moved by Trustee Schlenker, seconded by Trustee Hill.

CARRIED

### **2.2 Received and Accept the Minutes of the regular meeting held January 18, 2016**

The minutes of the January 18, 2016 regular meeting were distributed prior to the meeting.

The following amendments were presented for consideration:

- In attendance section “SSIFFA Lieutenant Peter Andress” be replaced with “SSIFFA President Peter Andress”;
- item 6 – “He reported December was a busy month with a total of 571 calls” be replaced with “He reported December was a busy month with a total of 50 calls and a total of 571 calls for assistance in 2015.”;
- item 7 – “SSIFA” be replaced with “SSIFFA”.

**Motion** that the minutes of the January 18, 2016 regular meeting be accepted as amended moved by Trustee Schlenker, seconded by Trustee Forest.

CARRIED

### **2.3 Receive and Accept the Minutes of the in-camera meeting held January 18, 2016**

**By general consent**, the minutes of the January 18, 2016 in camera meeting were received for information.

### **2.4 Receive and Accept the Minutes of the special meeting held January 28, 2016**

The following amendments were presented for consideration:

- item 3.2 – “Committee Chair Schlenker proposed a number of minor amendments to correct grammar, spelling” with “Committee Chair Schlenker proposed a number of minor amendments to correct grammar, spelling and reflect changes in the Local Government Act.”
- to replace “Mesh” with “mesh”.

**Motion** that the minutes of the January 28, 2016 special meeting be accepted as amended moved by Trustee Schlenker, seconded by Trustee Hill.

CARRIED

## **3. Committee Reports**

### **3.1 Facilities & Physical Plant**

Trustee Forest provided an update. The Water Tender Apparatus Request For Proposal (RFP) has been rescheduled from March 2, 2016 to March 15, 2016.

### **3.2 Finance & Audit**

**3.2.1 Receive the draft minutes of the Finance & Audit Committee meeting held February 3, 2016 (no recommendations)**

**By general consent**, the draft minutes of the February 3, 2016 Finance & Audit Committee meeting were received for information.

**3.3 Human Resources & Legal**

**3.3.1 Receive the draft minutes of the Human Resources & Legal Committee meeting held February 4, 2016 (2 recommendations)**

**By general consent**, the draft minutes of the February 4, 2016 Human Resources & Legal Committee meeting were received for information.

Committee Chair Hill introduced the following recommendation from the Human Resources & Legal Committee.

**Motion** that the Board appoint Lucy Austin to the Human Resources & Legal Committee moved by Trustee Hill, seconded by Trustee Baker.

CARRIED

**3.3.2 Receive the draft minutes of the Human Resources Committee In-camera meeting held February 4, 2016**

**By general consent**, the draft minutes of the February 4, 2016 Human Resources & Legal Committee in camera meeting were received for information.

**3.4 Marketing & Communications**

**3.4.1 Receive draft minutes of the Marketing & Communications Committee meeting held January 21, 2016**

**By general consent**, the draft minutes of the January 21, 2016 Marketing & Communications Committee meeting were received for information.

Committee Chair Craig introduced the following recommendation from the Marketing & Communications Committee.

**Motion** that the Board post biographies of candidates to the website and schedule All Candidates Meetings for future trustee elections moved by Trustee Craig, seconded by Trustee Forest.

CARRIED

### **3.5 Occupational Health & Safety Committee**

#### **3.5.1 Draft Minutes of the Occupational Health & Safety Committee meeting held December 22, 2015**

**By general consent**, the draft minutes of the December 22, 2015 Occupational Health & Safety Committee meeting were received for information.

**Motion** that the Board appoint Trustee Hildebrand as alternate co-chair of the Occupational Health and Safety Committee moved by Trustee Forest, seconded by Trustee Baker.  
CARRIED

### **3.6 Strategic Planning & Policy Development**

#### **3.6.1 Receive draft Minutes of the Strategic Planning & Policy Development Committee meeting held February 1, 2016 (3 recommendations)**

**By general consent**, the draft minutes of the February 1, 2016 Strategic Planning & Policy Development Committee meeting were received for information.

