



WRG

**Salt Spring Island Fire Protection District (SSIFPD)
Fire Service Review**

January 2015

Letter of Transmittal

January 31st, 2015

The Board of Trustees
Salt Spring Island Fire Protection District

Subject: The Final Report on the Fire Service Review

Dear Trustees

At the outset I want to thank the Board for allowing us the opportunity to conduct this examination on their behalf and for the guidance of Chairman Dan Lee and Board Trustee Mike Garside during the completion of this contract. I want to acknowledge the efforts of Chief Bremner and his staff of officers, firefighters and volunteer Paid-On-Call firefighters who gave their time to be interviewed, find and deliver documents and participate in the Town Hall meetings.

This report would not have been possible without the cooperation and contribution of the more than one hundred property owners, tax payers and residents of the island who submitted their thoughts and observations in written form, over the telephone or in person. To each of them, the community owes thanks.

Finally, our association with FireWise Consulting has been very productive and rewarding and I want to thank Glen Sanders, Dave Ferguson and Gary McCall for their efforts to bring these reports into one comprehensive document.

I believe that the observations and recommendations contained herein represent an honest and objective assessment of the Salt Spring Fire Protection District and provide a “roadmap” for future growth and I respectfully submit it for your review.

Richard L.H. Walker,
Sr. Counsel and President
The Walker Resource Group

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Letter of Transmittal

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Executive Summary

Our assessment was informed by an extensive Public Engagement process that included four “Town Hall” meetings and dozens of individual interviews. We have concluded that the fire and rescue service on Salt Spring is an example of a very well trained, professional emergency response unit. The career firefighters and the Paid-On-Call volunteers provide an effective fire and first response service for the residents and visitors.

Issues that have arisen during our examination date back to the late 1950’s in some cases, and some of the decisions made then and in the following 65 years have now come under question. While the history is informative, the task before the SSIFPD Board of Trustees is to deal with the organization they have before them today, and to the best of their ability, make decisions that are informed and in the best interest of the community as a whole. Without exception, the citizens that participated in the Public Engagement Process recognize the contribution being made by the community volunteers that sit as Trustees on the 2015 SSIFPD Board.

The annual budget has reached \$2.5 million and represents a mill rate cost of slightly less than the provincial average for communities of similar size. Costs associated with the budget are of significant concern to the majority of people we interviewed and the recent disclosure of salaries has peaked public interest. We believe that there are measures that can be taken to limit costs and that the Board needs to take specific actions to realize some budget efficiencies in the coming years. This may require limiting the menu of services currently being provided. Those decisions must be made in the context of an engaged and better informed public, because every service that is expected by and provided to the public has a cost.

During our examination we were made aware of a number of elements that require further examination by the Board and the operational staff. The location of SSIFRD boundaries, service area, hydrants, the responsibility for inspection(s) and bylaw enforcement were all highlighted. While we were able to comment on these, the scope of our assignment did not allow us to delve deeply into the history or the complexity of each issue. Where possible, we have made observations and

recommendations, and strongly suggest additional follow-up by the administration, operational staff and the Board.

This report recommends a more participatory form of decision making for the Board. We suggest a model that includes the creation of new subcommittees which are populated by members of the Board and representative property owners. It is our belief that this model will significantly improve the transparency and the quality of communication between the Board and the public. We have also included a limited number of specific suggestions regarding confidentiality, conflict of interest and the need for a robust and professional administrative unit.

The main Fire Hall in Ganges needs to be replaced immediately and steps should be taken to include extensive public involvement in the decision to relocate and the design of the new facility. In our conversations with members of the public, only one person of the 109 people who participated in the Public Engagement process suggested that a new Fire Hall was not needed. The desire for an open planning process for the examination of a location, size and design of the proposed new facility was universal. This type of planning will take more time than a traditional decision making process, however the goal is to achieve consensus on the location and design of the new facility and avoid the confusion and anger generated by the first attempt. It is hoped that this participatory approach will result in a fully functional space that meets both the needs of the Volunteers and Career firefighters, and the budget expectations of the community.

The Collective Bargaining Agreement was raised as an issue in almost every meeting and the lack of information and understanding about the contents of the contract was evident. It is clear that an in-depth review of the contents of the Agreement must be initiated immediately so that SSIFPD puts forth a strategic and coordinated approach to negotiating the renewal of the contract in 2016.

We believe that the SSIFPD could be a model for other communities and the recommendations contained herein can serve to improve the quality, efficiency and effectiveness of the Board and the fire and rescue service in general.

1. Introduction

The Salt Spring Island Fire Protection District (SSIFPD) issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) in the summer of 2014 to conduct a Fire Service Review. The intent of the review was to examine the mandate and operations of the fire and rescue service as well as to provide observations and recommendations regarding the Board of Trustees. The Walker Resource Group (WRG) was retained under contract on September 21st, 2014 and work commenced immediately.

At the outset the contract was divided into two distinct, yet interdependent segments. FireWise Consulting was engaged by WRG to undertake the more technical, fire and rescue related activities while WRG focused on the Board of Trustees activities and the Public Engagement process. FireWise has generated a report that forms a part of this document and as such they stand with WRG in the presentation of facts, opinions and recommendations.

2. Background

The SSIFPD recently failed in an attempt to get community support for the construction of a new fire hall. The referendum requested approval for the borrowing of funds to complete the design, construction and project management of a new hall to replace the facility in the village core. The Trustees and administration believed that they had offered multiple opportunities for the public to participate in the discussion, planning and design of the facility, however that feeling was not widely shared and several individuals and groups have questioned the openness and transparency of the process. During the weeks leading up to the referendum, a significant amount of public interest was generated by the display of plans and the introduction of alternate suggestions by which the new facility could be developed, but for which little detailed information was made available. The resulting concern resulted in the defeat of the referendum and a damaged relationship between the SSIFPD and the public.

The release of the 2015 SSIFPD budget and the process that was used to arrive at the final budget figure became a point of concern to many in the community. It was suggested that the \$2.5 million budget exceeded the community's financial ability and that both the budget number and the decision making process needed examination.

WRG launched the Fire Service Review contract with a commitment to Public Engagement and our review of the fire and rescue service on Salt Spring was heavily influenced by that process. We initially set out to interview thirty individuals from the Board, Career Firefighters, Paid-on-Call Firefighters and members of the public. Our intent was to identify individuals in the community that had expressed interest in the leadership and/or operations of the SSIFPD so we could contact them to ensure an interview was booked. In addition, we booked three separate "Town Hall" meetings that were advertised in the Exchange, Driftwood and on the SSIFPD website. In the end, a fourth Public Meeting was held to accommodate a request by the public to be able to bring more technical questions to the table. By January 30th 2015, 109 individuals participated in the Public Engagement process.

