

**GABRIOLA FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT
GENERAL MEETING - October 05, 2022**

A General Meeting of the Gabriola Fire Protection District was held October 05, 2022 with six Trustees, Corporate Officer, Fire Chief and Training Officer in attendance.

Attendees: Paul Giffin (Chair), Sean Lewis, Fred Apstien, Diana Moher, James Arends, John Moeller, Jessie Longo (Corporate Officer), Will Sprogis (Fire Chief), Kitt Stringer (Training Officer), Members of the public

Not in Attendance: Chris Windess

The meeting was called to order at 4:00 p.m. by Chairman Paul Giffin.

Fred Apstein gave the opening greeting "The GFPID acknowledges that we are gathering within the traditional lands of the Snuneymuxw Nation"

A lengthy discussion took place on approval of a draft agenda. Chairman read aloud Bylaw 97, section 16 and 17. Further discussion ensued.

- Diana Moher suggested making a motion, "to put in our next meeting we move to amend the bylaw to add the additional steps to approving the agenda before we move forward."
- Discussion about recommendations from the Trustee Review Committee and definition on in-camera meetings were had. The discussion soon became heated between Trustees.
- After debate, Trustee John Moeller brought attention back to the approval of the minutes and Diana's suggestion of a motion. Further discussion took place about why agenda items are in-camera.
- Motion was never seconded, discussed or carried.

The Chair returned attention to the need to approve the minutes of the August 31 meeting. Diana Moher moves. Sean Lewis seconds. Discussion. Motion by Fred Apstein proposes an amendment to the minutes under the Long Term Planning Committee. "Fred Apstein noted that the process by which the review was approved should have included the Board from the beginning." Seconded by Sean Lewis. Carried. The minutes of the last meeting, held on August 31, 2022, were approved as corrected.

Correspondence:

Letter to the Editor in the Sounder from Gabriola Contractors read aloud. *See Appendix A* Discussion that followed became heated.

- Fred Apstien - "Staff wanted clarification on what they should do with the permits, but when speaking with the Chair he said it was him who called the meeting. If the staff had called the meeting, I might have shown more interest."
- Diana Moher, "Still looking towards some direction from the Government and from legal to make sure there is no liability ... I heard similar things from both sides that had me concerned enough that I thought having a "Working Meeting", not a "secret" meeting, was worthwhile."
- Kitt Stringer shared that "He and the Chief were on a zoom call with the Senior Prevention Officer from B.C. Wildfire, the Deputy of Emergency Management of B.C. and the Office of the Fire Commissioner and they suggested there is a potential liability issue. The Chair was coming through the office, sat down and joined the latter half of the meeting and was there when it was suggested there was a liability issue. In essence it came from that meeting, from all of us, we expressed as staff to the Chair that we would like some guidance and the Chair reached out to the Board as is the normal chain of command."
- James Arends - "Bylaws are clear, proper notice and public notice .. did not follow the bylaws ... Trustees who did not show up to this illegally called meeting were in the right, the meeting was illegally called ... The fact that people showed up angry about it, I'm not surprised... Let's talk about what's in this letter, I've heard this phone message where it's quoted in the letter..." Trustee Arends continued to discuss liability issues.
- Sean Lewis, "Contacted Wildfire Prevention and quite clear you can make bylaws but if you choose to issue permits you may then be liable ... checked with other Districts and Departments and they don't have permits ... contractors inform them what they're doing and when they are doing it ... Perspective might want to consider. Move on to help each other.
- John Moeller, "My perspective is staff found a liability issue, they are not lawyers they are firefighters, they found a liability issue that they thought might pose a real problem for the fire department so they brought it to the Board. They made the change to the way the fire permits are being issued Not feeling 100% confident with the change they brought it to the Board so the Board can discuss it, review it and possibly give guidance. That was the whole point of that meeting. What this has turned into is us attacking them, and making their lives harder by the minute. I don't understand why. If someone is working for me and brings a liability issue to me, I want to know about that. I'm not going to say, "why, how dare you bring this up to me." That is absolutely insane, I'd want to know. I cannot believe the reaction they've gotten from this."
- The Chair Paul Giffin read aloud a letter he wrote in response to the Gabriola Contractors to clarify the events of the August 19 emergency meeting. *See Appendix B*

