

NORTH GALIANO FIRE PROTECTION COMMISSION
BOARD MEETING
Retreat Cove Fire Hall
July 1, 2012

Minutes

Note technical requirement of 4 for quorum

Present:

Rob Snape

Roger Pettit

Julie Gardner

Susan Phillips

Tom Darby

Dana Weber (Society board member, contributed to Commission discussions)

Regrets:

Robin Gregory

Andy Beers

1 *Adoption of Agenda and Past Minutes*

Adopted

2 *Reports and Related Business*

2.4 Treasurer Report:

Carried forward – records were not available. (Treasurer duties are in the process of being taken on by Roger since Andy has resigned as treasurer, and Roger does not yet have all the paper work.)

2.5 Management Report – Tom:

There was a smoke sighting at the north end (Lighthouse Park) and the keys on hand didn't work, so Tom subsequently acquired appropriate keys from BC Parks. Keys will also be acquired for District lot 59 by Pebble Beach.

There was a medical call, and appropriate measures were made to care for the elderly spouse of the victim as well.

Retreat Cove fire hall painting has been completed.

An Emergency Response Fair is being held on July 28th in conjunction with the Farmers' Market. Sean and Tom will set up a stand for the fire departments.

The CRD is coming over to map the water supplies.

Gaming spending is on track.

Action: Roger will discuss budget details with Tom.

A consultant has been hired by CREST determine who has priorities and procedures in the event of an area wide emergency.

The road issue is still with the CRD. Action from CRD has been too slow. Tom has taken the initiative to move things forward on the North end of the island.

A culvert at Dobson Lane was plugged with silt. The fire department cleared it with use of a hose during practice.

Volunteers are helping up-date the website.

Action: Rob will help up-date and then maintain the website.

The Dionisio Park key issue was resolved, but access is not possible due to the road being overgrown with broom. Tom was told to contact the landowners. Bowie Keefer assisted. In the past one of the owners had had to engage a lawyer to get BC Parks to pay their share of brushing the road. Fuel loading is an issue for the summer, with properties such as Thera at risk. BC Parks is obliged to pay 80%. Tom has taken appropriate actions to resolve the situation.

There is no open burning from now until September (including no beach fires, as decreed by the two fire chiefs). Tom issued a permit to the Conservancy for a specific purpose (cook fire).

Civic address verification: Canada post is now using civic addresses for mail purposes. There are many queries so far to the Fire department as we have responsibility for issuing these addresses and correcting errors and omissions.

The Board congratulated Eileen on her promotion to Lieutenant. She is doing a very good job.

Tom will be talking to Gaylor about the water upgrade.

The extrication equipment is being tested and serviced in the near future. We will try to set up some training at the same time.

There will be a pumps and pumping course next weekend at Bodega.

The Red Cross will be doing a first responder course in September. Everyone who needs this will be able to attend and will qualify as FR3.

2.6 CWPP

The proposal has been cleared by BC Parks and is now being considered by other parties to be submitted for funding. There was a lack of clarity on who is doing what for the next steps.

Action: Board members support Tom in continuing to take the proposal forward, with support from Robin. Tom will contact Ken Hancock (CRD alternate rep.) to check on the status of the proposal and what next steps are needed.

2.7 Emergency Access

Resolution: That the North Galiano Island Fire Protection and Emergency Response Service agrees to hold, with the Galiano Island Local Trust

Committee, the instrument of a Statutory Right of Way for emergency access purposes as required in the Smith/Romagnoli Rezoning, and requests CRD staff to work with the Islands Trust to complete the necessary agreement.

Approved unanimously.

2.8 North End Fire Hall Method of taxation

Assuming that the referendum passes, one of two methods of taxation could be used: a Parcel Tax or Property Assessment Tax (aka ad valorem tax). The CRD has advised that a combination of the methods would be too complicated. The method apparently will have to be named in the question posed at the referendum, as follows:

The North Galiano Fire Protection Service Commission requests staff to prepare bylaws for Electoral Area Service Committee review and CRD Board approval to enable funding of the new North Galiano Fire Hall Project by means of (pick one: a Parcel Tax or Property Assessment Tax).

Discussion: Commission members had reviewed extensive correspondence with the CRD on information relevant to the choice of tax method, including a useful table summarizing the pros and cons of each. This table is in the appendix of these minutes.

Discussion focused on the ethics (equity, fairness) of the decision – how the costs and benefits would be distributed among Northenders.

The basic scenario was described by the CRD as follows: According to initial analysis (numbers are estimates), a taxpayer with an assessed value of \$513,000 would pay the same \$217 amount under either tax scenario. An initial review of all the folios' assessed values indicates that 287 of the 432 folios are less than an assessed value of \$513,000. That is about 2/3rds of all the parcels. These would pay less of the fire hall tax burden if the property assessment tax method was used. Those with property values above \$513,000 would pay less if the parcel tax was used.