## **4. Correspondence**

### **4.1 Correspondence - Reg Jefferd**

The correspondence was received.

## **5. Acting Fire Chief's Report**

Acting Chief George presented the Fire Chief's Report for January 2016 and highlighted January was a busy month with 48 calls. He reported the 2016 recruit class is in their second month of training and provided a link to Fire Smart and noted preparation for the upcoming fire season is underway. A letter was received from Gulf Island Secondary School to acknowledge the Grade 9 CRP training program. Training has begun for tender shuttle accreditation and there have been discussions with the Fire Underwriters Survey (FUS) regarding what the timeframe will be for testing. He noted the FUS test provides the tools to provide service to areas that are not serviced by hydrants and provides reduction in insurance costs to homeowners that do not have a hydrant in their area.

## **6. Salt Spring Firefighters' Association Report**

P. Andress presented the report and highlighted the annual meet and greet event was held to welcome the 2016 recruits; 2015 recruits have completed their first year of training and have also received interior level operation fire fighter certification; funds were donated to Island Pathways for their bike program; the association has updated their logo and will be participating in the “Stair climb to the top of the Sheraton Wall Centre” event.

## **7. Old Business**

### **7.1 District Boundaries (moved to in-camera meeting)**

### **7.2 Update regarding document management systems & use of Drop Box (F&PP & SPPD recommendations)**

Chair Lee provided an update and reported that the Ministry does not have a policy regarding the use of Dropbox.

### **7.3 Update regarding amending meeting procedure bylaw Update regarding approval of Committees Terms of Reference - none**

### **7.4 Update signing officers on District accounts**

Chair Lee provided an update and noted CAO Peat would schedule the update for signing officers on district accounts.

### **7.5 RFP's for Information Technical Support and Web Site Design and Maintenance**

Chair Lee provided an update and noted the RFP's have not been released.

## **8. New Business**

### **8.1 Annual Appreciation Dinner**

Trustee Hill reported the Annual Appreciation Dinner is scheduled on April 2, 2016 at 5:00 p.m. at Meaden Hall.

### **8.2 Election Update & Appointment of Public Members to Standing Committees**

Chair Lee reported the 2016 Trustee Election is scheduled on April 16, 2016 and the advance poll is scheduled on April 12, 2016 at the Salt Spring Island Public Library. The nomination date has not been scheduled.

**By general consent**, the Board agreed Committee Chairs would discuss committee member commitment for the next term at their next committee meeting.

### **8.3 Fire Service Level Policy (SPPD)**

Acting Chief George circulated a document entitled Firefighting Service Level and noted there are three service levels that can be selected to meet the obligation of the fire commissioner: interior level, exterior level and full service. There was discussion and the following items were noted:

- the board needs to determine the definition of a complex structure;
- Acting Chief George polled 392 Fire Districts and 29 of those Districts have declared their service level;
- June 1, 2016 is the deadline for declaring the service level;
- the Board held a public information meeting regarding the service level in September 2015 and further public input will be necessary.

Committee Chair Hildebrand introduced the following recommendation from the Strategic Planning & Policy Development Committee.

**Motion** that the Board adopt the "Exterior Level" at its next business meeting unless Acting Chief George can verify that current personnel are suitably trained for the "Interior Level" in which case "Interior Level" should be adopted as the current policy moved by Trustee Hildebrand, seconded by Trustee Craig.

TABLED

**Motion** that the item be tabled moved by Trustee Schlenker, seconded by Trustee Hildebrand.

CARRIED

**By general consent**, the Board agreed to refer the Firefighting Service Level document to the Strategic Planning and Policy Development Committee and the Marketing and Communications Committee for consideration.