The Fire Chief wished to “Clear up the miss quote that was also in The Sounder, and the objection from James about liability and the perceived phone message.” The Chief advised they were going back to the Provincial high risk regulations. He stated Provincial high risk regulations only stop high risk activities. “Major liability issue is when I can’t re-inspect permits and we have clear violations and people don’t wait until the permits are activated, that’s where we run into a strict liability issue.” “This seems to be misconstrued ... Quite a few violations, and didn’t have the staffing to hire another Officer to come on and conduct the permits, and it wasn’t in the budget.”

James Arends asked the Chief for clarification that the quote is not accurate. The Chief confirmed it was inaccurate. James Arends stated, “Perhaps Dr. Rooks could play it then.”

A member in the public asked if the Chair was allowing this to run.

The Chair stated, “No, I’m not. This whole meeting has gotten out of control”

At 4:56 p.m. James Arends stated, “I think I’ve had enough of this” and left the meeting.

A member of the public stated, “Seriously, an elected Government member is walking out. That is shocking.”

Further discussion took place around bylaws, lawn mowing, Wildfire Act, the called emergency meeting on August 19 and how to help the Department and Contractors to move forward.

Question to the floor directed to Dr. Bob Rooks by Trustee John Moeller, “I’m a big fan of openness, I believe that that’s the best way to solve problems. Ok? There’s a person in the Community that’s made it clear that they have an agenda against the Fire Department, he’s here tonight. Bob I’m at a loss, what do you want? You’ve done a number of things, you’ve told people even that you are coming after the Department, and you’ve done a number of things to make that happen. The letter in the paper is one of them, and it’s working. I mean there’s chaos, there’s things going on. So I’m racking my brain, what do you want? I’m just at a loss. Is it exception permits? Help us out, I’m sure we could find a way to appease you, if you could help us out.”

Dr. Bob Rooks replied, “I would like a lack of bias and transparency. And I would like the Board to run in a way that I’m proud of, because I pay for it as a taxpayer.”

John Moeller stated, “I’m sorry, I don’t know how we can achieve that with what you’re doing right now. The way to deal with that is to have a conversation.”

Fred Apstein interjected stating that was out of order, and Dr. Bob Rooks answered his question.

The Training Officer spoke to a letter from the Forest Practices Board which addresses the Bylaws superseding the Provincial Act.

The Chair advised he is moving the agenda ahead.

Guest Speaker: N/A

Treasurer's Report: N/A

Planning Committee: N/A

Communication Committee:

A Trustee proposed creating a policy around becoming more proactive in correcting errors in facts, not for social media but items presented at a meeting, or in the paper. Discussed if it should be another Committee, or a bylaw. Another Trustee stated to put this on the agenda for discussion.

Finance Committee:

2023 Budget was presented and discussed.

The following points were noted:

- Shortfall in legal, prudent to increase
- 8% inflation and should be reflected in wages, however no increase in wages for staff
- New line items created for better tracking - Driver training, Fire Prevention Officer, Employee benefits, Senior and Junior day firefighter
- Funds are being reallocated from previous budget lines to new budget lines. ie. From building maintenance to Sr and Jr day firefighter.
- Reallocated funds to do jobs in house - Day firefighters are at the building during their scheduled shift. Cheaper than hiring someone for building and vehicle maintenance and 90 second response if call happens during the day time
- Pay per practice increased. As a result of COVID the past few years, there were less members at calls. Now when a call happens more people are responding, call volume has spiked
- Gabriola firefighter grant increased. In lieu of increasing pay for volunteers, food cost for after practice will now be covered. Food cost was previously paid by the volunteer firefighters.
- Capital Reserve increased due to Trucks and Hall 2 requiring improvement
- Overall increase is 11.98%

Fred Apstein moved "We approve this budget as presented" Seconded by Diana Moher. Carried

Business Email and File Storage Committee:

Discussion around different options for email and secure servers. Questions presented for further review. Committee will need to discuss further.

