



**HALIFAX REGIONAL COUNCIL
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MINUTES
March 25, 2015**

PRESENT:

Mayor Mike Savage
Deputy Mayor Lorelei Nicoll
Councillors: Barry Dalrymple
David Hendsbee
Gloria McCluskey
Darren Fisher
Waye Mason
Jennifer Watts
Linda Mosher
Russell Walker
Stephen Adams
Reg Rankin
Matt Whitman
Brad Johns
Steve Craig
Tim Outhit

Councillor Bill Karsten

STAFF:

Mr. Richard Butts, Chief Administrative Officer
Mr. John Traves, Municipal Solicitor
Ms. Cathy Mellett, Municipal Clerk
Mr. Andrew Reid, Legislative Assistant

The following does not represent a verbatim record of the proceedings of this meeting.

A video recording of this meeting is available: http://archive.isiglobal.ca/vod/halifax/archive_2015-03-25_live.mp4.html

The agenda, supporting documents, and information items circulated to Council are available online: <http://www.halifax.ca/council/agendasc/150325cow-agenda.php>

The meeting was called to order at 10:04 a.m., and recessed at 12:11 p.m. Council reconvened at 1:02 p.m. Council adjourned at 1:59 p.m.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Savage called the meeting to order at 10:04 a.m. Mayor Savage proposed to deal with item 4 - Proposed 2015/16 Budget and Business Plan before item 3 – Fire Services Operational Review – 2014 Update.

2. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES – February 18, 2015

MOVED by Deputy Mayor Nicoll, seconded by Councillor Mason that the minutes of February 18, 2015 be approved as circulated.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

3. Fire Services Operational Review – 2014 Update

This item was discussed following item 4.

4. Halifax Regional Fire and Emergency – Proposed 2015/16 Budget and Business Plan

The following was before the Committee of the Whole:

- Proposed 2015/16 Fire & Emergency Business Unit Budget and Business Plan dated March 9, 2015 with attached staff presentation dated January 28, 2015

Mayor Savage described the progress of the Fire Services review and highlighted a number of proposed amendments. He stated that the business plan presentation had not yet been presented. Mayor Savage proposed that discussion be held until after the presentation of the business plan and the implications of the proposed amendments by Chief Trussler. Mr. Labrecque, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer stated that the business plan would give the budget context for the operational review.

Mr. Doug Trussler, Chief, Halifax Regional Fire & Emergency, presented the 2015/16 Halifax Regional Fire & Emergency Draft Budget and Business Plan. This presentation is online and on file.

Mr. Trussler noted a correction in his presentation on page 5 in the 2015/16 proposed column where the total expenditure is 58,613,200 and not 58,380,700.

3. Fire Services Operational Review – 2014 Update

The following was before the Committee of the Whole:

- A recommendation report from the Executive Standing Committee dated December 15, 2014, with attached staff recommendation report dated December 15, 2014
- A copy of the staff presentation dated March 25, 2015 subtitled Evolving the Fire Service: An Operational Review
- A supplementary Information Report dated January 19, 2015
- Questions and Answers omitted in error from the Supplementary Information report dated January 19, 2015
- A supplementary Information report dated March 19, 2015
- A copy of the staff presentation dated March 25, 2015 subtitled Implications of Proposed Amendments
- A recommendation report dated February 6, 2006
- An extract of draft minutes from March 10, 2015 containing recommendations 1-6
- A copy of the Fire Stations Reports prepared by Opta Information Intelligence

Chief Trussler presented the implications of the proposed amendments to the operational review. He also indicated that more detail can be found in the supplementary reports.

At this time the Mayor noted that there was a portion of the agenda allotted to public participation.

Mr. Nick Langley, Director of Provincial Affairs, Canadian Federation of Independent Business (CFIB), presented a submission dated March 13, 2015 titled Creating a Sustainable, Growth-Orientated Climate for Halifax. This submission is available on file. He indicated a number of amendments. On page 1 he stated that CFIB membership in Halifax Regional Municipality should read 1,800 and not 1,350 and on page 4, he indicated that the municipal wage gap should read 10% and not 22%.

