

**Pender Islands Fire Protection Society
Board of Directors Meeting
Minutes
Tuesday, February 16, 2021
10:00 a.m., Virtual Meeting via “Zoom”, Pender Island, BC**

Present: Arn Berry, Art Curtis, Theresa Carle-Sanders, Jill Caston, Chief Mike Dine, Asst. Chief Adrian Hanson, Anna Herlitz, Maggie Macdonald, Sara Miles (Recorder), Rick Mudie, Brigitte Prochaska, Anna Starke

Regrets: None

Public: Two

1) CALL TO ORDER AND APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

President Macdonald called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

Director Prochaska moved and it was seconded to adopt the agenda.

Motion carried by consensus.

2) PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS

Judy Walker commended the emergency responders for a job well done during the recent snowfall event.

3) APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Director Mudie moved and it was seconded to approve the January 19, 2021 minutes. **Motion carried by consensus.**

4) COMMITTEE REPORTS

a) Treasurer’s Report

Report circulated electronically.

Treasurer Curtis reported on the process to finalize the financial statements for the period ending December 31, 2020. Some of the estimated \$40,000 surplus will be transferred to the restricted funds for a new truck purchase, and the remainder was taken up with an unexpected bill for new pagers.

It was previously understood that the new pagers and radios, at a cost of \$44,000 and \$178,000 respectively, were to be paid for by the CRD, but there is evolving

discussion on this. It appears that the society will have to pay for the pagers, but the radios will be covered by CRD. Treasurer Curtis will pursue this further.

It was reported that the 2021 operating and capital budgets were submitted to the CRD. There was a change by CRD (from \$1,200 to \$7,000) relating to software licensing because Microsoft changed its fee structure last year. The board asked Treasurer Curtis to seek clarification on the accounting behind the higher cost.

i) Training Facility Update re: CRD Agreement

Not discussed.

b) Governance Committee

Director Berry had nothing to report.

c) Finance Committee

Director Mudie had nothing to report.

d) Human Resources Committee

Director Caston had nothing to report.

e) Communications Committee

Director Prochaska reported on the committee's recent meeting, where the AGM communications, and Engine 32 retirement were discussed, as well as ideas to promote the fire department and public safety.

f) Victim Services Committee

Director Caston reported that it has been busy with administrative duties on the new systems, and staff are training online. The service has been busy as usual; there are no statistics available yet. The Coast system is almost up and running. Training starts tomorrow. The society's contact at the ministry has changed.

g) Firefighters' Representative Report

Report circulated electronically.

Director Herlitz said questions have come up about the AGM which she hasn't been able to answer yet. She thanked the first responders for their hard work during the snowfall on the weekend.

h) Fire Chief's Report and OHS Report

Report circulated electronically.

Chief Dine spoke about the contents of his report, including efforts to launch a new duty crew response model. A recruitment update was provided, as well as follow up from a recent youth training initiative brought forward by the CRC. Training requirements and opportunities were discussed, which have resulted in a need to update operating guidelines. New competency-based training requirements were outlined. There is a goal of 100% competency by the end of this year. Solutions are being explored for a new information/fire department management system; many programs are now hosted in the Cloud.

5) Ongoing Business

a) Annual General Meeting

President Macdonald summarized questions and issues that have arisen about the AGM details. Feedback from the ministry indicated that two AGMs could not be held on the same day.

The AGM on May 12, 2021 will be called the "2020 AGM addressing society operations for the year 2019". There will be two vacancies. The current plan is to hold it on Zoom, but there is some hope it will be held in-person.

Discussion ensued around the dates for candidate nominations, publication deadlines, the membership registration process and requirements. Director Prochaska will talk to Sergei about setting up a registration form online.

April 15 is the deadline for candidates to indicate their interest in running for one of the two vacant board positions. May 5 is the deadline for electronic member registration.

The 2021 AGM covering the year 2020 is planned to be held before the end of the year.

b) CRD/PIFPS Agreement

President Macdonald provided an update, saying that the agreement was signed and sent to the directors. It is the same as the previous five years. She and Director Berry agreed in their meeting with Jonathan Reimer to leave the insurance wording as it was. In order to ensure the society has adequate third-

party insurance coverage, Directors Mudie and Berry will undertake a study of the policies in place regarding the society, the department and volunteers.

c) In-Person Meetings

Nothing new to report.

6) New Business

a) Motion regarding Bill C-264 (amendment to the Income Tax Act increasing the tax credit for volunteer firefighters and search and rescue volunteers)

Director Berry spoke about the details of the long-form motion he sent to the board, and the Private Member's bill it seeks to support. There was discussion about it being a good incentive for volunteer emergency responders, and it was clarified that the tax credit would apply to a volunteer's total annual income. Two corrections were noted.

Director Caston moved, and it was seconded, that:

Whereas:

- a) On February 4, 2021 Courtenay-Alberni MP Gord Johns introduced Bill C-264 to amend the Income Tax Act to increase the amount of tax credits for volunteer firefighters and search and rescue volunteers from \$3,000 to \$10,000;
- b) Pender Islands Fire Rescue ("PIFR") is a composite fire department which depends primarily on paid on-call volunteers to provide first response and fire-fighting services to a community comprised of approximately 2500 permanent residents plus non-resident property owners and visitors;
- c) It is increasingly challenging for the PIFR and other fire departments in rural communities to recruit and retain sufficient numbers of volunteers to provide the necessary level of service. Volunteering is time consuming. Most of the PIFR volunteers have work and family commitments, yet they still devote many hours every week, day or night, rain or shine to serve the community. Additionally, they participate in regular training exercises in order to provide the same standard of service as that provided by paid, professional firefighters. They often incur income loss due to responding to calls during their working hours. Because of the high cost of living, housing shortages and limited work opportunities in our community, new volunteers are in short supply;
- d) Increasing the tax credit from \$3,000 to \$10,000 for volunteer firefighters will serve as an incentive that can only help the recruitment and retention

problems faced by volunteer fire departments. It will also provide volunteers with well-deserved recognition for the services they provide and enable rural fire departments to maintain an adequate level of service standards.

Be it resolved that the PIFPS:

Publicly endorse the initiative to amend the Income Tax Act to increase the tax credit for volunteer firefighters and search and rescue volunteers;

Authorize and direct the President to encourage the passage of Bill C-264 by providing copies of this resolution to Members of Parliament, the Prime Minister and party leaders, and to take such other steps as are considered necessary to promote the initiative to increase the tax credit for volunteer firefighters and search and rescue volunteers. **Motion carried by consensus.**

b) Spam Emails

Director Carle-Sanders explained how to block an email address to prevent spam, after a hacking incident occurred.

7) Next Meeting

- a) The next executive meeting will be on March 9, 2021 at 10:00 am.
- b) The next board meeting will be on Tuesday, March 16, 2021 at 10:00 a.m.

8) Closure

President Macdonald closed the meeting at 11:27 a.m.