

Date: 17/11/2021

To: Chair and Directors, Committee of the Whole

And To: John MacLean, Chief Administrative Officer

From: Stuart Larson, Manager of Protective Services

Date of Meeting: Committee of the Whole_Nov18_2021

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Short Summary:

Fire Hall Usage

Background:

Throughout the history of the fire service in small communities, the fire hall has been a place for people to come together and provide a service to their families and neighbours and take some time to socialize. As these departments grew, the sense of belonging increased and they became a quasi-family which used their facility for small events. These events were of a fundraising nature to begin with and then morphed into larger events such as Christmas parties and BBQs. So long as you were a member, the door was always open to welcome you home.

During these times, many departments created registered societies or auxiliaries to act as the official fundraising arms of their organization. Traditionally, this was a function adopted by the spouses of the firefighters and supervised by the chief. This gave some ownership to the spouses or retired members so they could be or continue to be a part of the department. Again, because these organizations were a part of the department, the door was always open.

As we progress towards today, many of these societies and auxiliaries have dissolved because the departments are tax funded and no longer require the bake sales, BBQs, or beer gardens. What remains is the expectation that the door is still open because that is the way it has always been. With changes to legislation in regard to workplaces and safety, liabilities for property owners, and security of assets, the "way it has always been" no longer exists as we know it.

Residents argue that fire halls are public facilities and should be made available for use by the public as there are limited, or no facilities available within their immediate areas and there is demonstrated history of use. Fire chiefs argue that the halls are a workplace and are no longer willing to accept liability for the unsupervised use of the facility. It must be recognized that there are no formal agreements in place with any organization for the use of fire department facilities, so liability for any incident falls upon the CRD at this time as the owner of the facility.

Additionally, all maintenance, utilities, and cleaning are the responsibility of the CRD with no mechanism for cost recovery in place.

Attachments:

N/A