

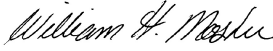


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Item No. 2

Halifax Regional Council
March 24, 2009

TO: Mayor Kelly and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY: 

William H. Mosher, Chief Director, Fire & Emergency

DATE: March 4, 2009

SUBJECT: Fire Service Rural Management Committee - Update

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

Over the last two years, Halifax Regional Fire and Emergency has undergone a change in leadership and a subsequent restructuring of roles and responsibilities. Throughout the Fall of 2008, the Rural Management Committee identified a number of changes it felt was necessary to ensure it continues to play a meaningful role representing the volunteer firefighters in Halifax Regional Fire and Emergency within the new structure.

BACKGROUND

The Fire Service Rural Management Committee was established on the recommendation of Council on July 2, 2002. The purpose of this committee was to ensure that the volunteer members of the rural fire service of HRM would have a vehicle to advise senior managers of the fire service on issues of concern to them. The objectives established were: (1) provide a forum for the discussion of issues of interest to the rural fire service; (2) initiate, research and review policy, implementation of policy, and other matters; (3) and advise the Chief Director of Halifax Regional Fire and Emergency Service on issues in the Rural Fire Service.

DISCUSSION

The committee has dealt with many issues over the past five years. It has been an effective forum for input from the volunteer members to proposed changes in policies and procedures, and has been a valuable communications tool for other concerns such as tax structure changes. Changes in HRFE structure in the past two years have eliminated many of the day-to-day issues which often previously found their way to the committee. Access directly to those responsible for provision of support services has eliminated issues previously caused by delays and misunderstandings.

The committee has examined its past role and identified directions it needs to follow in order to continue to be a valuable contributor in the current structure of HRFE.

The following major changes have been made and are now incorporated in the revised terms of reference:

- ▶ Change of name for the committee to Volunteer Fire Advisory Committee to better reflect its role.
- ▶ Increase the number of volunteer members from eight (8) to nine (9) to allow for the inclusion of a representative from the core area volunteers to sit on the committee.
- ▶ Appointment of two (2) Councillors to the committee, an increase from one. The committee has found the input of the Council representative valuable in the past but it has been difficult at times for a single Councillor to balance a commitment to this committee with necessity to deal with other district affairs. A second Councillor will relieve some of this pressure and also broaden Council's collective understanding of the uniqueness of this sector of the fire service; the only municipal service provided primarily by volunteers as opposed to employees.
- ▶ A change to the term of volunteer appointments to three (3) years to improve continuity of committee membership. One third of the members will be replaced annually.
- ▶ Recognition of the positions of Executive Officer and Zone Volunteer Chiefs in the make-up of the committee.
- ▶ A revised agenda format to better reflect the way the committee will operate.
- ▶ A provision for annual reports from the committee to the Chief Director.
- ▶ A provision for annual review of the terms of reference
- ▶ Other minor changes to improve the clarity of the terms of reference

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

There are no budget implications to the changes contained in the recommended terms of reference.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT POLICIES / BUSINESS PLAN

This report complies with the Municipality's Multi-Year Financial Strategy, the approved Operating, Capital and Reserve budgets, policies and procedures regarding withdrawals from the utilization of Capital and Operating reserves, as well as any relevant legislation.

ATTACHMENTS

Appendix 1 - Volunteer Fire Advisory Committee - Terms of Reference

A copy of this report can be obtained online at <http://www.halifax.ca/council/agendasc/cagenda.html> then choose the appropriate meeting date, or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 490-4210, or Fax 490-4208.

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Report Approved by: Stephen Thurber, Deputy Chief Director, Phone 490-5542

Appendix 1

Volunteer Fire Advisory Committee Terms of Reference

Objectives

The objectives of the Volunteer Fire Advisory Committee are:

- ▶ To provide a forum for the discussion of issues of interest to the volunteer members of Halifax Regional Fire and Emergency.
- ▶ Initiate, research, and review policy, implementation of policy, and other matters of interest to the volunteer sector.
- ▶ To advise the Chief Director of Halifax Regional Fire and Emergency on issues of interest to the volunteer fire service.