The Mayor called for further speakers. No further speakers came forward.

The Mayor opened the floor for discussion on the main motion pertaining to the fire services report, as consideration had been deferred at the March 10, 2015 meeting pending the supplementary materials.

The following motion was on the floor, as moved at the March 10, 2015 meeting:

MOVED by Councillor Whitman, seconded by Councillor Walker, that Halifax Regional Council:

1. **Endorse the 5-Year Technology Roadmap objectives in the Discussion section of the December 15, 2014 staff report and include the year one objectives (Data Management and Process Review, HRFE Dispatch Project and HRFE FDM Review and Enhancements) in the 2015/2016 capital budget;**
2. **Endorse the consolidation of equipment, career personnel and volunteer personnel in the core fire stations, to more effectively deliver fire services, and authorize staff to decommission Stations 4 (Lady Hammond), 11 (Patton Road), and 13 (King Street);**
3. **Authorize staff to initiate the process to improve coverage by relocating stations 8 (Bedford) and 9 (Sackville) to increase coverage and eliminate gaps that exist due to the growth of Bedford West/Hammonds Plains;**
4. **Authorize staff to investigate partnership opportunities with Halifax Stanfield International Airport to improve service delivery;**
5. **Endorse the following:**
 - (a) **Improve the rural fire response by:**
 - i. **maintaining E Platoon complements, as per the Discussion section of the December 15, 2014 report and as set out in Attachment 1 of the December 15, 2014 staff report (proposed staffing model);**
 - ii. **increasing career staff to four in major rural stations; and**
 - iii. **investigating operations to transition Station 28 (Sheet Harbour) to E Platoon staffing level.**
 - (b) **Maintain 24/7 Volunteer staffing, as per the Discussion section of the report and as set out in Attachment 1 of the December 15, 2014 staff report (proposed staffing model);**
 - (c) **Decommission volunteer sub-stations 25 (Ostrea Lake-Pleasant Point), 31 (East Ship Harbour), 36 (Meaghers Grant), and 43 (Grand Lake-Oakfield);**

- (d) **Maintain the existing fire coverage MOU with Enfield;**
 - (e) **Investigate entering into fire coverage MOUs with communities bounding Halifax Regional Municipality, including Hubbards and Ecum Secum; and**
 - (f) **Continue volunteer recruitment initiatives.**
6. **Direct staff to return to Council with a revised Fire Service Delivery Target and Administrative Order 24 Respecting Fire and Emergency Service in Halifax Regional Municipality no later than March 2016 following further detailed analysis of the 2006 Service Delivery Standard.**

Councillor Hendsbee questioned what size of a graduation class would be needed to meet the requirements of the proposed staffing. Chief Trussler responded that the typical class size was 12 officers indicating that, if a significant number of fire fighters were required to be hired it could take several years. He outlined a number of options to increase the numbers by hiring other fully trained fighters, or volunteer fighters or other training options.

MOVED by Deputy Mayor Nicoll, seconded by Councillor Mason that

- 7. **Committee of the Whole direct staff to proceed to prepare the 2015/2016 Halifax Regional Fire & Emergency Business Unit Budget and Business Plan as proposed in the accompanying presentation, incorporating any additional direction provided by motion or motions of Committee of the Whole, including any budget implications associated with the reinstatement of services at the Black Point Fire Station, for inclusion in the proposed HRM 15/16 Budget and Business Plan documents.**
- 8. **Committee of the Whole recommends that Halifax Regional Council direct that any additional costs related to the Fire Services Review – 2014 be applied to the general tax rate as an increase to the tax rate targets provided to staff by motion of Regional Council on October 21, 2014.**

Deputy Mayor Nicoll stated concern regarding the reduction in urban volunteers. She indicated it would have been more appropriate to have a transition plan to understand all the pieces of the plan's implementation. She also commented that there were few urban core volunteers and those volunteers on the periphery of the service boundary were critical to both serving the core and the rural areas. Deputy Mayor Nicoll also commented that succession planning must include volunteers, where the investment has already been made.