The Terms of Reference for the contract were developed from the RFP issued by the SSIFPD in August 2014. The importance of the need for Community Engagement could not be overstated. Our approach echoed those sentiments and in early October 2014 we initiated the engagement process. Soon after we began we were overwhelmed by the interest and response. To the best of our ability and within the timelines given to us under this contract, we tried to accommodate every person who wanted to contribute to the assessment. We believe that WRG and FireWise have completed a thorough examination of SSIFPD and an exhaustive Public Engagement process.

3. Observations and Recommendations

WRG was retained to undertake an assessment of the Salt Spring Island Fire Protection District (SSIFPD) and to make recommendations where improvements could be made. The scope and intent of the contract was to conduct a critical analysis of the current conditions at SSIFPD, review the history of the service as it may relate to the need for adjustments and generate constructive recommendations to help the service move forward. We were not contracted to conduct a forensic investigation into past mistakes, nor were we interested in finding or assigning responsibility of past actions or decisions.

Over time, decisions were made by the men and women who served in the operations or on the Board. Those decisions were made in the context of the times. What may have been appropriate then may now be viewed otherwise. The fact remains that we have a fire and rescue service that has evolved from a Volunteer Firefighter brigade operating out of a single hall to an organization that has professionally trained, full time firefighters working alongside highly skilled volunteer, Paid-On-Call firefighters from the community, operating fifteen vehicles from three separate halls.

Salt Spring is disadvantaged in that it is not a Municipality and as such it is not eligible for many Provincial grants and subsidies. In 1989 the Provincial Government began a process aimed at reducing the number of unincorporated communities and phasing-out Improvement Districts. Today only 247,000 British Columbians receive service from Improvement Districts and provincial grants and subsidies remain unavailable. The burden that this places on the tax payer has begun to show on the island and several references have been made to “tax payer fatigue”. The construction of the swimming pool, library, the inevitability of a filtration plant at St. Mary Lake, up-grades to the sewage/sewer system, and costs associated with schools and community infrastructure have and continue to weigh heavy on the minds of tax payers. In the absence of significant provincial and federal assistance – such as that which is available to a Municipality, the majority of these costs have, and will continue to be transferred directly to the property owners of Salt Spring Island.

The task before us, as a community, is to determine the extent to which the tax payers of Salt Spring want to maintain, restrict or enhance the level of service being delivered by the SSIFPD, articulate those expectations clearly so that the Fire Rescue service and the public understand the implications of those decisions, and then build-in processes and efficiencies into the governance, operations and budgeting for those services. Every service costs money.

There was significant comment regarding the Board of Trustees during the Public Engagement process. Without exception those that provided their input were very complimentary with respect to the dedication and commitment of the volunteers who serve as Trustees. Several were surprised to find out that the Trustees are volunteers and there is no monetary remuneration, unlike School Trustees who receive a stipend for their service. In all of our interviews there was never a mention of intentional wrong-doing or malfeasance. It is clear that the property owners of Salt Spring value the contribution of these seven volunteers and wish to work together to move the SSIFRD forward.

Our examination and the issues raised in the Public Engagement process fall into one (or more) of the following four subject areas:

- The Board of Trustees
- Operations and the Cost of SSIFPD
- Administrative Support
- Facilities and Physical Plant

It was our intent to examine each of these four areas to determine if and where improvements could be made. The caveat to all of this is the limited discourse that we were able to have with the public and the very clear need for an extensive communication and engagement process with the rate payers so that the future of a fire and rescue service on Salt Spring can be debated and discussed.

3.1 The Board of Trustees

The Salt Spring Fire Protection District is governed by a Board of Trustees made up of seven elected property owners – one of which serves as the Chair. The structure and regulations under which the Board operates are dictated by the Provincial Government and are administered as an Improvement District. On Salt

Spring Island, there are several Improvement Districts, each providing a specific service or function. Most of the IDs on the island are related to the provision of water service.

Improvement districts are autonomous local government bodies responsible for providing one or more local services for the benefit of the residents in a community. They vary considerably in size, from small subdivisions, to urban communities. Improvement districts are usually located in rural areas of the province where there was no alternative form of local governance available, suitable, or desirable for the community. They are similar in structure to a municipality but are more informal and only provide direct services such as waterworks, fire protection or street lighting. There are more than 200 improvement districts operating in the province.

Improvement districts are brought into existence by the provincial government through Cabinet Orders which authorized the passage of a document known as Letters Patent. The Letters Patent contain the name of the improvement district, its boundary and the services which it will provide to the residents within that boundary.

Although improvement districts are independent public corporations, they are also subject to supervision by the Ministry. All bylaws passed by the board of trustees must be registered with the Inspector of Municipalities and the bylaws are not effective until that approval is granted.

*Government of British Columbia
Ministry of Community Services
Improvement District Manual*

3.1.1 The Role and Responsibility of Trustees – The SSI Fire Protection District Board of Trustees have a very important role in the delivery of service to the public.

The improvement district's Letters Patent, applicable sections of the Local Government Act, and other applicable provincial statutes outline the powers that can be exercised by the board of trustees. These powers include the ability to enact and enforce its regulations and charges, to assess and collect taxes, to acquire, hold and dispose of lands, to borrow

money and to expropriate lands required to carry out its functions. The board of trustees exercise these powers through the passage of resolutions and bylaws.

*Government of British Columbia
Ministry of Community Services
Improvement District Manual*

3.1.2 Accountability - Trustees and members of a Board are accountable in a multitude of ways. They are accountable to each other for their service to the Board and for their professional behavior on behalf of the organization. Each member of the Board has a fiduciary responsibility.

Fiduciary. def: In law, (a Trustees is) a person in a position of authority whom the law obligates to act solely on behalf of the person he or she represents and in good faith. Examples of fiduciaries are agents, executors, trustees, GUARDIANS, and officers of CORPORATIONS. Unlike people in ordinary business relationships, fiduciaries may not seek personal benefit from their transactions with those they represent.