In the discussions one consideration was ability to pay – what people can afford by way of taxes. There was a priority on being progressive. A challenge was lack of certainty as to how closely property assessments reflect the economic status of the property owner. Some people with relatively low incomes might hold relatively high value properties. Most commission members present felt that on average, property assessments and income are probably related. It was pointed out that the island might not be “normal” in this regard, with waterfront properties having very high assessments, and a large proportion of property owners being part-time on the island.

Another consideration was how much of the property assessment is related to structures. While the fire department has several important roles, its budget is significantly skewed towards the cost of fighting structural fires. Therefore, cost-wise, taxpayers with relatively more valuable structures have more to gain from fire protection services than those with modest structures (smaller, older,

possibly in disrepair), or no structures at all. It could be argued the former should pay proportionally more of the costs.

The different types of landholdings entered into the discussion. The majority of forest lot owners fall into the group having no structures needing protection (and their low tax assessments reflect current zoning that prohibits building a house). However, several do have dwellings on their properties, and if the appropriate zoning changes are made they will be able to build (or those to whom they might sell their properties may build). So should the forest lot owners benefit in the short term from a property assessment type approach?

North Galiano residents may have different interests in the tax options than part-timers whose properties are second homes or vacation cabins. A tax option that favors full-time community members could be argued for.

Those who live in one of the three stratas, where many tax payers fall into few “parcels,” would hold yet another perspective on the two tax options, having more to gain from the parcel tax approach.

Discussion also touched on which approach would most likely lead to the referendum being passed, given that all commission members strongly believe in the need for the new fire hall, based on its pivotal role in allowing the fire department to continue to play its critical roles in the community. A majority “yes” vote depends on how many voters fall into the different types of tax payers described above, on how they themselves view the tax option put forward, and on who is most likely to turn out to vote.

The members present were not able to reach agreement on one tax approach, while the majority supported the Property Assessment Tax. Commission members recognized that in the end, any who could not go forward supporting the majority decision would have to resign.

Outcome: Those present agreed that the consequences of this decision are significant enough that all Commission members (i.e. including the three who were not at this meeting) should vote on the choice. Also, more information would be useful. The risk of delaying progress towards the referendum was acknowledged; at the same time, the loss of board members via resignation due to lack of unanimity on the decision might also delay progress.

Questions for Ken Hancock:

Could a combination of the two tax approaches be considered?

Would it be possible to tax more on the basis of the value of structures on properties rather than the value of the structure plus land?

How long can we take to make this decision without delaying the referendum?

2.9 Funding question request from CRD

The CRD asked whether Commission members support adding a referendum question, that the service establishment bylaw be amended to read “the greater of \$1.60/\$1,000 or \$267,000.”

This is proposed by the CRD to raise the cap so that should property assessments go down they could still raise up to the \$267,000 that is already set in the bylaw.

This will need to be amended through a referendum question so the CRD would like to put it forward at the same time as the fire hall spending referendum question, to save the cost of having another referendum in the future.

All agreed that this question must be separate from the fire hall taxation question and that it would be better not to add the question because it may confuse voters and might discourage them from voting to approve taxation on the new fire hall. Board members noted that this figure is \$90,000 more than is required now, so it could be some time before the question would have to be put to Northenders.

3 New/Other Business

Next meeting: To be determined

4 Actions

Action: Roger will discuss budget details with Tom.

Action: Rob will help up-date and then maintain the website.

Appendix

	Pros	Cons
Parcel Tax	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Everyone pays the same amount (\$217 each) • The 40 managed forest lots pay \$217 each versus only \$5-25 for property assessment tax • Finite tax term of 15 years and then it ends – better optics to taxpayers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Everyone pays the same amount (\$217 each) – may not be considered to be fair by some • 42 homeowners on 3 parcels pay nothing for the new fire hall, but they will get a benefit of lower fire insurance from the new fire hall • Lower assessed homes will subsidize higher valued homes • Another tax line on property tax bills – negative optics to taxpayers
Property Assessment (Ad Valorem) Tax	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All 432 folios/homes participate in paying for the new fire hall in proportion to the assessed value of their home/land – usually considered 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The 40 managed forest lots pay very little only \$5-25 each versus \$217 for parcel tax • Not easy to distinguish between funding for new fire

	<p>to be a more fair tax (those who have more pay more)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Easier to handle administratively than a parcel tax• No new line item on the property tax statement (just a higher cost on the existing fire service line item)• Bylaw could be written to reduce the maximum requisition at the end of 15 year debt servicing for the new fire hall	<p>hall versus regular operations (its all lumped into one line item). However, we could see if a written breakdown could be provided on the tax bill.</p>
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