

SUPPLEMENT TO MINUTES

FIRE PROTECTION, PREVENTION AND SUPPRESSION

Background – Not a “Knee Jerk” Reaction

Council is well aware that various Fire Protection initiatives have taken place over the life of the Alpine Village and all have failed. There are many issues that can be re-addressed.

Council has been active over the past few years seeking to get CVRD and MWAR to do something about Fire Protection.

1. A Council Committee attended the CVRD public Integrated Resort Community Plan hearings in 2011 aimed at developing a new Community Plan. We stressed the point we were paying taxes but having no representation and receiving no services and our main requirement was fire protection. Our efforts seemed to have no obvious effects upon the new Official Community Plan that came out in November 2014.
2. In 2014 Council started an investigation related to a Forest Management Plan. The singular goal that evolved was a focus on fire aspects. Council investigated the FireSmart approach and obtained training and rating manuals. In April, Council formed a FireSmart Committee (FSC). Also in April the FSC met with the Forestry officer who is the key FireSmart proponent in the Northern Island.
3. After the New Year’s Eve fire scare, Council has taken some measures to at least control fireworks. As stated in the last Minutes, a Rule has been adopted to ban fireworks. Members will be asked to vote on a Bylaw at the AGM, or at a Special General Meeting, if that comes sooner for other reasons.
4. Since the Foster’s fires, Council has been doing a lot of investigating and lobbying to have the main players do something.

Future Plans

We have been advised by CVRD that a new Fire initiative is being mounted which will seek public input. Three of your Councilors have volunteered to be involved. Based on past experiences, it is difficult to expect too much in the near future but Council will dedicate whatever resources are required for this initiative. Although the process may take some time, there seems to be a new, encouraging attitude in the CVRD to do “something”.

Council has decided that irrespective of what and when something may come out of this latest promise, 799 should do something on its own in the short term. 799 has its own unique problems related to winter access. A possible future fire station and truck will be work for 799 for more than half the year. We would need to supplement special winter access gear, to whatever gear such a scheme would entail.

Based on work of the FSC, Council is developing a plan to provide some sort of fire protection for 799 **only**. Council has reached the point that we need feedback from the Membership on what you want your Council to do. Council feels strongly that this cannot wait until the AGM in October and that a Special General Meeting should be called. With Membership approval, Council would like to initiate a work program for this summer.

The basic concept Council is pursuing is based on several central tenants:

1. 799 should look after 799 until something else happens.
2. No local Fire Department is allowed (by law) to respond unless life is at risk.
3. Due to our location, there is no way that we (or anyone else) can save a particular building once it catches fire. Our aim is to wet down adjacent buildings and the forest to prevent multiple buildings, the forest, or even the whole Village from going up in flames.
4. Due to shortage of permanent residents, a proper volunteer fire department is not viable.
5. The first priority is to perform a Fire Audit and then produce a Fire Safety Plan. A Fire Safety Plan shows the location of hydrants, propane tanks (snow-covered or not), transformers, power shut off points, access details, likely populations of buildings, points of ingress and egress of buildings and the Village, muster points, alarm systems, and fire-fighting strategies.
6. Secondly we need to reduce the amount of fuel that can spread fire. FireSmart rates the risk of a fire for a particular location. Unfortunately to completely follow their recommendations to lower our score, we would need to clear-cut the Village. That obviously is not viable. Instead our aim is to reduce the amount of "ladder fuels", the small coniferous trees and scrubs that can conduct understory fires to larger trees and buildings.
7. Thirdly, we need some basic fire-fighting equipment which can be used by any first responders that may be around, and then by outside professional fire fighters who will not be allowed to bring their own equipment.
8. We hope to identify professionally trained firefighters who will respond to a fire year round. We believe that this is possible on a call-out basis with little or

no standby rates. This requires signing a Contract with a donor Fire Department(s).

9. During summer months there is a high probability that Forestry, with its extensive resources, will respond. Although Forestry does not fight structure fires, in our case a forest fire endangers structures to the same extent structure fires endanger the forest.
10. One reason this initiative is now more possible than before is that Lana and Mark Blair are permanent residents and have offered to take an active part.