Miriam Webster's Dictionary 2015

3.1.3 The Duty of a Trustee - Being a Trustee involves myriad duties and carries a responsibility unlike that of an average citizen. In general terms, a Trustee's fiduciary responsibility can be summarized in nine points:

- 1. THE DUTY TO ADMINISTER - To manage the trust in accordance with its terms for the duration of the trusteeship.*
- 2. A DUTY OF LOYALTY - An obligation owed by a trustee to a beneficiary that binds the trustee to act in the best interests of the beneficiary while refraining from placing their own interests above those of the beneficiary.*
- 3. DELEGATION BY A TRUSTEE - A responsibility that a trustee owes to the grantor and beneficiary to personally carryout the management of trust assets and other matters that the trustee has agreed to undertake.*

4. *A DUTY TO KEEP AND RENDER ACCOUNTS - The trustee has the role of keeper of records and provider of transactional details.*
5. *THE DUTY TO FURNISH INFORMATION - The right of beneficiaries to receive a copy of the trust, along with detailed information including all material facts, accountings, and transactions.*
6. *A DUTY TO EXERCISE REASONABLE CARE AND SKILL - Trustees have a duty to exercise reasonable care and skill in executing their duties and responsibilities as trustee in relation to the fact that, as a fiduciary, the trustee has the highest level of duty.*
7. *A DUTY TO TAKE CONTROL OF TRUST PROPERTY- Ensuring proper designation and title of trust property to secure the corpus by the trustee.*
8. *The DUTY OF IMPARTIALITY - A trustee's responsibility to administer a trust so as to afford each beneficiary with the same level of benefits and protection. The duty extends to current as well as successive beneficiaries.*
9. *A DUTY WITH RESPECT TO A CO-TRUSTEE - The dual accountability of a trustee for their own actions, inactions, and decisions, as well as those of their co-trustee(s).*

*Guide for Trustees in a Post-Uniform Trust Code World
by Edward Jones Trust Company*

3.1.4 Oath of Office - An Oath of Office is an important element of building trust between the members of a Board; between the Board and the operational staff; and between the Board and the public they serve. The Oath need not be long and detailed, several examples exist where only a few lines articulate the pledge that each Trustee is making.

Recommendation – 1 : The Board should move immediately to craft an Oath of Office and have each Trustee read and sign the oath. The Oath of Office and the expectation that the Oath will be signed should be included in the documentation for nominees to vacant Board positions. (within 45 days)

Sample Oath of Office

“I swear that I will faithfully, impartially and to the best of my ability perform the duties of Trustee as prescribed in the Letters Patent, law and the regulations of the Province of British Columbia.”

3.1.5 Confidentiality and Conflict of Interest - Confidentiality, professional behavior and the avoidance of any real or perceived conflict are important to a Board and are an expectation of Board membership. All members of a Board are charged with responsibilities that affect people’s lives either directly, as in employment related issues, or less directly such as decisions around service delivery or policy.

Recommendation - 2: The Board should move immediately to draft a Confidentiality Policy and accompanying Agreement for each Board member to review and sign. The Confidentiality Agreement and the Conflict of Interest Policy and the expectation that both will be signed should be included in the documentation for nominees to vacant Board positions. (within 45 days)

Sample Confidentiality Agreement

“This is to certify that I, _____, a Member of the Board of Trustees of SSIFPD, understand that any information (written, verbal or other form) obtained during the performance of my duties must remain confidential. This includes all information about volunteers, employees and other associate organizations, as well as any other information otherwise marked or known to be confidential. I understand that any unauthorized release or carelessness in the handling of this confidential information is considered a breach of the duty to maintain confidentiality. I further understand that any breach of the duty to maintain confidentiality could be grounds for immediate dismissal and/or possible liability in any legal action arising from such breach.”

Recommendation - 3 : The Board should move immediately to create a Conflict of Interest policy and have each member of the Board review and sign it. (within 45 days)

3.1.6 Board Orientation - Membership on a Board can seem overwhelming at first. New Board members should expect to receive support and guidance from longer servicing members and an orientation to the work and protocols of the Board. A package that contains the Letters Patent; Bylaws; Policies; Improvement District Manual; governing legislation; Oath of Office; Confidentiality Agreement; Non-Conflict Agreement; the Terms of Reference and job descriptions for each subcommittee; and an abridged version of Roberts Rules of Order should be available to each Board member. In addition, each new Board member should have an interview with the Chair and the Chief once each calendar year.

Recommendation – 4 : The Board should move quickly to create an Orientation Package and a process of mentorship for new Board members. (within 60 days)

3.1.7 Balancing Priorities - As one can see from the nine duties of a Trustee, the responsibility of accepting a position on a Board of Trustees comes with a significant measure of responsibility. Embedded in these nine duties are the principals of transparency, fairness, professional conduct and accountability. Incumbent in those responsibilities is the need to balance the constraints of Board membership with the demands for public involvement. When members of the public or rate payers are included in the activities of the Board, such as decision making, the Trustee(s) must keep in mind that the greater good for the beneficiaries as a whole must weigh heavily against the individual desires of a single beneficiary. This may appear to contradict the eighth duty; however the common ground achieved by affording each beneficiary with the same benefits and protection often resolves conflicts involving preferential treatment or the wishes of an individual.

Trustees acting in the course of their duty will not generally be liable for damages arising out of the decisions they make. The legislation provides protection that limits their liability to certain actions such as gross negligence, malicious or willful misconduct, dishonesty, libel or slander (section 287). Further information on this topic can be found in the Insurance, Liability and Indemnification section.

*Government of British Columbia
Ministry of Community Services
Improvement District Manual*

Recommendation – 5 : The Board is encouraged to conduct a Board Governance workshop once annually to ensure that they identify and hold themselves accountable for the roles and responsibilities set out for them and set forth by themselves. It is important that this session be held annually so that “mission drift” is avoided and adherence to standards of practice for Board members is maintained. It is also suggested that the Board invite representatives from the Ministry to attend and participate in the working session. (within calendar 2015)

Mission Drift, def: Mission drift is when a nonprofit unintentionally moves away from the organization’s mission. The mission is the raison d’etre of an organization. It provides direction and purpose for the organization, motivates staff and volunteers ... and provides a means of evaluating organizational achievement.

Imagine Canada

3.1.8 Transparency – Transparency comes in many forms and applies differently in an operational and Board context. For the sake of this examination we limited our assessment to two areas; documentation and decision making.

A) Documentation: During the course of our examination we were introduced to myriad documents that relate to, or have in the past related to, the governance and operations of the SSIFPD. While every attempt was made by the operational staff to provide us with documents, and all documents requested were forthcoming, it was noted that there is a significant amount of material held in storage that is at some risk of loss or deterioration. Because the public has an interest in the preservation of historic documents and because some of these documents shed light on the decisions and processes that have allowed the fire and rescue service to evolve into the entity we see today, we believe it is very important that all of the documentation related to the SSIFPD be protected and stored electronically.