Fire Chief Report:

Monthly Call Outs 54

- 18 Burn Complaints
- 1 False Alarm
- 6 Hydro
- 4 Investigation
- 1 MVI
- 2 Other
- 1 Structure Fire
- 1 Rescue & Safety
- 20 First Responder

FireSmart

July 2022	<p>End July Summary:</p> <p>As previously briefed, the FireSmart Grant that expired at the end of May 2022 was directly managed and applied for by the GVFD. This grant was in part due to COVID-related economic recovery. As of June 28 2022, GVFD was awarded \$18,564 dollars towards the coordination of FireSmart activities on Gabriola, Mudge, and Decorcey. For personal reasons, the previous FireSmart Coordinator, Hayley Bennet, has taken a couple of months leave of absence. I asked Oliver Bussler to take on the FireSmart coordination, with the help of his spouse, Glenys.</p> <p>The new FireSmart grant is a subset of the RDN's FireSmart grant. The funds can only be used for wages, which have been set by the RDN at \$34.00/hour. I have asked Oliver to develop this budget based on achievable targets for the three islands. We have broken down the grant funding into five distinct categories: the wages associated with administration of the grant including coordination, ordering supplies, booking events, meetings and other administrative functions. The other sections include Farmer's market - community outreach; FireSmart Home Ignition Zone assessments, including the administration that accompanies that; fuel management initiatives, and wages for LFR's to give public presentations on all three Islands.</p> <p>This grant expires at the end of January 2023 and we will be working with the RDN to seek similar funding; the application process will open in October. Our approach for this grant has been to form a team of trained</p>
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FireSmart representatives within the department. Currently, we have six trained LFR's and have five more people interested in taking the training when it is available in the fall. Additionally, there has been interest by residents of Mudge and Decourcy to take the LFR training. With the team approach, we are able to both use all the funds, and have a wider reach in promoting FireSmart within the community.

Other notes:

Farmer's markets - 5 scheduled, every second weekend during the summer months attended by 2 people

LFR home assessments - Targeting 40, have already had 22 booked after the second Farmer's market

Fuel management - Looking at getting bins from the RDN, as well as other options for paying wages for Zone 1 and 2 fuels to be picked up

Community engagements - Have planned a FireSmart session for both Mudge and Decourcy, the Garden Club and the Gabriola Garden homes.

First invoice will be sent in the next couple of days to RDN - we will be reimbursed monthly as per the terms of the grant.

End August Summary

In August, Oliver & Glenys attended both Mudge and Decourcy Island. They toured the Islands and were shown their facilities and capabilities; they did a presentation to the communities about FireSmart; conducted mock FireSmart Home Ignition assessments; provided information about how to do self-assessment; recruited locals interested in becoming Local FireSmart Representatives (LFRs).

The Gabriola FireSmart team attended two Farmer's Markets on Gabriola Island (Saturday, Aug 13 & Aug 27), signing up 24 homes for assessments. Due to holidays and general lack of LFR availability, only three home assessments were completed. September/October will be a push to complete all the home assessments that were signed up for during the summer months.

September/October focus will be on fuel management, LFR training, Community presentations and LFR Home Ignition Zone assessments.

Drop Off Days

We have been approved to use the MOTI property, Degnen Pit to do FireSmart drop off days held on October 29 & November 5 12 until 4 pm. The material produced is landscaping frusesse from residents FireSmarting around their households. Last year was a great success, 200 vehicle loads were dropped off over a 8 hour period. Many letters of support were sent to the Fire Hall. The two burns allowed all members to have the required training for the upcoming wildfire season.

Emergency Dock Update at Descanso Bay

The emergency services of Gabriola are still waiting for the emergency dock to be replaced after a log got jammed in it and broke it apart at low tide. A contractor has been chosen to do the replacement; no date is set. For the time being Green Wharf is being used as the emergency dock. We have restricted all parking at the end of Wharf road, and left part of a slip open for a medical evaluation. I would like to thank the residents of Mudge Island for supporting the use of Green Wharf .

