

MUNICIPALITY OF THE DISTRICT OF LUNENBURG
Minutes of a Meeting of
FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES COMMITTEE
Held in Council Chambers, 210 Aberdeen Road, Bridgewater, NS
Monday, March 9th, 2020 – 7:00 p.m.

ATTENDANCE

Brian Keizer, District 1 & 2 Fire Commission, Chair
Councillor Reid Whynot, Vice Chair (arrived at 7:30 p.m.)
Deputy Mayor Eric Hustvedt
Councillor Wade Carver
Councillor Cathy Moore
Deputy Chief Steve Patterson, Cornwall Fire Department
Deputy Chief Dean Schmeisser, Dayspring & District Volunteer Fire Department
David Fancy, Member-At-Large
Herbert Seymour, Member-At-Large
Mayor Carolyn Bolivar-Getson, Ex-officio

Staff: Alex Dumaresq, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer
Chris Kennedy, Fire Services Coordinator/Administrator
Sandra Challis, Administrative Assistant

Regrets: Chief Tom Lockwood, Indian Point Fire Department

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Keizer called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Moved by Deputy Chief Schmeisser, seconded by Mr. Seymour that the Agenda be approved as circulated. Carried Unanimously.

3. Approval of Minutes of the January 13th, 2020 Meeting

Moved by Deputy Mayor Hustvedt, seconded by Deputy Chief Schmeisser that the Minutes of the Fire and Emergency Committee meeting of January 13th, 2020 be approved as circulated. Carried Unanimously.

4. Approval of Minutes of the February 20th, 2020 Special Meeting

A discussion was held regarding the Committee's requirement to attend the Special Meeting, as there had been no specific invitation to members. It was explained that the presentation made following the regular meeting of Lunenburg Regional Fire & Emergency Services (LRFES) had been previously presented and discussed at the regular meeting of the FESC where direction had been given to take it forward to LRFES. Mr. Dumaresq advised that although members were welcome to attend, there was no requirement for them to do so. He also advised that procedurally, it was permitted for members to vote on approving minutes for meetings where they were not in

attendance. It was suggested that the minutes of the special meetings involving the LRFES could be presented at the Annual General Meeting.

Moved by Deputy Chief Schmeisser, seconded by Deputy Chief Patterson that the Minutes of the Fire and Emergency Committee Special Meeting of February 20th, 2020 be approved with the removal of Vice Chair following Deputy Chief Patterson's name.

Carried Unanimously.

5. Business Arising from Minutes and Unfinished Business

5.1 Firefighter Personnel Insurance/WCB

Mr. Kennedy reviewed the memo regarding the Special Meeting of the Fire Departments regarding recommendation on proposed group personnel insurance (circulated with agenda). The document included the memo and presentation that had been given at the meeting. There had been unanimous support from the departments in attendance to move forward with the group personnel insurance.

Mr. Kennedy was asked to reword a sentence in his covering memo (agenda page 2), which suggested that all fire departments, except three were getting a small increase in their premiums. This statement was incorrect as only three departments were going to be seeing a small increase in premiums.

During the Special Meeting, representatives from both the Insurance Broker and WCB had been available to answer questions from the departments. There had been a suggestion to increase the amount of weekly indemnity coverage, but it had been explained that there would be a potential to over-insure which would not be cost effective. Most departments would see greatly improved coverage and benefit from cost savings. Deputy Chief Patterson advised that although his department was seeing an increase in premiums, it was due mainly to an increased membership. The group buying of insurance reflected in better coverage for his members.

The objective of the exercise had been achieved, with all firefighters being treated equally. The Mayor thanked the Insurance Sub-Committee and the FESC for all their hard work on this matter. It was acknowledged that financial help from the Municipality in hiring a consultant had been a huge factor in the success of the project.

A discussion followed regarding the budget that had been set-aside for the insurance project during 2019/2020 and if this would be carried over. It was advised that the Municipality had provided a contingency of \$20,000 in the event that the personnel insurance was put in place in 2019/20. The Municipality is anticipating a total cost for personnel insurance and WCB premiums to be funded from the 2020/2021 budget. General contingency funds for operating expenditures are not reserved in special purpose funds if they are not spent.

Moved by Mr. Seymour, seconded by Councillor Moore that the FESC recommend to Municipal Council that they accept the new Group Personnel Insurance Policy as presented and passed at the February 20th, 2020 Special Meeting.

Carried Unanimously.

5.2 Pump Test Requirement for Annual Registration

Mr. Kennedy gave a presentation on Mandatory Pump Testing – Standards and Compliance (circulated with agenda) which explained what pump testing was and provided, for discussion, tools that could be used should a department not adhere to the requirement. Departments would be reminded in the 2020/2021 registration package that proof of pump testing would be a mandatory part of the registration document for 2021/2022. The introduction of mandatory pump testing was to ensure the safety of all firefighters and the communities they represent.

Should a department fail to provide proof of pump testing, the Fire Services Coordinator would open dialogue with the department to see what their barriers were to completing testing and offer support with problem solving. Should a pump fail the test, the Fire Services Coordinator would work with the department on a plan to get the problems rectified and set a date when the testing should be completed by.

