Fire Committee Meeting
February 11, 2025
Town Council Chambers

Present
Deputy Mayor D. Roberts, Chair
Councillor J. Pelly
B. (William) Chisholm, Fire Chief, AVFD
R. Kell, AVFD
R. MacPherson, AVFD
B. Landry, AVFD
D. MacDonald, AVFD

Also Present
M. Fougere, Deputy Clerk
M. Barkhouse, Director of Corporate Services
S. Long, Acting Director of Community Development

1. Call to Order
The Chair called the meeting to order at 5:12 PM.

2. Approval of Agenda
It was Moved and Seconded "to approve the agenda as amended."

Motion carried.

3. Acceptance of Minutes
The Fire Committee minutes of August 27,2024 were accepted as presented.

4. Business Arising from the Minutes
The Chair temporarily moved to Item 5.1 – Fire Levy Clarification to accommodate M. Barkhouse's update. Following this discussion, the meeting returned to Item 4.

5. New Business
5.1 Fire Levy Clarification (M. Barkhouse)
Deputy Mayor D. Roberts suggested proceeding to Item 5.1 – Fire Levy Clarification – and returning to Item 4 following the presentation. Committee members agreed.

M. Barkhouse provided an overview of the Fire Levy structure and clarified the distinction between the Fire Vehicle Replacement Levy and the Fire Protection Levy, as there was some confusion in the previous meeting.

The Fire Levy under the Municipal Government Act (MGA) pertains to fire protection. The terms "Fire Protection Levy" and "Fire Vehicle Replacement Levy" are sometimes used interchangeably, but they are distinct:

- Fire vehicle replacements are funded through capital replacement and tax revenue, not directly from the Fire Protection Levy.
- Currently the Fire Vehicle Replacement expenses is approximately 2 cents on the tax rate and are allocated for Fire Vehicle Replacement expenses.

R. Kell inquired about a set rate for the Fire Vehicle Replacement Levy.
M. Barkhouse provided some information, noting a 25-year schedule was established in 2017, assuming an annual 2 % increase.

At budget time, if the Volunteer Fire Department (VFD) wishes to adjust the rate, they must bring it to Council for consideration, as it may affect the tax rate.
Fire vehicle replacements are funded through tax revenue.
Council makes the final decision on the amount allocated for fire vehicle replacement.
Discussions ensued.

D. Roberts asked the AVFD whether they would like an increase beyond the current 2% rate.
Clarification was provided that the Fire Vehicle Replacement Levy can be adjusted as needed and the Fire Protection Levy amount is set by the UARB.

Mayor S. Cameron arrived at 5:27 PM.

Deputy Mayor D. Roberts suggested that she would like to make a recommended motion to bring to council to increase the Fire Replacement cost.

Discussions ensued.

Recommended Motion
It was Moved and Seconded "to bring to Council with a recommendation that the vehicle fund be increased to 4% per year for the purpose of the fire replacement schedule."
Motion carried.

M. Barkhouse left the meeting at 5:43pm.

The Chair returned to the agenda.

4. Business Arising from the Minutes

4.1 Commercial & Residential Civic Numbers

A Civic Address By-Law Summary and the Civic Addressing By-Law were circulated to members at the start of the meeting.

Deputy Mayor D. Roberts was looking for clarification on civic addressing procedures and whether the Town receives a formal report on this matter.

Discussion followed regarding the role of the Eastern District Planning Commission (EDPC) in civic addressing. It was clarified that the Town's Civic Addressing Coordinator operates under the EDPC and is responsible for maintaining, updating, and amending civic address records in accordance with the Civic Addressing By-Law.

It was further noted that the Town does not enforce civic addressing requirements, though it follows the by-law's guidelines and recommendations.

Discussions ensued.

Action Item:
S. Long will explore opportunities to increase public awareness of civic numbering during Fire Prevention Week through advertisements and radio announcements, possibly featuring the Mayor.

4.2 Fire Truck Replacement

B. Chisholm informed the committee that a meeting is scheduled with Fort Garry on February 25th at 5:30 PM at the Antigonish Fire Hall. The meeting will include a sales representative to review the specifications and pre-build details for the new fire truck.

This meeting will provide an opportunity to go through all specifics to ensure that all necessary components are included and that nothing is overlooked.

5. New Business (Continued)

5.2 Equipment

Deputy Mayor D. Roberts inquired about the status of equipment, and it was confirmed that all equipment is currently in good condition.

B. Chisholm reported that the Town and Council have been very supportive and provided updates on the fire department's breathing apparatus (BA) replacement plan. The department intends to access the Emergency Service Providers Fund (available every three years) in the upcoming fiscal year.

B. Landry noted that the plan is in hopes to replace the BA's in Truck #2 and upgrade 12 Bottles under the Emergency Providers Fund. The new BAs will use 4500 PSI bottles, compatible with neighboring departments. The current 2200 PSI bottles provide approximately 22 minutes of air, with limited time remaining once the low-level alarm activates. Due to safety concerns and updated alarm standards (now 700 PSI), the department has decided to transition to 4500 PSI bottles.

Given the significant cost, upgrades will be completed one truck at a time. Last year, four harnesses were purchased through the Emergency Preparedness Fund. Harnesses and bottles are not interchangeable. Costs are approximately $10,000 per harness and $1,400 per bottle.

It was further noted that three firefighters have recently retired, creating vacancies. Interviews will be conducted to recruit new members. Outfitting and training new firefighters represents a significant investment, with turnout gear costing over $5,000 per person and training courses approximately $650 each.

5.3 Other Matters - Hydrants (Town & Private)

Town Hydrants

B. Chisholm noted that he recently encountered a frozen hydrant, something he had never seen before. It was discussed that hydrants may have been flushed later than usual.

While the Town has done a good job in keeping hydrants functional, there is concern about identifying which hydrants are operational and which may be frozen. Older hydrants may retain some water, increasing the risk of freezing. B. Chisholm explained

the importance of the fire department having an up-to-date list of working and non-working hydrants.
Mayor S. Cameron agreed and suggested that a list be circulated.

B. Chisholm also recommended implementing “out of service” tags to clearly indicate non-functional hydrants for firefighter safety. S. Long will follow up with the Director of Public Works to obtain an updated list.

Regarding water supply during a fire:

- Engine 1 carries 1,500 gallons of water
- Engine 2 carries 900 gallons of water
  For large structure fires, this supply is not sufficient without access to a functioning hydrant system.

Private Hydrants
A question was raised regarding the hydrant at Shamrock Acres, specifically whether it has ever been tested. It was noted that this hydrant would not be relied upon in the event of a fire.

It was noted that K. Proctor (Previous Director of Public Works) has maps of the Town’s hydrants that are available and the new hydrants that are being installed. Overall, the fire department is generally satisfied with the hydrant program.

R. MacPherson suggested that a centralized area somewhere in the county that all fire departments could utilize. It could serve as a practice site for ladder drills, vehicle extractions, and other training exercises. Noting that this would not compete with an official fire training school but would instead provide a dedicated space for ongoing practice and skill development.

At the last AVFD meeting, there was interest in the idea, and a committee was formed with four members from various departments. The most recent update was that Blaise MacDonald (EMO) planned to discuss the proposal with the Town CAO, Mayor, County CAO, and Warden to determine next steps. This update was provided as an information piece for Fire Committee members.

B. Chisholm expressed this centralized area would be very beneficial.

6. Adjournment

Next Meeting will be determined.

With no further business the meeting adjourned at 6:36 PM