Digitizing documents is easy and can provide not only the effective storage and safeguarding needed, but with a simple document

management system (DMS) digitized files can be easily retrieved and made available as needed. It was noted in our Public Engagement Process that the ability to access information has been a major concern for members of the Board and the public. Current delays in the retrieval of documents and the impact that those delays have on decision making and public confidence make an electronic data and document system a priority. As each document is digitized, a summary of the contents, date and author should be made and tied to the reference (locator) number. There are individuals on the island with significant experience in library management and a cooperative effort by the SSIFPD to engage these professionals in the archiving of documents would be valuable. Students from GISS could be retained to assist as required, as part of a summer employment strategy that both accomplishes the goals of document management and provides a summer work experience for youth.

Recommendation – 6 : The Board should immediately initiate a Board Task Force to address this issue (within 45 days), start a dialogue with professionals on the island who have experience in this area and connect with the Library and the High School to see if a mutually beneficial program can be established. It is strongly recommended that the SSIFPD then move quickly to assemble all hard copy and electronic documentation; research and adopt a simple Document Management System (DMS); and proceed with archiving all material. (completed within 200 days)

Access to documents is an issue that requires a policy of the Board. There will be a small number of documents that cannot be made available to the public due to their sensitive nature – the majority of which will be Human Resource Files and perhaps some documentation relating to planned capital or operational expenditures. It is likely that when all of the documents are scanned and catalogued, all but a few could be made available to the public. Only those few documents that meet specific confidentiality criteria as determined by the Board should be restricted from distribution. A policy relating to the criteria for flagging a document as confidential would be part of a Document Accessibility Policy.

The Board needs to determine a process of reviewing and responding to requests for information where the document has been deemed confidential. All other documents should be available to the public through the Fire Rescue Service web site or a revised web portal to which tax payers have access by means of an access number – perhaps related to their tax assessment notice.

Recommendation – 7 : The Fire Rescue service as part of the Board Task Force noted should seek professional assistance in the creation of a policy that requires all documentation to be made available to the registered property owners on the island and potentially to the public in general, in electronic form from the web site or a web portal. The exception to this would be the aforementioned confidential documents, for which the Board must create a criteria for designation and a process to review, approve or reject access requests. The policy must include timelines for reviewing requests and providing a response. (completed within 200 days)

B) Decision Making - Transparency in decision making was a frequently mentioned issue during the Public Engagement process and one that should be addressed immediately by the Board. The perception that in the past some important decisions may have been made without the tax payers’ knowledge or approval presents a difficult governance “Catch 22”. The Board is charged with the responsibility to act on behalf of the property owners and to make decisions based on their knowledge and expertise, yet some members of the public want greater involvement in decisions. While Boards are accountable to their electorate, an electorate that does not participate in the public sessions offered by the Board or who do not attend and observe Board meetings have little recourse when decisions are made with which they disapprove. There are options available, and one is to open the Board subcommittee structure to engage more public input.

Participatory democracy applied in the context of a community service such as fire and rescue on Salt Spring can benefit in a number of ways. Having property owners available to assist in the review and decision making process adds value and credibility to the eventual outcome. The

caveat to this is the added time and effort that it takes to include additional people in a process, where previously only a few participated. The benefit of being able to access human resources that don't normally reside in the administration or Board far outweighs the additional expenditure of time.

Volunteers and paid professionals that are able to contribute their knowledge and experience to an agenda bring an insight that may normally be missed. In addition, a third party, removed from the responsibilities of Board governance can often provide community insight and practical advice gleaned from years of experience in other situations.

The concept of an open, participatory Board subcommittee structure is examined more completely in the following section.

Communication between the Board of Trustees and the public has been strained in recent years. The failure of the Fire Hall Referendum served as notice that something had to be done if there was ever going to be hope of solving the facilities issue. The Fire Service Review and the resulting reports are a first step in addressing the need for greater communication.

Recommendation – 8 : The Board should develop a Communication Plan that addresses the need to engage and inform the public more fully. This plan should include the creation of a new web portal as discussed above; access to all SSIFPD documents; an annual “State of the Service” presentation by the Chief and the Board Chair; more frequent press releases; better use of social media; and greater public engagement. (completed within 200 days)

3.1.9 Board Structure and Protocols

Boards operate under the watchful eye of the electorate. Having a set of protocols that address most of the standard business of the Board helps maintain consistency and build confidence. Robert's Rules of Order is the standard to which most Boards hold themselves in North America. The Board Trustees currently operate under Robert's, however adopting and

implementing a published set of Robert’s Rules is a convenient way to ensure that the Board meetings and the business of any subcommittees of the Board operates smoothly.

Robert’s Rules are not rules per se, rather they are guidelines by which Boards and associations may conduct orderly and professional meetings. The Board is encouraged to include a tutorial and review of Robert’s in their annual governance workshop sessions.

Recommendation – 9 : The Board should immediately and formally adopt Robert’s Rules of Order and publish an abridged version – with edits and amendments as necessary – on the SSIFPD website as a public document. The resulting Robert’s Rules should serve as the minimum standard for all Board or subcommittee meetings. (within 45 days)

Board structure is an important element and one that needs to be addressed. The current structure can serve as a framework for additional subcommittees needed to effectively manage the affairs of SSIFPD. It is strongly suggested that several new subcommittees of the Board be established and populated. Membership on the subcommittees need not be restricted to Trustees, indeed the addition of members of the public can add a significant amount to these working groups. In addition, by opening the decision making process to members of the public, the SSIFPD Board will be, and will be seen to be more inclusive and transparent.

These subcommittees of the Board can serve as an introduction to the SSIFPD for members of the public who may be contemplating a Trustees position. In addition, Trustees who are retiring from the Board could use the subcommittee structure as an “exit platform” from which they can slowly release themselves from Board service while continuing to share their institutional knowledge.

To simplify the process of subcommittee development, the following structure is suggested:

Finance and Audit: Composed of a minimum of three Trustees, one of which serves as the Chair, and up to five members of the Public who

have experience and knowledge relevant to banking, accounting, bookkeeping, business or government.

Human Resources and Legal: Composed of at least two Board members, one of which serves as the Chair, and up to five members of the public who demonstrate a knowledge and interest in human resources, staffing, law, business or counseling.

Marketing and Communications: The subcommittee will have a minimum of two Board members, one of which serves as Chair, plus up to five members of the public that possess skills and experience in communications, website design and management, marketing, business, media or social media.

Facilities and Physical Plant: Composed of three members of the Board, one of which serves as the Chair, plus up to five members of the public who have experience in building maintenance, construction, property development, mechanical systems, planning, design, engineering or architecture.

Strategic Planning and Policy Development: Comprised of three members of the Board, one of which serves as Chair plus up to five members of the public who possess knowledge and experience in business, government, governance, non-profit management, education, public policy or strategic planning.