Details

1. The FSC approached Oyster River Fire Department. Even though they too are in Area C CVRD Electoral District, they are not allowed to respond to a fire at 799. Mt. Washington and surrounds are not included in any Fire District to date. However, the Chief and his staff have been very generous in providing us with useful information and support (within his community service mandate).
2. Courtenay will not assist 799 and has directed us to deal with the CVRD.
3. CVRD refused a meeting but indicated a process was starting. Funds have been made available to hire a Consultant to conduct a public process involving many stake holders. 799 has provided a list of FSC members prepared to attend any meetings.
4. 799 is seeking quotations for services from a private Fire Fighting firm, Strategic Natural Resource Consultants. Strategic provides many different services including the possible provision of firefighters. They also indicated that 799 may be eligible for government grants related to fire prevention projects. They will quote on filing such applications on our behalf.
5. A second independent wildfire contract firm is also under consideration.
6. Cumberland Fire Department has offered to help in various ways:
 - a. Perform a Fire Audit
 - b. Provide staff to help us create a Fire Safety Plan.
 - c. Provide staff to help us select equipment.
 - d. Provide staff to help train personnel.
 - e. Provide qualified firefighters to respond to requests from 799 to attend fires on a call-out basis. 799 will have to provide basic equipment as the firefighters are **not** allowed to use Cumberland FD equipment.
 - f. 799 must form a Fire Society to allow the provision of WCB coverage. To date we have no estimate of firm costs for insurance, but it seems to be fairly reasonable, as long as we qualify.

7. It is necessary to reduce fuel in the Village. The provincial FireSmart process recommends cutting all combustibles in three Zones:
 Zone 1 – cut all “ladder fuel” vegetation for a radius of 10m around buildings,
 Zone 2 – thin out all trees contained in 30m, and
 Zone 3 – thin trees to prevent tree-top spread to 70m.
 Much of the “Ladder fuel” is comprised of small trees that have sprung up over the last 30 years.
 Council feels we cannot meet these recommendations as even Zone 1 virtually produces a clear-cut Village.
8. Council will recommend a thinning of the most flammable small trees (ladder fuels) within 5 meters of buildings. Mature trees constitute little threat but will be “limbed” to a minimum of 2 meters. Dead material on the forest floor will also be cleared within the 5 meter radius. Membership must obviously approve cutting any trees at a Special General Meeting.
9. Quotations are being sought for such work so Membership knows the financial impact of such a move. A preliminary order of magnitude for such work is \$12,000.
10. Council will propose the purchase of some fire-fighting equipment, consisting of hoses, hardware, protective equipment, a tank and booster pump and small trailer. Hydrant pressure of 60-90 psi must be boosted to 150 psi. Initial estimated costs could be as high as \$30,000. This is a one-time investment. Membership will be asked to approve this at a Special General Meeting.
11. Council will ask Membership’s approval to enter into negotiations with outside professional freelance fire-fighters who will respond to fires in the Alpine Village. Of perhaps a dozen volunteers on call, about 4 – 6 will respond. Payment will only be on a call-out basis. Volunteer firefighters are paid \$30 per hour rate.
12. It is yet to be determined if an annual retainer fee is applicable when formalizing a Contract.
13. Members may elect to purchase personal gel kits for their buildings. This fire-proofing material may be sprayed on porches, decks, woodpiles, etc, once a fire has started somewhere and threatens to spread. It has a 6 hour life span and can be hosed off. This material cannot be ignited even with a blow torch.
14. 799 will be well served by subscribing to a special “911-Active” alarm system. Through 911, designated fire-fighters are paged and respond if they are available. There is a small monthly fee applicable.
15. Council will propose a new cost code which will set aside funds for maintenance of fire-fighting equipment and possible payment of personnel.

16. Council will ask MWAR to install snorkels on all 799 fire hydrants or to assure hydrants will always be accessible. Heavy snow fall makes it dangerous and impractical to keep digging out hydrants. Snorkels pay back quickly.
17. At this early stage it appears **no** Special Assessments will be required. The fact we have under-run the snow budget this winter means we should have sufficient funds available for capital and operating costs to get this program going.

Special General Meeting