Day Firefighter Report

Work completed over September.

Junior 48 hrs

- 2 hrs Ground Keeping
- 24 hrs Apparatus Inspection
- 18 hrs Cleaning
- 4 hrs Equipment Maintenance

Senior 64 hrs

- 8 hrs Floor Finishing
- 48 Refinishing Beams
- 8 Antena

“Over the last year we had 11 applications submitted to the Fire Department to become new members. Last week a Select Committee made up of Glenys Bussler, Jenn Knight and myself ran interviews of the applicants. We have selected 6 of the 11 to be processed into basic training. The department is pleased to have a full complement of 40 members.

The Gabriola Volunteer Fire Department needs to create a Deputy Fire Chief position to share the growing workload and on-call duty hours for the Fire Chief. The position would merg a few small positions to make one larger part time position. The position would be made up by merging Training, Prevention and a portion of Duty Officer hours. The budget would not increase; we would just reallocate the fund to one position to more effectively manage these tasks. I would like a motion from the Board for the Fire Chief to be proceed with preparing materials such as job desriptions and other documents required for the selection process of hiring a Deputy Chief.

The Gabriola Volunteer Fire Department is applying for a UMBC Grant up to \$30,000 for phase 1 of a structural protection unit. A structural protection unit is often a trailer loaded with equipment to prepare homes the best chance of surviving an incoming wildfire. The equipment purchased in phase 1 or \$30,000 would be the start-up equipment such as water bladders, pumps, hoses, sprinklers. I need a motion to allow the Fire Department to submit the grant application and manage the grant if successful.”

Diana Moher motioned “for approval to apply for the \$30,000.00 grant.” Seconded by Fred Apstein. Carried.

Fred Apstein Motioned “The Chief create a job description to bring to the Board for discussion” Seconded by Diana Moher, Carried.

Training Officer’s Report:

Independent review update

-Update on progress

-Report from Jay Brownlee

The HR subcontractor is confirmed and ready to start reviewing issues we submit - The 3 top items I suggest we review are:

- What are the current standards under updated PIPA Law for the collection and retention of employee (paid or volunteer) information?
- How should personal information resulting from Driver's Abstracts, promotional interviews / processes, discipline, etc, be kept and handled by a department or employer?
- Is the employer's governing body (ie" a Mayor and Council, or Board of Directors) entitled to request and review any of this personal information?

- Is there a standard policy or best practice in BC that addresses a reporting relationship in the workplace involving a married couple integrated into the Officers Chain of Command?

- Is there a standard policy or best practice in BC that addresses real or perceived nepotism in promotional procedures?

Meeting with trustees for input and department members beginning the end of October- date set for trustees- he will attend officers meeting.

EMR update

Province asking for First Responders to provide more care to boost up the system.

EMR Instructor Course- Vancouver Oct 21,22,23 Glenys, Jenn, Kitt

GVFD EMR Course- 11 members- Nov 25th,26,27- Dec 2nd, 3rd, 4th.

Evacuation drill

-Still meeting with stakeholders to review the drill

-Feedback positive- recurring theme of neighborhoods needing more self resilience

Training Info

Regular members drill

-CPR with Jenn

-Naloxone Training with Claire Dineen

-Lw Ropes Stations Lessons

-Low Ropes Drill- include Search and Water

Additional Training

-1 more Member completed the six on-line training sessions for the program developed for the Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs; Equity, Diversity and Inclusion.-
8 hours

-2 members attended a Train the Trainer event for Emergency Scene Traffic Control with Roadmasters Safety Group- Held in Lantzville
FD. New WCB rules

-Fire inspector level 1 and 2 accreditation ongoing

B.C. Fire Training Officer Association Meeting update - Craig Richardson presentation

NEW- Training Standards

-sneak peek with Craig Richardson

-Need to begin by March 2024

-defined rolls for auxiliaries

-pump course

-ISO requirements

-Will require Jessie for some extended time

Thank Trustees that came out to training night

Thank Trustees who came to Infrastructure Tour

Association:

Fireworks at Twin Beaches on October 29 at 7:00 p.m. Fire Boots will be around the Community to fundraise to support the cost of the fireworks. It's been two years since the last event.