There will be a requirement that members of the Board sit on more than one subcommittee. This may result in the need to increase the size of the Board from its current seven members so as to spread the workload across a larger group. In addition, recruitment of members of the public to these subcommittees will take a significant amount of effort. It is believed however that the benefits of opening the decision making process to include knowledgeable members of the public will add significantly to the quality of leadership and will reflect a more open and transparent governance model.

Subcommittees will be managed under the same rules and protocols as the Board, however a more open and free-ranging dialogue is encouraged during

the working group meetings. Members of the public that accept a role on one of the subcommittees will be expected to sign a confidentiality agreement and non-conflict statement; come prepared to participate in the work and decision making process; accept tasks assigned by the subcommittee; and to the best of their ability be fair and impartial.

Subcommittee recommendations should be made by way of a motion and a vote with all members expected to participate. Subcommittee recommendations carry a significant amount of weight, however they do not bind the formal decision making process of the Board and the Board is not obligated to accept or adhere to any subcommittee recommendation.

It is anticipated that there will be a lot of cross-communication between subcommittees, especially during the budget and audit processes. The Finance and Audit subcommittee for example may request that all other subcommittees participate in the review and rationale behind individual items in the proposed budget.

Examples: The justification for training, professional development, conference attendance or staffing changes should be scrutinized by the HR and Legal subcommittee and a recommendation forwarded to the Audit and Finance Subcommittee for review. OR ... The Facilities and Physical Plant subcommittee may be asked to review the administration's request for new equipment or renovations to existing buildings and submit a summary to Audit and Finance for inclusion in the draft budget.

Much needs to be done to create and implement this form of open decision making. The Board needs to review the concept and decide if a participatory form of governance is desirable at SSIFPD and if so, a Task Force should be charged with the responsibility of finalizing the concept and moving forward. In the event that the Board accepts this recommendation, the immediate priority is to establish the Finance and Audit subcommittee and the Human Resources and Legal subcommittee. These two subcommittees must address issues currently on the table at SSIFPD and be prepared to share their finding with the Board and the public.

Of immediate concern is the need to prepare for the development of the annual financial statements, conduct the annual audit and organize the Annual General Meeting. The HR and Legal subcommittee needs to establish a roster of candidates for inclusion on the various subcommittees and initiate a process of recruiting people to populate the five working groups. In addition, HR&L needs to articulate the job descriptions for each subcommittee and create a recruitment package and subcommittee orientation.

Recommendation – 10 : SSI Fire Protection District Board of Trustees adopt a participatory model of decision making with subcommittees populated by Trustees and members of the public, and immediately create a Finance and Audit subcommittee, and a Human Resources and Legal subcommittee. (within 45 days)

3.2 Operations and the Cost of the SSIFPD

Communities across North America are struggling with issues related to the provision of services and the cost of police, fire and emergency services. Recent articles in Canadian media suggest that some jurisdictions are facing financial insolvency due to the rising costs of police and/or fire protection. With average staff salaries exceeding \$100,000 per year, small municipalities are looking for ways to trim the budget. In British Columbia, municipalities manage the vast majority of fire protection while to a certain extent policing and ambulance are generally outside their direct control (except in larger urban areas) – policing being provided by the RCMP and Ambulance service being a provincial responsibility.

Salt Spring Island is unique in that, as an unincorporated entity there is no municipal authority to plan, manage or monitor the fire service. Capital plans, budgets and operations are dealt with locally by the elected Board of Trustees. Guidance for the operations and management of the service comes in the form of provincial and national standards, guidance from the Fire Underwriters Survey and input from the firefighters' union.

In a Municipality, budgets for the Fire Service are routinely scrutinized by the Municipal administration – likely a finance division, before being sent to the

Municipal executive for review and ultimately the elected Council for acceptance or amendment. This system of checks and balances ensures (for the most part) that the capital and operating plans of the Fire Service are in keeping with an overall program service delivery plan of the Municipality and that the budgets are approved in the context of other needs and priorities – planning, inspections, sewer, water, waste disposal, parks, recreation and so on. On Salt Spring, all of these functions operate independent of each other with the exception of the few services provided by the Capital Regional District (CRD) or the Islands Trust and generally do not benefit from cross-communication and decision making.

How the cost of the Fire rescue service relates to the cost of policing, parks and recreation, water, sewer and other services was not included in the mandate of this assignment. We did however research the cost of fire services in other jurisdictions as a way of determining where SSIFPD is positioned relative to others.

A comparison between communities is not a perfect science as no two communities are identical and many administrations calculate costs differently. Some administrations do not include administrative cost (or portions of administrative costs) in the calculation of the fire serve expenditures as some of the non fire-related activities are assigned to municipal administration, human resources, legal or accounting departments.

Generally speaking SSIFPD operates within the financial averages of communities of similar size. While exceptions can always be found the reader is cautioned not to focus on a simple side-by-side comparison with another island or a mainland community of 10,000 population. Our assessment has concluded that at less than \$0.90 per thousand in property value (the “Mill Rate”), the SSIFPD cost is slightly below the provincial average for similar communities. Some communities operate at sub \$0.50 per mill levels (like Shawnigan Lake, Mill Bay and Cowichan Bay) while other have budgets that result in a Mill Rate in excess of \$1.50. Could the cost of the fire and rescue service be reduced – yes it could. Should the cost be reduced – perhaps. Ultimately, the answer depends on the public expectations of the level of service they want and the ability of the SSIFPD to negotiate at the next Collective Agreement renewal in 2016.

Mill Rate. def: Each year, council, during its budgetary process, approves the amount of revenue required to operate the municipality. From this amount they subtract the known revenues, such as grants, licenses, permits and so on. The remainder represents the amount of money to be raised by property taxes. The amount to be raised is divided by the total value off (sic) all the property in the municipality and multiplied by 1,000 to decide the tax rate also known as the “mil rate.”

The Municipal Assessment Agency

3.2.1 The Firefighters’ Contract

Prior to 2005, firefighters on the island were not unionized. Negotiations around salary and working conditions, and a lack of effective communication between the Board and the firefighters resulted in an impasse and the firefighters sought guidance from their colleagues. This impasse and the discourse between the firefighters and Board at the time provided sufficient grounds for employees to seek permission for a show of support for unionization. The resulting discussions lead to the ratification of a union vote and in 2005 the first Collective Agreement was negotiated and signed. At the time, the negotiations were handled by Board members without the participation of experienced union, legal or labour relations professionals. In 2011 the Collective Agreement was renewed and again no outside counsel was used during negotiations. The resulting contract remains in effect until December 31st 2016.