### **8.4 Project Tracking template (SPPD)**

Committee Chair Hildebrand introduced the following recommendation from the Strategic Planning & Policy Development Committee.

**Motion** that the Board approve the adoption of "Project Tracking" as a planning and work tool moved by Trustee Hildebrand, seconded by Trustee Baker.

CARRIED

Trustee Schlenker OPPOSED.

### **8.5 Draft Policy Statement "Use of Information Technology Resources" (SPPD)**

Committee Chair Hildebrand introduced the following recommendation from the Strategic Planning & Policy Development Committee.

**Motion** that the Board adopt the proposed "Use of Information Technology Resources" policy as amended moved by Trustee Hildebrand, seconded by Trustee Hill.

CARRIED

## **8.6 Draft Policy Statement "Code of Conduct" (HR)**

Committee Chair Hill introduced the following recommendations from the Human Resources & Legal Committee. There was discussion regarding the draft Code of Conduct policy and the following items were noted:

- amend "weight";
- amend "addressed"
- add "is damaged".

**Motion** that the Board adopt the Code of Conduct Policy as amended moved by Trustee Hill, seconded by Trustee Craig.

CARRIED

## **8.7 Draft Policy Statement "Employee Dismissal for Just Cause" (HR)**

Committee Chair Hill introduced the following recommendations from the Human Resources & Legal Committee. There was discussion regarding the draft "Employee Dismissal for Just Cause" policy and the following item was noted:

- replace "action" with "acting".

**Motion** that the Board adopt the Just Cause Dismissal Policy, as amended moved by Trustee Hill, seconded by Trustee Schlenker.

CARRIED

## **9. Delegations**

### **9.1 Mark Lucich**

Mark Lucich presented a written statement regarding misinformation in the community. The document is attached at the end of the minutes.

## **10. In-camera Session to Discuss Union Grievances and Human Resources Matter**

Chair Lee reported that the Board has two union grievances and is in conversation with the president of the union regarding an equitable situation between employee and employer.

**Motion** to move to an in camera session to discuss Union Grievances and a Human Resources matter moved by Trustee Schlenker, seconded by Trustee Hill.  
CARRIED

The meeting moved in-camera at 8:54 p.m. The meeting reconvened at 10:38 p.m.

**11. Adjournment**

There being no further business **motion** to adjourn moved by Trustee Schlenker, seconded by Trustee Hill.

CARRIED

The meeting adjourned at 10:38 p.m.

The next scheduled regular meeting of the trustees is March 21, 2016.

Delegation document attached.

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Linda Lee  
Chair Board of Trustees

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Andrew Peat  
Corporate Administrator

## **Delegation received from Mark Lucich for presentation at the February 15, 2016 Board meeting.**

This delegation to the Fire District Board of Trustees follows on the heels of my letter in last week's Driftwood. For those who haven't read it, the gist was to address some misinformation circling in the community. I mentioned the continuity of the Union contract, as well as its tie to the IAFF Union Local in Saanich.

One has to wonder why there is so much misinformation in the community regarding the fire department. Probably a lot of it comes down to former trustees who hadn't been willing to recognize their own limitations, some of it was arrogance, some an unwillingness to discuss issues in front of the public and some was just, plain misinformation by the Board.

The Province admits that Improvement Districts have problems with professionalism and accountability. This seems to have been a self-fulfilling prophesy. Without the guidance or involvement of qualified administrative staff, we've had trustees claim:

- that the public has no right to question the budget;
- that releasing information about employee compensation violates the employee's right to privacy;
- that recording public meetings is improper;
- that Improvement Districts are prohibited from establishing Renewal Reserve Funds when, in fact, they're required;
- that it's okay to purge bylaws from the record books.

A complete list is way too long for the ten minutes allowed for this delegation.