Should a department refuse to complete pump testing, it was suggested that the following tools could be used:

- Withhold Municipal Funding
- Suspend Registration
- Revoke Registration

It was suggested that Municipal Funding should be better explained:

- It was not intended to withhold fire area rates collected by the Municipality on behalf of some departments.
- Municipal Funding is considered to be grants provided by the Municipality.
- The funding would be withheld, by a proportionate amount, until pump testing completed.
- Transferring withheld funds to a Department providing mutual aid, whilst the pump was out of action, had not been considered.

A discussion followed regarding suspending and revoking registration. It was advised that suspending a department would mean that the department would be unable to provide a service where a pump would be required, and mutual aid would be organized until testing on the pump could be completed. It was acknowledged that revocation would be a “last resort” situation where a Department flatly refused to comply. It was noted that LRFES had given their support for mandatory pump testing to be introduced, therefore, it would be hoped that compliance would not be an issue. However, it was agreed that methods to ensure compliance should be determined and included in revisions to Policy MDL-36.

Mr. Kennedy advised that this presentation would be made to the Fire Departments at the AGM and following discussion, proposed changes to Policy MDL-36 would be brought to the FESC for approval before it would be taken to Council for their approval.

5.3 Strategic Planning Workshop

The memo regarding the FESC Workshop on February 10th, 2020 (circulated with agenda) was reviewed. The memo showed the priorities that had been determined by the Committee at the workshop, with the most important item being identified as Maintenance & Testing Standards with Training and Mental Health following.

The memo provided examples of existing equipment standards, standards for training and mental health training that could be used to formulate a plan moving forward. Mr. Kennedy asked for direction from the Committee on which items to concentrate on.

It was discussed that looking at standards relating directly to firefighter's safety should be the priority – namely PPE equipment (correct use, care and replacement schedule) and both the testing and replacement schedules of SCBA equipment and hoses. Mr. Kennedy advised that he intended to ask Departments questions on what they currently do on these items as part of the annual registration form. It was noted that many departments already carry out routine maintenance and have replacement schedules in place, but there is no method for the Municipality to capture this information. Once this information is collated, Mr. Kennedy will be able to determine where the priority lies and what the next steps could be. It is hoped that results can be presented at the next regular FESC meeting in May 2020.

5.4 Fire Scene Security

It was noted that Fire Site Security would come under Bulk Purchasing shown in Appendix A of the workshop memo. It was discussed that perhaps Fire Site Security could be a shared service as the Municipality of Chester already had something implemented. It was agreed that as Bulk Purchasing was #4 on the list of priorities, it would not be looked at in the near future, but the issue would not fall off the Committee's radar and would be acted on should the need arise.

6. L.R.F.E.S. Report

Mr. Kaizer gave a verbal report on the most recent LRFES meeting where time had been spent on planning and developing the organization's future – looking at ways to make the meetings more appealing to members by bringing in speakers. A presentation had been given on high-pressure firefighting.

(Mayor Bolivar Getson left the meeting at 8:17 p.m.)

7. NEW BUSINESS

7.1 Annual Registration Form Proposed Changes

Mr. Kennedy presented suggested amendments to the Annual Registration (circulated with agenda). The main changes were highlighting to departments the introduction of mandatory pump testing effective 2021/2022 and gathering of information on departments' forms current Health & Safety practices. Staff were directed to implement the changes. The revised document would be distributed at the AGM.

7.2 Mutual Aid Agreement

Chief Feener from Dayspring & District Fire Department had submitted a request for information on the old mutual aid agreement. His request was for it to be brought up to date and reinstated. Mr. Kennedy explained that this agreement would not replace any of the current mutual aid agreements in place, it was an overarching document. It had received some minor changes approximately eighteen months ago and was currently with the legal department. Once the changes had been completed, it will be circulated to all departments for signature, indicating that the agreement had been received and understood. It was suggested that perhaps this document should be updated/re-signed each year and the AGM would be an opportunity to do this. Mr. Kennedy was not sure if the revisions would be ready in time for this year but would aim to have a working draft document prepared. Deputy Chief Patterson advised that LRFES had discussed a generic agreement for inter-departmental mutual aid in order to help Dispatch.

7.3 Nova Scotia Power – Failure to Provide Essential Service

Deputy Chief Patterson explained his department's recent communication to local MLAs, MPs, Mayor & Councillors, REMO Coordinator, Fire Services Coordinator (circulated with agenda) regarding Nova Scotia Power and the negative consequences of losing power and communications for Fire Departments during storms. In recent storms, pagers and TMR have failed to work. A result of the communication was that the Department had been contacted by a Vice President of Nova Scotia Power and a meeting would be held, in the field, so both organizations could understand the implications of power outages to each other. Deputy Chief Patterson was requesting written support to the cause from both the FESC and Council.

(Mayor Bolivar Getson returned to the meeting at 8:40 p.m.)

Moved by Councillor Whynot, seconded by Councillor Carver that the FESC recommend that Municipal Council write to Nova Scotia Power, Eastlink and Bell on behalf of the Fire & Emergency Services Committee, expressing concern regarding outages of power and critical telecommunications systems. Carried Unanimously.

8. IN CAMERA (Nil)

9. NEXT MEETING – Monday May 22, 2020

Note: Annual General Meeting – Wednesday April 8th at 7:00 p.m. Dayspring & District Fire Hall.

10. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business at 8.47 p.m., it was moved by Councillor Moore, seconded by Deputy Chief Schmeisser that the meeting adjourn. Carried Unanimously.