Incumbent in a Collective Agreement are detailed descriptions of the working conditions and remuneration, amongst other things. The Salt Spring Firefighters’ salary schedule is tied to that of Saanich. Salaries for firefighters on Salt Spring are based on their qualifications and experience and as such the salary grid could award a new career firefighter with annual pay approaching \$100,000 if they have the appropriate qualifications and experience. Most of the current Salt Spring career firefighters have passed this plateau.

The Career Firefighters currently work a day shift during the week (some adjustment to this schedule is currently being discussed) and the Command Vehicle is assigned to one of the Career members each evening so that all

incoming calls can be assessed and the appropriate response made. Prior to the 2005 Collective Agreement, this “duty” was shared among all firefighters, both career and Volunteer Paid-On-Call and the remuneration was nominal. Subsequent to the 2005 agreement and then again in the 2011 renewal, this duty fell under the guidelines of the contract and two significant changes were implemented:

- The career firefighters had first right to Command Vehicle duty and only if none of the career members wanted the duty, could a Paid-On-Call member take the role.
- The remuneration was increased to 50% of a Captain’s hourly rate, resulting in a situation today where each overnight “On-call” duty results in an additional allowance of approximately \$435. The cost to the SSIFPD last fiscal for this duty call was in excess of \$160,000.

Having a professionally trained and highly qualified battalion of career firefighters is an enviable position to be in, especially when resident on an island. The issue that the Board must address is that the number of career firefighters and the cost of maintaining this level of service may exceed the expectation, desires or capacity of the rate payers. This is especially true in an unincorporated community like Salt Spring where the costs of all other services are being borne by that same taxpayer without relief from provincial grants and subsidies.

Recommendation – 11 : The Board must move quickly to assign a Board Committee (likely the HR and Legal subcommittee recommended) to start the process of gathering information about Collective Agreements in other jurisdictions and to explore how those communities are addressing the cost of fire services. (within 90 days)

Recommendation - 12 : The Board should begin the process of building a professional negotiating team; seek outside advice with respect to what can and what cannot reasonably be expected in the December 2016 negotiations; and move to engage the unionized firefighters in a constructive dialogue to address the community’s concerns regarding services to be delivered and the associated cost. (within calendar 2015)

3.2.2 Efficiency and Effectiveness

Our analysis suggests that there are a number of initiatives that could be taken to achieve financial efficiencies, keeping in mind the distinction between efficiency and effectiveness. Budget cuts can result in efficiencies, but if the service delivered falls below the mandate of the organization, the effectiveness of the organization in meeting community expectations is compromised.

Effectiveness is about doing or using the right things — things that yield positive results. Efficiency is simply about doing things right — i.e., completing a task cheaper or faster.

Ideally, individuals and companies find ways to be effective and efficient, but it is possible to be effective, but not efficient, or vice versa, or neither.

Diffen Business Dictionary

Recommendation – 13 : We suggest that there is a need for the Board to re-visit its Letters Patent and other SSIFPD documents, and examine closely where their authorities exist (for service delivery) and where they do not; where the boundaries of service delivery exist and where they need to be amended; and where opportunities and agreements currently exist for Mutual Aid (or should exist) with neighboring jurisdictions. Agreements with BC Ferries, Salt Spring Air, Harbour Air, the Water Taxi service and others should be established or refreshed as they relate to emergency transport. (within 200 days)

During the Public Engagement process we were offered a wide range of opinions regarding service expectations from; limiting the SSIFPD to firefighting only and not providing inspection, education services or first response; to increasing the size and scope of the organization to include all aspects of emergency response, ambulance, emergency preparedness, the Emergency Operations Centre, Search and Rescue, building inspections, permits and bylaw enforcement.

Call volumes at SSIFPD have reduced significantly over the past ten years. There are a number of reasons for this, not the least of which are better building practices and materials; the building inspection program; and the fire safety education initiatives delivered by the career Firefighters. These programs cost money to plan and deliver. The expectation that budgets should have reduced over time as call volumes drop ignores the realities of the cost of delivering the various safety programs mentioned, inflation and the annual salary adjustments stipulated in the union contract. As previously mentioned, at \$0.90 per mill the SSIFPD operates within the provincial financial averages. The question that needs to be addressed centers around the community expectation for service - what services are expected and what are not.

Approximately 30% of the calls annually are fire-related. The largest portion of “call outs” are First Response calls where the SSIFPD personnel provide support to the Police or Ambulance service. It is clear that Salt Spring Island is understaffed at the Royal Canadian Mounted Police detachment (RCMP). The staffing formulae for a detachment servicing a population the size of Salt Spring Island suggests that an additional four constables are needed. Unfortunately, because Salt Spring is not a municipality, the formulae is not applicable and the current allocation of eight members will remain until such time as the island is incorporated as a Municipality.

The Ambulance Service is provincially mandated and there appears to be no significant increase in funding or service delivery levels on the horizon. With one Ambulance often busy transporting individuals to the ferry; the remaining ambulance is left to cover the entire island.

Emergency Preparedness (The POD system and Emergency Operations Centre) on Salt Spring is the responsibility of the CRD and operates at a budgetary level significantly lower than municipalities of similar size - no increase is anticipated.

Faced with the realities of the emergency, policing and ambulance service on the island, SSIFPD has evolved over time to be the “go to” source for support and emergency response. It has been the expectation of the community that

someone will respond to an emergency in their home or place of work. For the reasons stated previously, those responders have historically and increasingly been firefighters.

Based on our interviews, the public seems to be conflicted when faced with the statistics – everyone wants a community that protects and supports its citizens and visitors, but they also want an affordable system. We believe that these are not mutually exclusive and that selected measures can be implemented that will result in savings without a reduction in essential services.

Only after the Board has determined the service delivery model that meets the needs of the tax payers on the island, can they move forward to rationalize the annual budget development process.

Recommendation – 14 : The Board must move immediately to engage the rate payers on the island in a dialogue with respect to the fire and rescue service to determine the specific services that need to be provided. The issue of First Responder; property inspection; fire safety training and education need to be discussed. Each service adds cost, some more than others. The final decision with respect to the level of service required on the island must be discussed and agreed to before the next budget cycle. (within 200 days)

3.2.3 Zero Based Budgeting

Our assessment and the comments received from the Public Engagement process suggest that a Zero-Based budgeting process and a more robust protocol around the creation, review and approval of the annual budget could achieve some success in reducing cost.

