

## **Chair of the Board of Trustees Report 2016-2017**

Since our last AGM the Board achieved the following.

### **Fire Service Level was declared**

When the *Official Playbook* was released by the Office of the Fire Commissioner describing the three possible levels of service delivery, there was much misunderstanding and misinformation. The official declaration of Fire Service Level refers to the level of firefighter training required for the different levels of fire suppression. This definition was misunderstood by many as it was thought to affect the level of first responder service as well, which it does not. Salt Spring Island Fire/Rescue has been delivering full service level training to our members for some 20 years. This high level of training not only protects our firefighters but also gives the ratepayers the maximum protection as defined for a full interior attack on structure fires. One of the issues we discussed was whether, by declaring Full Service, there would be added costs to ratepayers if we declared what we were already delivering. This coming year we will continue to discuss whether it is feasible on this island to deliver full service, taking into consideration terrain, time to arrive, and water availability.

### **Appointment of a New Fire Chief**

The Board appointed Acting Fire Chief and former Assistant Fire Chief, Arjuna George, to the position of Fire Chief. Arjuna has been a member of the Department for 20 years. He brings to this position the experience and skills, required training and most importantly the respect of the members both here on the island and within the fire service community in BC. We are proud to have one of our own Salt Spring Island firefighters and community members as our new Fire Chief.

### **Paid on Call Retention**

Our Board dealt with the issue of Paid on Call retention by improving their training budget as well as increasing their wages and benefits. Life and AD&D insurance was increased for qualifying members. A matching RRSP contribution benefit (maximum \$500) is now offered to qualifying members. There was a pay increase for POC members who now also receive vacation pay for scheduled backfill shifts. The Board and IAFF Local 4467 negotiated an increased backfill wage rate for POC members, raising their pay when they filled in positions that a union member normally would be doing.

### **Trustees Resignations**

In October 2016 four Trustees resigned from the Board. Before doing so and while there still was a quorum I was appointed to the position of Chair. With their resignation, the Board which was now only made up of two trustees, Howard Baker and myself, stayed on to make sure that the District could still function. We could not conduct any new business or carry out any decisions other than the ones already approved by the full standing Board. Communications with the Province continued to look into solutions for the predicament our Improvement District was faced with. The Province

orchestrated elections to fill the 5 vacant seats in February 2017. We have four new trustees who were appointed by acclamation.

I would like to say that I was proud to serve along side with all trustees that were on the Board for the two years I have served. There was, and still is, a tremendous amount of passion and dedication shown by all. Each trustee brought their own skill set and at the board and committees levels they all worked very hard and long hours to improve the professionalism in the way the District is run. Every committee member whether staff or public appointees is to be commended and thanked for their efforts and time put in. Procedures were set in place to ensure that best practices were followed. The best interest of the ratepayers was one of the mandates we followed. Care for our employees and proper management was another of our mandates. Being fiscally responsible rode herd over all we did.

I look forward to working with the new Trustees who have shown their interest and desire to serve the community. The preview I have had of the new Board indicates to me that there will be a continuation of hard work and dedication. An amazing platform has been created to build upon.

As Chair, I would also like to thank the IAFF Local President Jamie Holmes for agreeing, until there was a full Board, to defer discussions regarding contract interpretation and the start of collective agreement negotiations. These negotiations will commence shortly.

It is my duty to report any expenditures that are expected to arise in this coming year. We are required by the Fire Underwriters to replace one more piece of rolling stock since it has reached its 20<sup>th</sup> year in service. To maintain our Superior Shuttle Designation that saves ratepayers insurance dollars we must replace this piece of equipment. Replacement cost should be in the neighborhood of \$600,000. The collective agreement negotiations with the Union will also cost us in legal fees which are in the budget.

Respectfully Submitted



Mitchell Forest  
Chair Board of Trustees  
Salt Spring Island Fire Protection District