



LOCAL SERVICES BOARD OF LORING, PORT LORING AND DISTRICT
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Summary of Discussion Points - Meeting between Argyle Volunteer Fire Brigade and Local Services Board – September 18, 2017

This can also be viewed on our website: www.loringslb.com

Meeting brought to order by Sandra at 7:31 p.m.

This meeting was held at the request of the Fire Chief, Argyle Volunteer Fire Brigade (for the remainder of the minutes, referred to as the Fire Dept)

In Attendance for LSB: Sandra Gendron, Hilary Chambers, Mike Buchanan, Steve Davis, Stephen Brushey and Peggy Whitehead

In Attendance to speak on behalf of the Fire Brigade: Christopher Ballard, Tracey Watson, Robert Hampel, Mike Clapperton and Dan Brooks

There were approximately 75 local residents in attendance

Background

Sandra stated that she was contacted by Kevin Schooler, a representative of the Ontario Fire Marshall's (OFM) office on August 21st. Mr. Schooler advised that the OFM wanted to change the current process of fire agreements and wanted to meet with the LSB on Monday, August 28th to provide information. He was advised that we could not meet as a full Board due to the requirement to hold all meetings in the public, and provide one-week notice of all meetings. He stated that a meeting with some of the Board would be acceptable as his intention was to provide information only.

The request to meet with some of the Board members was sent by e-mail and one additional Board member was identified to attend the meeting. Once this agreement was reached, a meeting was set for Monday, August 28th to include: Two LSB members, the LSB Secretary, the MNDM Rep, and two OFM members. Mr. Schooler indicated that he would invite the Fire Chief. The intention behind the meeting was to provide the information, answer any immediate questions and allow time for the two agencies (LSB and Fire Dept) to have a full discussion in a separate venue. On the day of the meeting, there were too many LSB members (both for the current and new Board) that insisted on attending the information meeting. In order to prevent a quorum of LSB members and the perception that the LSB

members were attempting to meet outside the public view, the location of the meeting was changed to a private residence.

Current Process

Based on the information provided at the information meeting, Sandra outlined the current process: an agreement for Fire Services is signed between the OFM and the Argyle Fire Dept Board; and the LSB contracts for fire protection with the Argyle Fire Dept. The OFM wants to change this process so that the agreement is signed between the OFM and the LSB; and the LSB would contract for services with the Fire Dept, incorporating the terms in the OFM agreement into the contract. Their rationale for this change is that the OFM, as the provincial agency, would have an agreement with the elected representatives of the community (the LSB) instead of an agreement with the Fire Dept Board.

At this point, the meeting was handed over to the Fire Dept Chief, Christopher Ballard.

Argyle Fire Department Presentation

The Fire Chief read several extracts from the Northern Services Board Act, and the Local Services Boards Guide for Inhabitants and Board Members that would preclude changing the agreement procedure from its current structure. Chief Ballard also stated that if the LSB approves a by-law (at the September meeting) to sign the agreement with the OFM, this action would cancel the existing contract between the LSB and Fire Dept. Residents would be left without fire protection for at least one month until the new LSB was put into place (the reference cited by the Fire Chief is from the Inhabitants Guide, page 42).

Christopher provided a brief summary of the Fire Dept history from the former three-department structure to the current organization that was formed when the three departments amalgamated in 1996. Since that time, the agreement has been in place between the Fire Dept and the OFM, and a contract between the Fire Dept and the LSB. The current procedure works and provides fire services to the area for \$157,600 per year which covers the costs of operating three stations.

Sandra clarified that the LSB had absolutely no intention of signing any by-law regarding the agreement, especially since the Board has not yet discussed this matter together in the public forum. The agenda for the September meeting has been posted and it clearly indicates that there is no by-law tabled; therefore, it cannot be signed. She also emphasized that suggesting the LSB would take any action that would leave the residents of this community without fire protection for any period of time, or move forward on such an important topic without public consultation and discussion, was incorrect and misleading. Much more information is required before any decision can be made. She indicated that she is researching other unorganized service boards that have similar areas to ours (similar in the sense that there are summer residents, residents that live on islands or remote locations, etc). She also stated that the OFM has offered to address this topic with the full Board (and also with the public in attendance) and this was one of the items that would have been discussed at the September meeting.

Kerry Booth advised the residents that the OFM wanted to sign the fire services agreement with the LSB (instead of the Fire Dept) 15 years ago but at that time the agreement was much more extensive. The current agreement is almost the same as the one that the Fire Dept currently signs with the OFM; the difference is that it does not include water access support or off-road situations. Sandra said that the OFM advised that this would be an optional service that the LSB would negotiate with the Fire Dept directly; and if agreed, the LSB would have to obtain additional liability insurance for that type of service. Kerry Booth summarized by stating that while it was good to have this meeting, it was held too soon and that the OFM and MNMD representatives must also be in attendance in order to answer questions that are outside the Fire Dept and LSB areas of responsibility.

Steve Davis brought up that the honorariums for volunteer fire fighters were not an eligible expense for the budget. Steve said that this should be changed to training fees and further consultation would be required with the MNMD. Christopher provided a breakdown on the calculation of honorariums and indicated that this cost should be considered as a thank you to the volunteers who support the community. He also asked why the LSB has to follow the Guide when calculating service fees when the LSB does not follow the section (of the Guide) that states the LSB cannot sign with the OFM when they have a contract with the Fire Dept.

Conclusion

After much discussion, it was clear that the concerns related to this proposed change in procedure could not be resolved or fully addressed by the LSB and Fire Dept Representatives. More research and discussion is required and further public meetings with representatives from the OFM and MNMD in attendance are required.

The meeting concluded at 8:50 PM.

Prepared By
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Peggy Whitehead
Secretary/Treasurer

Posted on September 29, 2017