Chief Trussler responded that a meeting would be held between the core station chiefs and the Volunteer Fire Advisory Committee (VFAC) to come up with a working model. Regarding succession planning, he stated that intake of volunteers would be examined when recruitment is performed in the fall.

The Mayor clarified that the staff recommendations 1-8 were on the floor and there were not yet any amendments.

Councillor Watts stated concern for recommendations number 2, 3, and 5c. She requested clarity and more information regarding the proposed amendment number 4 and the additional cost of staffing all stations with 4 firefighters. She also requested the total cost for doing so.

Chief Trussler responded that the additional total cost to staff all 25 volunteer fire stations would be \$9.7 million in year one, rising to \$13.5 million in year four. He explained that \$625,000 would be required for equipment and between \$1.25 – 5 million for retrofitting the buildings. He stated that the cost associated with keeping open those urban stations recommended to be closed would be approximately \$2.231 million annually with additional onetime costs for equipment and training.

Mayor Savage clarified that the previous discussion around amendment number 4 was considered to take into account all costs and not necessarily as a recommendation.

Councillor Craig indicated he would be making an amendment after the discussion. He cited page 35 of the supplementary report dated March 19, 2015, Part V – Council Motion to Bedford / Larry Uteck Area Coverage. He described both Options 1 and 2 for the approaches to providing the station requirements in that area as outlined in the supplementary report. Councillor Craig indicated he would be putting forward an amendment in support of Option 2.

Councillor McCluskey commented that there was no consultation with the residents where the stations were proposed to be decommissioned. She commented that Administrative Order 24 mandates that volunteer fire stations hold an annual meeting and receive feedback from the community but this was not required in the urban area. Councillor McCluskey highlighted barriers to response time in her view from Highfield Park station to downtown. She questioned the need for the aerial truck in addition to the effectiveness of aerial trucks.

Chief Trussler indicated that he was aware of the challenges around aerial trucks and slowness on hills and these were taken into consideration with the formulation of the recommendations. He stated that the OpticomTM were designed to improve conditions at traffic lights and are used effectively.

Councillor Dalrymple indicated he would be asking for an amendment to recommendation 5c. He voiced approval for the E-platoons and technology recommendations. Councillor Dalrymple highlighted page 39 of the March 25, 2015 supplementary report, pointing out the low cost of stations marked for closure, which included the following stations: Ostrea Lake, Sheet Harbour, Grand Lake, and Meagher's Grant. He voiced opposition to their closure as the stations also functioned as community halls. He also questioned the dollar figure on Meagher's Grant, stating that the cost was lower as the property may belong to the community and not the municipality. Councillor Dalrymple voiced concern for the rationale of cost savings in closing the four stations.

Councillor Rankin commented that it was important to take an integrated approach. He commented on the risk of maintaining the current status quo and questioned where additional costs would come from. He indicated that the operations had not been examined in two decades and the purpose of the review had been to secure savings, efficiency and re-allocate resources.

Chief Trussler voiced agreement with Councillor Rankin that the plan was put together in an integrative manner and the proposed stations were intended to staff the aerial trucks and provide 4 firefighters in the required stations as recommended by the Fire Underwriters report and in the plan proposed. He stated that the operations plan was created to allocate the appropriate staff and resources to the appropriate locations. He stated the intent of the plan is to use existing resources to provide the same or a better level of service and safety.

Mr. Butts responded that no recommendations would be made that compromised Fire Service's responsibility of protecting lives and property. He stated that cost effectiveness had been achieved by proposing to close redundant stations and reduce overlaps. He responded that if Council added resources, more funds would be required by increasing the tax rate.

Councillor Johns commented on amendment number 4, indicating that not all volunteer stations would want career firefighters and neither would the residents. He voiced disapproval for recommendation 2, indicating he would be putting a motion on the floor to have it removed. He commented that no consultation had occurred on consolidating stations 10 and 11. He also voiced concern for the accurateness of the information pertaining to volunteer counts in the Convoy Run and Metropolitan stations.