Old Business:

Diana Moher moves "To table business by email policy - Draft until the next meeting" seconded by Fred Apstein. Carried.

New Business:

Fred Apstien moved "To remove Paula Mallinson from bank accounts" Seconded by Sean Lewis. Carried.

A member of the public expressed their sadness around the letter to the Editor from the Gabriola Contractors, and concern about a fire starting by mistake. The Chair thanked them for their comment and wished to reiterate that no contractor lost any days of work as a result of the actions that were taken.

How meeting minutes are recorded:

The Corporate Officer requested to revisit how meeting minutes are currently drafted, it was stated there is a lot of time creating the minutes and a lot of detail noted. They requested to streamline the process of minutes, eliminating who said what and use Robert's Rules as a guideline. If any questions around who said what, or what was discussed, there is the audio recording. It was noted by Trustee Diana Moher minutes are for what is done, not what is said.

Diana Moher moved "To amend recording of minutes as described in Robert's Rules" Seconded by John Moeller. Discussion. Carried. 4 Trustees Paul Giffin, John Moeller, Diana Moher and Sean Lewis voted for. 1 Trustee Fred Apstein voted against.

Fred Apstein noted he had to leave at 6:15 p.m, apologized and left the meeting.

Sean Lewis moved to "Table Board letter process questions to next meeting" Diana Moher seconded.

Paul Giffin moved to adjourn the public meeting, seconded by John Moeller
Adjourned at 6:19 p.m.

Meeting minutes approved as amended at the November 02, 2022 general meeting.

Appendix A

TO: Gabriola Fire Protection Improvement District Board of Trustees
Gabriola Sounder

Date: 17 September 2022

As contractors we are deeply concerned. We are local contractors, providing services to Gabriolans and contributing to the local economy. We do it safely and responsibly, because Gabriola is also our home. We have been applying for, receiving, and working under exemption permits for years. Last year, shutdown extended through July, August and part of September, and we were working with exemption permits during that time.

After going through the process and receiving permits after the fire rating was at shutdown in August, each of us received a call on August 18th from the Fire Chief to tell us that he was rescinding all exemption permits because fire department "staffing levels are low coming into the end of summer; people are taking holidays". We were told to "default to the provincial regulations".

The next day, on August 19, the Chair (Paul Giffin) of the Gabriola Fire Protection Improvement District Board called an emergency meeting of the Trustees. The Sounder's article "*GVFD to stop issuing exemption permits for burns*" covers the events of the meeting. Chair Giffin is quoted in the article as saying "I learned that if a fire permit is issued to a contractor, whoever, and as a result of that work or work being done by the contractor/developer, a fire starts, not only is the contractor/developer whoever liable for that fire, but so is the fire department." He also says "...as Chair of this Board, I am not prepared to take that risk. Not at this time."

The concern, depending on who is talking, is either that the Fire Chief does not have not enough firefighters to cover the required staffing levels for the department, or that the Trustees are concerned, not about there being a fire, but about liability if there is one. What is the real reason the permits were rescinded? Why were the contractors told one thing, and why was there an emergency meeting held for a completely different reason the next day?

If the fire department was so concerned about their liability surrounding the permits, perhaps it would have been a good idea for them to invite us to this meeting and discuss their concerns, instead of just pulling our permits and telling us to follow the provincial guidelines at our discretion. Trustee Moeller is quoted in the article as saying "there's no harm in stopping...some contractors won't get to work for a while, which is unfortunate". I don't believe our employees and families will think there is no harm in stopping our work.

We rely on the fire department to work with us, and we need to be able to trust what we are told. To have our permits rescinded a few days after they were issued, for reasons that are either about fire department staffing problems or Trustee concerns about liability, is not good community policy. Communication and transparency is a responsibility of government.