Zero Based Budgeting. def: (A) Method for preparing cash flow budgets operating plans which every year must start from scratch with no pre-authorized funds. Unlike the traditional (incremental) budgeting in which past sales and expenditure trends are assumed to continue, ZBB requires each activity to be justified on the basis of cost-benefit analysis, assumes that no present commitment exists, and that there is no balance to be carried forward. By forcing the activities to be

ranked according to priority, ZBB provides a systematic basis for resource allocation.

The Business Dictionary

Recommendation – 15 : The Board should move to affirm the Zero Based Budgeting model as the standard for all future budgets. (within 45 days)

3.2.4 Water Supply

Water is a critical issue on the island. The volume and quality of water varies by season and the responsibility for distribution of water is shared by fifteen separate water supply entities – some, like North Salt Spring Water operate as an Improvement District, others are under the guidance of the CRD or operate completely independently. The supply of water for firefighting has always been an issue due to the geography of the island and because the independent water systems exist for the most part, for the provision of potable drinking water and their infrastructure may not have been designed to accommodate modern firefighting equipment.

The location of hydrants, the volume of water available to those hydrants and the infrastructure that supplies the hydrants varies from system to system, and within systems depending on the age of the installation. Because of these variances and the need to be assured of water in rural and remote locations, SSIFPD has adopted the Superior Water Shuttle system. This system has resulted in significant savings for homeowners who carry fire insurance, as the insurance rate for homes within the reach of the Shuttles is significantly less than it would have been if a water supply was not assured. Communities in other parts of the Province are examining the feasibility of adopting the Shuttle model as the costs of building (in ground) infrastructure are increasingly prohibitive.

Recommendation – 16 : The Board should move to meet with the relevant authorities in all of the water supply organizations to confirm a process of testing, rating and marking hydrants, standpipes and water supply systems and make that information available on the SSIFPD website or portal. (within calendar 2015)

3.2.4 Bylaw Enforcement

Municipalities have the authority to enforce bylaws as does the CRD. Improvement Districts generally do not have the necessary authorities to initiate enforcement; however they can use other means to accomplish enforcement when required. The designation of several SSIFPD staff as Local Assistants to the Fire Commissioner could allow the service to intervene in special situations – discussed more completely on page 29 and again later, starting on page 39 of the FireWise Report attached.

It is important to note however that with enforcement powers come the possibility of increased call volumes and additional training and staffing. The need and appropriateness of having SSIFPD become an enforcement agency beyond that which it is already mandated to do is a subject for further investigation, costing and debate in the Public Engagement process that has been recommended.

An examination of the roles and responsibilities of all on-island enforcement personnel and the need for greater coordination between the SSIFPD, the CRD, the RCMP and the Islands Trust is required.

Recommendation – 17 : The Board assign a Task Force or subcommittee to examine bylaw administration and enforcement and to meet with the relevant authorities from the CRD, Islands Trust and RCMP to discuss a coordinated enforcement program that meets the needs of the island residents. (within calendar 2015)

3.3 Administrative Support

The administration of a non-profit, public service entity such as the SSIFPD is critical to the effective and efficient operation of the organization and the function of the Board. The administrative staff and volunteers provide the back-bone of the organization and enable all other elements to operate effectively. There are specific requirements for Improvement Districts related to administrative staffing.

Historically, administration has been seen as an “overhead cost”, a necessary “financial burden” to an organization. This has been especially true of non-profits, societies and charities. Nothing could be further from the truth.

The administrative unit in an organization, especially a non-profit is vital to the core competence and operational effectiveness of the unit and must be seen as a high priority when budgeting and staffing.

SSIFPD has a limited administrative unit made up of full-time staff, part-time staff and contributions made by volunteers. Other jurisdictions have found success and cost savings by outsourcing some functions such as bookkeeping and payroll.

Recommendation – 18 : The Board should immediately assign a Task Force or subcommittee to examine the administrative function(s) within the SSIFPD and determine a roster of responsibilities and deliverables. An outside Human Resource advisor should be retained to assist in this regard and to create job description(s), a list of qualifications, and a valuation of the position(s). Current staff could be assessed against these findings and included in the interview process as necessary. (within 45 days)

3.4 Facilities and Physical Plant

There is no doubt that the original Fire Hall on the island has exceeded its life expectancy. The building was built on in-fill that continues to settle causing concern about the safety of the staff and equipment. Environmental studies of the ground water and soils under the old Shell Gas Station and the extent to which hydrocarbons may or may not be migrating are unknown and continue. The structure will not withstand a seismic event of any significance. The community runs the risk of having staff and equipment lost or severely compromised when it is needed most. The functions and equipment currently residing in the main Fire Hall need to be relocated.

The two auxiliary halls – one in the south near Fulford and one at Central are cinder block buildings of modest dimensions. Neither building is expected to

withstand a significant seismic event; however they are less likely to sustain debilitating damage than Hall #1 in the centre of the Village. No structural tests were conducted during this examination and we rely on the expertise of others to provide a bona-vide certification of the structural integrity of the buildings.

Recommendation – 19 : The Board should move quickly to have a structural assessment completed on Halls #2 and #3 so that the risk of damage during a seismic event can be determined. (within calendar 2105)

The referendum to replace Hall #1 was soundly defeated and the issue remains unaddressed. Several options were discussed during the Public Engagement process and FireWise added their comments regarding alternatives (see the FireWise report).

An expansion of the Central Hall to accommodate the relocation of equipment and personnel from Hall #1 would require the purchase of adjacent properties; the demolition of any buildings on those properties; the adjustment of the septic field on the existing property and possibly the purchased properties; and potentially the demolition and replacement of the existing Fire Hall so as to meet earthquake standards at the new facility. It has been suggested that these works would require in excess of \$1 million in order to deliver a clear property ready for a new building.

The Brinkworthy property that was donated to the SSIFPD through their Foundation offers an option that few communities the size of Salt Spring ever realize – a large parcel of land close to the highest concentration of citizens, clear of obstruction and ready to accept a new building. This property could be the most economical solution to the facility question.

In the event that a decision is forthcoming regarding the construction of a new fire hall, the Board will need to assess the two locations; Central and Brinkworthy and determine which is the most operationally effective and cost efficient option.