Chief Trussler noted the error Councillor Johns indicated and stated that a correction could be circulated regarding volunteer counts. Councillor Johns responded that he was uncomfortable making a decision without accurate information and that he would support a deferral of a number of the recommendations.

Chief Trussler stated that the error pertained to active number of volunteers, which fluctuated on a daily basis; however, all financial information in the reports is accurate.

Councillor Outhit summarized the issue before Council as a matter of moving firefighters from one station to another, hiring more firefighters, or changing the management of urban and rural firefighters. He questioned if the budget figures given would apply to approximately 75 firefighters and what criteria was used for the \$9 million dollar budget figure. Councillor Outhit also highlighted Councillor Whitman's recent motion to reallocate firefighters from Black Point to Tantallon. He voiced concern for moving staff instead of making decisions on closing fire stations or reallocating staff.

Chief Trussler responded that the \$9 million figure was used to provide the total estimated costs for staffing the 25 stations currently unstaffed (with 2 fire fighters) now with an E-Platoon and volunteers. He referred to slide 8 of the presentation dated March 25, 2015, as listing the expense for each E-Platoon station and 24/7 urban station. Chief Trussler responded that a Lieutenant was moved to Blackpoint – Station 56 and an additional firefighter in the context of the overall plan.

Mayor Savage outlined the origin of the fire report stemming from 2006. He confirmed that the four person crews had been recommended for safety and efficiency. He questioned what, if any, the effect would be on safety if the recommendation was implemented to remove station 13 King Street, in Downtown Dartmouth, 4 Lady Hammond Road. Mayor Savage also requested confirmation that no personnel were being eliminated to implement the recommendations but that 5 new Full Time Employees (FTEs) were being hired. He also commented that caution was required regarding budget implications when making amendments.

Regarding the effect on safety, Chief Trussler responded that resources were assigned based on the service delivery targets set by Council, one of which is having the first truck on scene in 5 minutes 90% of the time. He stated that these targets determine the distribution of resources. He indicated that based on analysis, this standard was achievable and furthermore would enable the option of an aerial truck. Chief Trussler stated that safety would not decrease in the area. He also commented that most calls for station 13 were outside of their area. Chief Trussler confirmed that no personnel were being eliminated but 5 new FTEs were being hired for station 28 Sheet Harbour.

Councillor Watts summarized the issue before Council by stating that the plan to staff the aerial firetrucks with 4 firefighters immediately required recommendation 2, i.e. the decommissioning of stations 4, 11, and 13. She indicated that recommendation 3 was an issue that would be dealt with later on. She also indicated that recommendation 5c was less time sensitive and cost intensive and could be left open to further negotiations.

Mr. Butts clarified that the reason those stations were proposed to be closed was because they are redundant. He further stated that all the recommendations are interconnected. Chief Trussler confirmed Mr. Butt's statement and stated that staff would be moved where they were required, meaning that the firefighters from stations 4 and 13 would be moved to 2 and 12 for the aerial trucks.

Councillor Watts questioned if funds from the closure of those stations would support any other fire service activities. She commented that there is a complement of 5 trucks and 18 firefighters currently on the peninsula and that if the recommendations were adopted, 2 more firefighters would be stationed on the peninsula for the aerial trucks. Councillor Watts stated that there are 2 firefighting pieces of equipment at West Street station 3 and questioned whether one could be moved to the Lady Hammond station 4 to keep it open. She stated that the only incremental cost would be to operate the station and there would be no additional cost around firefighters.

Regarding the funds from the decommissioned stations supporting other activities, Chief Trussler responded in the negative, stating that the closure would allow for the better utilization of staff. Chief Trussler voiced agreement that there would be no additional cost in terms of firefighters under his proposed plan. He outlined that the reason for moving the quint truck to West Street station 3 was operational as well as for the risk in that area. He stated that there was a heavy rescue truck in that area

that lacks staff. Chief Trussler also indicated that having firefighters at that station for both of those trucks would enhance Fire Service's training operations.