Before 2006...basically, before the Board approved a Union contract...most issues went unnoticed because they didn't create much additional cost. Interestingly, in October, 2005, months before the Union contract was approved, the CRD made an overture to the Board to take over District responsibility. This would have been in keeping with the push from the Province, which has recognized many of the pitfalls of Improvement Districts. The Province provides incentives for this kind of "conversion" to Regional District authority, including eligibility for grant funding, better insurance rates (our savings were estimated at \$14,000/year), and professional administrative support.

According to January, 2006, Board minutes, this proposal was rejected: "Michael Schubart recommends shelving this project as he sees no benefit, financial or otherwise, to proceeding with a conversion. Bruce Patterson agrees, and believes the District's conversion wouldn't be accepted by the CRD board until after union negotiations are completed." Basically, incorrect assumptions and unverified beliefs were the basis for a major decision made on our behalf.

It seems like an opportunity was lost to take all of this to the ratepayers for their input or, at the very least, a clear explanation of the options and implications. Did we want to continue on a path to more full-time, career personnel? Did we want to consider the CRD's proposal? For that matter, does conversion under the CRD still remain an option?

The spread of misinformation doesn't stop with trustees. In a Driftwood article from December, 2014, Union President Jamie Holmes was quoted as saying: "Salt Spring's union firefighters aren't backing down on a contract item that will require the improvement district to hire two career members during the next year, despite public pressure to revisit the issue."

The reason given was "to ease a crippling workload." Over the last few years the number of calls and fires have either remained steady or declined, so what is that "crippling workload"? Holmes' response: "Our career members right now are putting in an average of 63 hours every week. The system has to be somewhat broken if it's regular for the career members to put in those hours every week".

The only way to come up with 63 hours is to include the time for taking home the duty vehicle. So how "crippling" is it to take the duty vehicle home for what is now more than \$500/night?

If Mr. Holmes statement was sincere, I question why the union submitted a grievance after the Board tried to lighten their workload by having the [then] Chief or Deputy chief occasionally take home the duty vehicle. The only conclusion I can reach is they did not want to give up the income. When you consider that it averages around \$25,000 a year for each, it's easy to understand why.

In the same article Captain Holmes was quoted as saying that "almost all BC firefighters are paid the same rate". Without digging deeper (and I think the Driftwood should), his statement creates the false impression that firefighter earnings are the same. In fact, the "rates" are only the start of the calculation. Other items get factored in, and result in significant disparities. How else to explain that he earned \$151,000 in 2013, while Captains in Victoria earned between \$98,000 to \$101,000.

I don't think there's any doubt that the elephant in the room is the current Union contract, one that the Board in 2010 approved without the benefit of any legal or professional advice. When asked about it three years later, Chair Bruce Patterson replied that "wages, benefits and all other components of the CBA fall well within the norms of other unionized fire services' contracts and best known practices in BC and Canada." Mr. Patterson had been a trustee since 2003 and voted to approve the contract, so it stands to reason his statement should be reliable.

Unfortunately, that's not the case. A year ago several private citizens had the contract reviewed by a labour lawyer. His assessment is radically different from Mr. Patterson's comfortable assurances: "Put bluntly, this Agreement represents the evolutionary pinnacle of every protection that the IAFF has been able to devise in all of their years of experience operating in multiple jurisdictions."

Over the last few years members of the community have repeatedly questioned the proposed hiring of two more union firefighters. More hiring didn't jibe with the reductions in the number of fires and the total number of calls. The former trustees consistently claimed that we are obligated to hire the two new members because the contract requires it. As we've

since learned, the trustees actually authorized this hiring before the contract was ever approved.

The two new positions have now been filled, but there's a disturbing rumour circulating in the community that, according to the union, the contract obligates us to hire at least two more. If this interpretation is correct, it flies in the face of what we've been repeatedly told by trustees who were party to the contract.

The Board faces some looming decisions in the near future, many of which deserve ratepayer involvement. The ratepayers need reliable information in order to contribute to those decisions. The trick will be to overcome years of misinformation and the resulting opinions that were formed. I hope this is one small step forward in that process.

DRAFT