Recommendation – 20 : The Board should immediately assign a Task Force or subcommittee (like the Facilities and Physical Plant subcommittee recommended) to initiate a Public Engagement process to address the need for a replacement for Hall #1. This process should start at the very beginning: the need to exit Hall #1 and explore all of the options for replacing that

functional space. Further, the Board should assign a date of November 30th 2015 for the delivery of the subcommittee recommendation and then begin to plan for a referendum early in 2016. Because of the history behind this issue, the Board is advised to retain a facilitator for this process. (within calendar 2015)

4. Summary of Recommendations

Recommendation – 1 : The Board should move immediately to craft an Oath of Office and have each Trustee read and sign the oath. The Oath of Office and the expectation that the Oath will be signed should be included in the documentation for nominees to vacant Board positions. (within 45 days)

Recommendation - 2: The Board should move immediately to draft a Confidentiality Policy and accompanying Agreement for each Board member to review and sign. The Confidentiality Agreement and the Conflict of Interest Policy and the expectation that both will be signed should be included in the documentation for nominees to vacant Board positions. (within 45 days)

Recommendation - 3 : The Board should move immediately to create a Conflict of Interest policy and have each member of the Board review and sign it. (within 45 days)

Recommendation – 4 : The Board should move quickly to create an Orientation Package and a process of mentorship for new Board members. (within 60 days)

Recommendation – 5 : The Board is encouraged to conduct a Board Governance workshop once annually to ensure that they identify and hold themselves accountable for the roles and responsibilities set out for them and set forth by themselves. It is important that this session be held annually so that “mission drift” is avoided and adherence to standards of practice for Board members is maintained. It is also suggested that the Board invite representatives from the Ministry to attend and participate in the working session. (within calendar 2015)

Recommendation – 6 : The Board should immediately initiate a Board Task Force to address this issue (within 45 days), start a dialogue with professionals on the island who have experience in this area and connect with the Library and the High School to see if a mutually beneficial program can be established. It is strongly recommended that the SSIFPD then move quickly to assemble all hard copy and electronic documentation; research and adopt a simple Document Management System (DMS); and proceed with archiving all material. (completed within 200 days)

Recommendation – 7 : The Fire Rescue service as part of the Board Task Force noted should seek professional assistance in the creation of a policy that requires all documentation to be made available to the registered property owners on the island and potentially to the public in general, in electronic form from the web site or a web portal. The exception to this would be the aforementioned confidential documents, for which the Board must create a criteria for designation and a process to review, approve or reject access requests. The policy must include timelines for reviewing requests and providing a response. (completed within 200 days)

Recommendation – 8 : The Board should develop a Communication Plan that addresses the need to engage and inform the public more fully. This plan should include the creation of a new web portal as discussed above; access to all SSIFPD documents; an annual “State of the Service” presentation by the Chief and the Board Chair; more frequent press releases; better use of social media; and greater public engagement. (completed within 200 days)

Recommendation – 9 : The Board should immediately and formally adopt Robert’s Rules of Order and publish an abridged version – with edits and amendments as necessary – on the SSIFPD website as a public document. The resulting Robert’s Rules should serve as the minimum standard for all Board or subcommittee meetings. (within 45 days)

Recommendation – 10 : SSI Fire Protection District Board of Trustees adopt a participatory model of decision making with subcommittees populated by Trustees and members of the public, and immediately create a Finance and Audit subcommittee, and a Human Resources and Legal subcommittee. (within 45 days)

To simplify the process of subcommittee development, the following structure is suggested:

Finance and Audit: Composed of a minimum of three Trustees, one of which serves as the Chair, and up to five members of the Public who have experience and knowledge relevant to banking, accounting, bookkeeping, business or government.

Human Resources and Legal: Composed of at least two Board members, one of which serves as the Chair, and up to five members of the public

who demonstrate a knowledge and interest in human resources, staffing, law, business or counseling.

Marketing and Communications: The subcommittee will have a minimum of two Board members, one of which serves as Chair, plus up to five members of the public that possess skills and experience in communications, website design and management, marketing, business, media or social media.

Facilities and Physical Plant: Composed of three members of the Board, one of which serves as the Chair, plus up to five members of the public who have experience in building maintenance, construction, property development, mechanical systems, planning, design, engineering or architecture.

Strategic Planning and Policy Development: Comprised of three members of the Board, one of which serves as Chair plus up to five members of the public who possess knowledge and experience in business, government, governance, non-profit management, education, public policy or strategic planning.

Recommendation – 11 : The Board must move quickly to assign a Board Committee (likely the HR and Legal subcommittee recommended) to start the process of gathering information about Collective Agreements in other jurisdictions and to explore how those communities are addressing the cost of fire services. (within 90 days)

Recommendation - 12 : The Board should begin the process of building a professional negotiating team; seek outside advice with respect to what can and what cannot reasonably be expected in the December 2016 negotiations; and move to engage the unionized firefighters in a constructive dialogue to address the community's concerns regarding services to be delivered and the associated cost. (within calendar 2015)

Recommendation – 13 : We suggest that there is a need for the Board to re-visit its Letters Patent and other SSIFPD documents, and examine closely where their authorities exist (for service delivery) and where they do not; where the boundaries

of service delivery exist and where they need to be amended; and where opportunities and agreements currently exist for Mutual Aid (or should exist) with neighboring jurisdictions. Agreements with BC Ferries, Salt Spring Air, Harbour Air, the Water Taxi service and others should be established or refreshed as they relate to emergency transport. (within 200 days)

Recommendation – 14 : The Board must move immediately to engage the rate payers on the island in a dialogue with respect to the fire and rescue service to determine the specific services that need to be provided. The issue of First Responder; property inspection; fire safety training and education need to be discussed. Each service adds cost, some more than others. The final decision with respect to the level of service required on the island must be discussed and agreed to before the next budget cycle. (within 200 days)

Recommendation – 15 : The Board should move to affirm the Zero Based Budgeting model as the standard for all future budgets. (within 45 days)

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Recommendation – 19 : The Board should move quickly to have a structural assessment completed on Halls #2 and #3 so that the risk of damage during a seismic event can be determined. (within calendar 2105)

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5. Conclusion

Our assessment has determined that as a whole, the fire and rescue service on the island is much more professional than it has been in the past and the management of the operations is on par or better than most communities in the province. The cost of the fire and rescue service is not excessive given the costs in similar communities, however the extent to which the full roster of services can and should be provided in the future needs to be examined by the community.

The Board or Trustees play a significant role in the delivery of service to the property owners and much can be said about their dedication and commitment to the community.

We have identified areas where improvements could be made to the Board governing model and where cost efficiencies could be realized. There is little that can be done at this time to effect any real changes to the Collective Agreement with the Firefighters Union; however there is sufficient time before the contract renewal in December 2016 to research and begin crafting a negotiation strategy.

Opening the decision making process to include more public participation, a more robust administrative unit, and the need for a new facility to replace Fire Hall #1 are the most pressing items on the Board's agenda.

We have made specific recommendations for each of these priority issues and have offered a process that is very heavily weighted on the side of Public Engagement so that the outcome of a future referendum could be more positive.



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