Councillor Walker stated approval for the staff recommendation. He indicated that in District 10, the Fairview and Rockingham stations had been decommissioned previously and that the need to realign fire response is ongoing. Councillor Walker indicated support for the staff recommendation and stated that he required proof that the stations proposed for closure were not redundant. He also voiced approval for the 2 stations in the growth area of Bedford.

Councillor McCluskey commented that station 13 was not redundant to Dartmouth and highlighted the number of seniors in the area. She commented that, in her opinion, with the closure of station 13, the 5 minute response time from Highfield Park would not be possible. She questioned the appropriateness of the number of FTEs, citing that the report dated February 2006 had recommended 81 additional firefighters be hired. Councillor McCluskey also questioned the operating cost of station 13 and asked to verify if the costs had changed from \$30,000 to \$80,000.

Gerard Cottreau, Financial Coordinator, Fire and Emergency Services, responded that the \$80,000 not only included utility costs but could also include non-capital costs such as regular maintenance upgrades. He itemized a number of costs associated with the \$80,000 including electricity, natural gas, mechanical equipment, and staff wages from facility services.

Councillor Hendsbee requested clarification that there would be an E-Platoon at Chezzetcook and Musquodobit Harbour. He stated the need to hire additional staff in the future and indicated Oyster Pond and Tangier as potential areas for E-Platoons.

Chief Trussler clarified that the E-Platoon at Lake Echo, station 21, would be moved to Chezzetcook, station 23. He confirmed that Musquodoboit Harbour, station 24 would have an E-Platoon.

Councillor Johns highlighted that the response time passed by Council was based on a Federal Standard and he requested the name of the standard. He questioned if the standard was a 5 minute urban and 8 minute rural response time.

Chief Trussler responded that the standard was a hybrid that was developed for Halifax Regional Municipality to address the diversity of urban, rural and suburban areas. He stated that it was based on the National Fire Protection Association Standards. Chief Trussler corrected Councillor Johns, stating that the standard is based on population density, which entailed the first truck would arrive on the scene in a 5 minute travel time for areas with 100 or more persons per square km. He indicated that it was a 10 minute travel time if the population density was less than 100 persons per square km.

Councillor McCluskey questioned if there had ever been an audit on response times and indicated that she would like an external source to do the evaluation. Chief Trussler responded that response times had been looked at by the underwriters based on Fire Department Management (FDM) review. He stated that Fire Services would like to come back in a year with a total audit for response times and recommendations for possible changes to the response objectives and Administrative Order 24.

Deputy Mayor Nicoll questioned where the aerials are now housed.

Chief Trussler responded that one was housed at West Street and one was in storage at Highfield Park.

The Committee of the whole recessed at 12:11 p.m. and reconvened at 1:02 p.m.

Councillor Dalrymple questioned how many additional new firefighters would be required to keep the existing stations and also staff the aerial trucks.

Chief Trussler responded that 40 more full time firefighters would be required plus 5 for an E-Platoon at Sheet Harbour.

Councillor Johns stated that in 1996 there were 3 fire stations in Sackville and he requested confirmation that this recommendation proposed that the number be reduced to one station. Chief Trussler confirmed that there would be one station, station 10. Councillor Johns highlighted the growth areas in District 14 He and voiced disapproval for the recommendation.

Deputy Mayor Nicoll questioned the impact on the tax rate of having the additional 40 firefighters. Mr. Keefe, Director of Finance and ICT, estimated it would be approximately \$4 million dollars annually or almost 2 cents per \$1,000 of assessment on the tax rate. He indicated that staffing could not be accomplished in one year and the rate would need to be phased in.

Councillor Watts highlighted that she would be asking Council not to amend but to defeat recommendation 2.

The Mayor stated that amendments to the recommendations could now be heard.