(Signatures attached)

Gabriola Contractors-signatures for letter to the GVFD September 2022 (original signatures provided to the Gabriola Sounder)

Devlin Semmler-Blackfish Homes

Jay McCarthy-Kayan Custom Homes

Robert Rooks-Gabriola Gravel & Excavating

Curtis Smith-Island Tree Service

Sean Hawkes-Total Property Care

Hank Lenko-MHL Construction

Bob Bye-Gabriola Septic

Ted Ramey-Ramey Systems

Felix Amuir-Amuir Excavating

Andrew Huber-Huberhaus Projects

Phillip Frisson-GI John

Dusty Trainer-D & A Hoodcleaning

Mike Stewart-Phoenix Grounds Maintenance

Peter Fulton-Sea to Sky Construction

Dan Foley-Summer Rain

Tom Duffin-Limber Tree Service

Jeff Pounds-Pounds Metal

Tami Craig-G.T. Yardworks

Dan Kelly-Island Wide Milling

Byron Schofield-Trafalgar Homes

Kodiak Youngman-Salish Sea Tree Service

Darryl Saam-Drain Doctor/Discovery Home Inspections

Mack Shaw-Mack Shaw Excavating

Kaleb Velsen-Velsen Contracting

Adam Velsen-Velsen Homes

Appendix B

I will respond to the letter dated Sept 17 2022 received by the Board on Wednesday Sept 21 from gabriola contractors @gmail.com.

I will correct some errors in this letter. I would also hope the media gives this response as much attention as it gave the letter from gabriola contractors

It is fair to say that the increase in fires and their costs to the Province of BC has been significant over the recent years. This has drawn increased attention to both wild fires and interface fires.

On August 18, 2022, during a phone call with a senior person in the Ministry of Forests it was brought up that the fire department may be held liable should a fire occur at a site where a fire permit has been issued. I was also aware that the resources of the Gabriola fire department were being strained due to emergency response calls and fire permit requirements.

I subsequently contacted all Trustees and asked for an emergency meeting on August 19, 2022 at 4pm. It is noteworthy that only Trustees were contacted.

The purpose of the meeting was to advise the trustees of the liability issue, seek their direction, provide support for the fire chief and hopefully have information pertinent to the issue available prior to the August 31 Trustee meeting in order to limit the disruption of the services provided by the fire department.

At 4pm Trustee Moeller was on the phone, Trustee Windess was off island and not available, Trustee Moher and Giffin were present in the meeting room and three trustees did not attend. Hence there was no quorum. However at 3:45pm Mr. Rooks lawyer had appeared at the fire hall, followed by a media representative (Derek), Mr Bob Rooks and several other citizens. In the interest of full transparency, the matter of concern was discussed with those present. Mr. Rooks then took the opportunity to dress down the Chief.

Subsequent to the August 31 public meeting of the Trustees there was an in camera meeting held. At this time the liability issue, along with new information obtained, was presented to the trustees. I sought a motion from the trustees to be authorized to contact legal counsel to review the issue and provide direction. Hopefully the trustees would then be in a position to create a policy that would address the concerns. One trustee, "agreed to conduct some research into the issue of liability in my role as a trustee." On Sept 14, 2022, the trustee sent a letter to the board saying that he "conducted quite a bit of research...and fully intended to provide a memo to the board that could be used to

provide some guidance due to this supposedly pressing liability issue .However I wish to be clear that I will not be doing so”.

So here we are in October and I will again be asking for permission from the board to contact legal counsel.

It is important for EVERYONE to understand that no action taken by the board of trustees or the Fire Chief stopped any contractor from doing any work. What changed was that fire department was not issuing permits and all parties were required to comply with the Provincial regulations.

As a Trusree and Chair of the Board, my primary concern is to ensure that the island has an effective and efficient fire deptartment. Having said that, the Board also has a fiduciary responsibility to the department and ratepayers. The actions taken by the fire department were interim and allowed contractors to work.

I would like to thank those in the community that have worked through this issue with the fire department, taken the time to understand what the problem may be and supported the fire department and its members.