Committee Membership

1. The Chief Director shall appoint a selection committee who shall seek nine representatives of the volunteer fire service to serve on the Volunteer Sector Advisory Committee. The members shall be members-at-large representing all of the volunteer fire service.
2. Halifax Regional Council may appoint two members of Regional Council to serve on the committee for a term selected by Council.
3. The term of appointment for fire service representatives shall be three (3) years, with three (3) members being replaced each year.
4. In the event a fire service representative is unable to complete their term, another representative shall be appointed by the Chief Director or designate to complete the term.
5. The Halifax Regional Fire and Emergency representative to the Fire Service Association of Nova Scotia (FSANS) as appointed by the Chief Director shall be a non-voting member of the committee.
6. The Executive Officer to the Chief Director shall be a non-voting member of the committee.

Meetings

1. The Committee shall meet on the third Monday of each month at 7:30 PM. The meetings may be held at different locations throughout the service areas.
2. The Committee may schedule meetings at other times and places as it deems necessary.
3. The Committee may reschedule meetings to avoid holidays or other conflicting events.

4. Meetings shall not last beyond two (2) hours without the consent of all members present.
5. Meetings shall be Chaired by the Chief Director or a person designated by him/her to be the Chair of the committee. The Chair does not vote unless there is a tie.
6. For clarity, members of the committee are as follows:

Member of Committee	Voting Status	Quorum Status
Members-at-large (9)	Voting	Counted
Council Representatives (2)	Voting	Counted
Chair	Tie breaking only	Not Counted
Executive Officer	Non-voting	Not Counted
HRFE Representative to FSANS	Non-voting	Not Counted
Volunteer Zone Chiefs (Observer)	Non-voting	Not Counted

Agenda

1. Members wishing to add items to the agenda shall provide written notice to the Chair at least one week prior to the meeting.
2.
 - a) The minutes of the previous meeting shall be distributed to all stations with volunteer members at least ten (10) days in advance of the next meeting.
 - b) The agenda for the next meeting shall be prepared and posted seven (7) days in advance.
3. Emergency items may be added to the agenda with the consent of all members present.
4. The agenda format shall be as follows:

Approval of Agenda
 Minutes of Last Meeting
 Updates and Reports of Sub-Committees
 Agenda Items
 Emergency Items
 Adjournment

Rules of Order

1. A quorum for meetings is five(5) members. The Chair shall not be counted for the purposes of a quorum.
2. Members shall speak in order as recognized by the Chair. No members shall speak more than once on an issue until all other speakers have had an opportunity to speak. The Chair may permit a speaker to speak out of turn for purposes of clarification.
3. Voting shall be by show of hands, with a simple majority of those present required to pass a motion
4. Each committee member shall be entitled to one (1) vote on any issue.
5. a) The Committee may appoint sub-committees to discuss specific issues and make recommendations to the Committee. It is not necessary to be a committee representative to be appointed to a sub-committee.
b) Sub-committees shall provide written copies of minutes and reports to the Committee.
6. An annual report to the Chief Director on the activity of the committee shall be prepared by the Chair and tabled with the Committee in March of each year.
7. Only the Chair, Committee members, and invitees, shall sit at the meeting table. All other attendees shall sit in a gallery.
8. The Executive Officer is a non-voting member of the Committee. Volunteer Zone Chiefs shall be permanent observers at all committee meetings.

Conflict Resolution

Conflicts within the Volunteer Fire Service are to be handled as outlined in Policy P-806. This policy is to be managed by the Volunteer Fire Advisory Committee.

Annual Review of Terms of Reference

The Terms of Reference of the committee shall be reviewed annually. The review shall coincide with the appointment of new members to the committee.

Originally approved by the RMC on 19 Nov 08.
Minor amendments to appointment of Councillors and quorum made on 19 January 09.