MOVED by Councillor Craig, seconded by Councillor Johns to amend recommendation 3 as follows:

Authorize staff to initiate the process to improve and increase coverage by relocating Station 8 to the area between the 102 and 101 intersections and Bedford Commons, and construct a new station on Larry Uteck Drive and assign a 24/7 crew of four firefighters at the station per the Fire Underwriter's Survey recommendation Option 2 for zone 8.

Councillor Craig indicated that the premise of the main motion was based on the Fire Underwriter's findings to improve coverage in Bedford. He stated that the 2016/17 budget was between \$10 million and \$14 million to construct 2 new fire stations. Councillor Craig stated that the operating budget implications detailed in the supplementary report would be between \$51,000 and \$1.5 million depending on how the Fire Chief chooses to staff those 3 stations. He stated that the amendment would give flexibility to take advantage of the future fire service plan, fire service standard to be examined in 2015/16, and implementation of technology. He stated that the motion would enable Chief Trussler to utilize E-Platoons, full volunteers or FTEs in 3 locations. Councillor Craig underlined that the amendment would provide greater flexibility but not hamper or delay implementation of better coverage for Bedford. He stated that there would be no budget impact for the coming fiscal year and capital would remain intact for 2016/17. He indicated that operating expenses would be covered off at the earliest in 2 fiscal periods.

Chief Trussler agreed with the Councillor's analysis and confirmed there would be no implications in this year's budget. He indicated that the \$1 million set aside for the fire academy would be used to purchase the land for the station and other costs would be subject to future budgets. When asked to confirm his support, the Chief stated that he could support the amended recommendation.

Councillor Adams questioned if the amendment was not already included in recommendation 3. He stated concern over specifying where the station would be.

Chief Trussler responded that the intent of the motion was to transfer staff from stations 8 and 9. He stated that the question remained what to do with station 9 and whether to decommission it or set it up with an E-Platoon, or volunteer platoon. Chief Trussler also responded that he would need to check the exact locations through GIS mapping to determine if the stations were the same as indicated by Councillor Craig.

Regarding the amendment, Councillor Outhit stated that the proposal was for station 9 to be left open, station 8 Convoy Run to be moved to the interchange, and a new station to be built in the Larry Uteck area. He highlighted the benefits provided by the amendment; however, requested clarification if the new station would be required given that Station 8 would help cover the Sackville area.

Chief Trussler responded that the premise would be to rebuild the two stations in the locations suggested.

He stated that the amended motion would defer the decision of what to do with station 9 until 2017, at which point it could be decommissioned, or staffing could be re-examined. Chief Trussler stated that he anticipated based on analysis that Fire Service's recommendation to decommission the station would remain the same two years hence. Councillor Outhit commented that he could support the amended motion, but highlighted the difficulty of the future decision.

Councillor Mason said he could support the amendment; but stated concern for why staff levels would need to be prescribed in a Council motion. Councillor Craig responded that his recommendation was made through the firefighter underwriter's survey. Mr. Butts noted that if the underwriter's survey was made part of the motion it would be binding. Councillor Craig voiced agreement for Councillor Mason's suggestion to remove staff levels, to which the Committee agreed.

Councillor Outhit stated that the premise of the amendment would be to ensure a minimum of 4 people in any new station. Chief Trussler confirmed he was in agreement with the minimum.

The amended motion now reads:

Authorize staff to initiate the process to improve and increase coverage by relocating Station 8 to the area between the 102 and 101 intersections and Bedford Commons, and construct a new station on Larry Uteck Drive.

The Mayor called for the question on the amendment to recommendation 3.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

Councillor Dalrymple requested support to defeat recommendation 5c. He emphasized that the cost of operating the stations was minimal. He stated a discrepancy in staffing numbers, highlighting there were more volunteers at Grand Lake and Meagher's Grant than reported. He highlighted that more volunteers were waiting to join the stations. He also voiced concern over the detrimental effect on the community hall and on response times of fire and medical emergencies. He highlighted the recent closure of station 37 Elderbank, and the resulting travel gap if additional stations were decommissioned. He gave estimates of resulting travel times and indicated they were insufficient for fire or medical services. He also stated the importance of integration of services in rural areas to ensure adequate water supply from pumper trucks.

Councillor Watts stated concern for the impact to response times, and highlighted the emotional and difficult situation before Council. She indicated that she would not be voting to support recommendation 2 because keeping station 4 open would not affect the overall budget.

Mayor Savage indicated that Council was currently debating 5c.

Councillor Rankin stated many of the comments held the common feature of attempting to maintain the status quo. Councillor Rankin stated that this was not the recommendation given by the Chief. He questioned the cost for the taxpayer. He highlighted that any changes to the plan should first openly consider changing the service standards. He indicated that Council was poised to increase the tax rate by at least 1 cent.

Councillor Mason stated concern for defeating recommendations 2 or 5c, as there would be no contingency. He indicated that no one had suggested bringing in an outside consultant to confirm Chief Trussler's decision. He indicated he would not support simply defeating those motions. Regarding 5c, he stated that a contingency might be to allow a year for a recruitment drive of volunteers and if targets are not met, the station could be turned into a community hall.

Councillor Hendsbee stated that if a fire station is transferred into a community hall, it would have to be supplemented with resources elsewhere. He concurred with Councillor Dalrymple's request and stated that before stations are closed, the option of E-platoons be examined.

Councillor Outhit requested travel times on sub-stations 25, 31, 36, and 43 in response to Councillor Dalrymple's statements on recommendation 5c. Councillor Outhit also stated that equipment and personnel had to be examined in tandem. He indicated that if the stations such as station 4 Lady Hammond Road were kept open, a motion to include that in future budgets would need to be made.

Councillor Johns stated that before the tax structure review, stations were financed via an area rate and not the general rate. He stated that residents would not have agreed to the process of tax review if it ended in the closure of those stations. He stated that he would be supporting Councillor Dalrymple.

Deputy Mayor Nicoll asked to confirm if the Elderbank station was closed last year. Chief Trussler responded in the affirmative. Deputy Mayor Nicoll questioned if the station's closure had a ripple effect and if it were not possible to close nearby stations over a period of time.

Chief Trussler stated that there are few volunteers in those areas, with low call volumes and low risk assessments. He stated that the existing response already comes from elsewhere. He stated that Elderbank station did not possess a firetruck.

Councillor Dalrymple stated concern for the ability to maintain the 10 minute service standard, where there were 23km distances. Regarding Councillor Mason's suggestion, he stated that he would like Grand Lake not to remain open indefinitely but placed in the same position as station 47 Goffs and station 42 Wellington as slated for closure when the new station is built at Aerotech Connector Road. Regarding Meagher's Grant, Councillor Dalrymple stated he was alright with closing the station if no more volunteers were found within 2-3 years.

Councillor Rankin questioned the concern for risk to HRM raised by the underwriters in the Fire Stations Report. He questioned if that risk was real and what the consequences would be if some or all of the stations were not decommissioned.

Chief Trussler responded that the underwriters determined 15 was the number for a viable firefighting force from the volunteer stations. He also explained that this number was determined on the basis that volunteers could attend emergencies 25% of the time. He stated that if there was not a viable firefighting force these stations would be more of a risk to the municipality than an asset. He also stated that the underwriters recommended closing more of the volunteer stations but fire services deemed this impractical as they wished to increase recruitment in those areas and ensure coverage.

The Mayor indicated that this closed the debate on Councillor Dalrymple's amendment and the Committee of the Whole would reconvene to continue discussion on the motion at their next meeting.

5. Corporate Accounts – Proposed 2015/16 Budget and Business Plan

The following was before the Committee of the Whole:

- Proposed 2015/16 Corporate Accounts Budget and Business Plan dated March 16, 2015 with attached staff presentation
- Correspondence from Nick Langley dated March 13, 2015

This item was deferred until the date of the next meeting.

6. Staff Report on the Public Safety Office

The following was before the Committee of the Whole:

- Staff report dated March 10, 2015

This item was deferred until the date of the next meeting.

7. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 1:59 p.m.

Cathy J. Mellett
Municipal Clerk