



WATCH LAKE – NORTH GREEN LAKE VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT



5771 Green Lake North Road
70 Mile House, BC, V0K 2K1

www.wlmgfiredept.org

Newsletter - Summer 2015

Moving Ice and High Water

In the past two newsletters I have described the design and construction of the dry hydrants at Accesses 14 and 20. They have now survived and proven their reliability through the winter. When the temperature dropped to -30C the firefighters had no problem pumping water from the lake. It was certainly cold for the crew working in the cold, but the water flowed freely through the lines. Fortunately no damage was done to the hydrants when in early March the ice made a strange inward surge on the north side and pushed its way up the bank.



The ice threatened, but the hydrants survived – March 2015



The ice pushed about 4 m. up the bank.

Several docks parked on the beach did not fare so well and were crushed against the rocks on the shoreline while others were torn from their mooring. When the ice broke on March 27th there were several reports of wayward docks being washed ashore.

In last summer's newsletter we wrote about the increase in the water level. Since then it has risen even more. Between the fall 2014 measurement and that taken this spring the water level had risen 30 cm. In the fall of 2012 measurement was 10 cm within an all-time low and since then it has now risen almost one meter.

We do have a good reserve of water and the well is producing faithfully. This abundance of water is good news for the fire department since we are always concerned with the water supply in the event of a major fire. The bad news is many of the ponds surrounding the lake are already dry and since there was little snow this year the water table and lake level will no doubt go down.

With this poor snowpack from the past winter and with the early warming trend so far this spring, the grasslands and forests dried off much earlier than usual. This has created a very hazardous situation as we began the annual burning of dead grass and rubbish piles. Burning restrictions for class 3 fires were announced to begin on April 27 and this put an end to major burning, but we must still be extremely careful with the smaller, allowable fires and campfires, they can get away very quickly. For current fire bans and details go to <http://bcwildfire.ca> and if you are planning a small rubbish fire on your property be sure to check the daily venting index at 888-281-2992.

One of our members had hoped to burn the remains of winter deadfalls on his property shortly after the snow receded. Fortunately, he was fully prepared with shovels, water and a helper since he found that in no time his initial fire was rapidly spreading to the surrounding grass. That was it for the cleanup for this year.

A nearby rancher was not so lucky with what was supposed to be a small grass burn on his front lawn. No sooner had he started when a moderate wind developed and sparks jumped the driveway to ignite the hay field on the other side. A small yard burn soon developed into a two hectare grass fire. Our firefighters were rapidly on the scene, with plenty of water to drown the flames, but their efforts were hampered by the wind constantly blowing sparks up to six meters beyond the fire line. The fire was approaching the nearby forest when a sudden change in the wind slowed its progress and the firefighters were able to soak the surrounding area. It has not been a good start to spring for the rancher. A month earlier there was a chimney fire in a small house he owns on an adjoining property. However, he had paid the fire dues on both properties and avoided what could have been a \$6,000 bill for fire services to unpaid properties. Moral of the story - be aware of fire hazards on your property and, of course, pay your fire dues.

All of us on the fire department hope you have a safe and enjoyable summer.



Roy Allan
President, WL-N.GL VFD

A Director's Concern: "Why Pay Our Fire Dues?"

A question was asked of us here on the board side as to why we should pay our annual fire dues. This is a very good question, so I am about to explain to you why "Membership has its Privileges."

People who do not pay their dues to the VFD do not understand why they cannot receive emergency services and are unsure why we should not come out to protect their investment. There are several reasons, but most importantly - if people in our community do not pay their dues, we will not have a fire department. Without the money we get from dues we cannot pay for the department's operations. One non-paying resident recently said, "If I am driving along and come across a fire I would stop and help to do whatever I could." I agree. I would too until the fire department came to help. Not all that long ago a chimney fire happened on the Lone Butte side of the protection area. A very Good Samaritan stopped to help and see what he could do. He helped with buckets of water and did whatever he could until the Lone Butte VFD got to the house. He could not understand why we would not perform the same thing for him. Well here is the

“Rest Of the Story “

Lone Butte VFD is CRD funded and they respond to all fires since their operating costs are paid for as an addition to the property owner's taxes and at a much higher rate than what we ask our community members to voluntarily pay for the same if not better protection. The funding that comes from our members covers only the operating expenses of our VFD. We also apply for grants (which are not always a given). The fire dues do not cover all the costs of getting new equipment (mandatory for any VFD) or the dry hydrants, buildings, fuel, training for fire fighters, insurance for equipment, and countless other little things that make a VFD run. This does not include the countless hours your fellow community members put in on a volunteer basis, first of all as on-call firefighters, but then attending to all the details that keep the department operating, administration and bookkeeping, fund raising, hall and equipment maintenance, construction and repairs.

All of this equals a functioning VFD that our community is very proud of. Without this all of our property insurance fees would be much higher, the risk of someone losing everything they own much higher. Here is what bothers me from my personal perspective. 80% of the people in our community support our VFD but the 20% that do not pay expect our VFD to come and protect them for nothing. They also get lower insurance rates since I am sure they do not tell their insurance companies that They Do Not Pay their Fire Dues so they do not have a responding fire department. They just hope to play the odds that nothing will happen.

You cannot go to the Gas Station and ask to fill up your tank and not pay for it, nor can you go to the grocery store and fill your cart full of food and just walk out the door. I am not sure why 20% of our population in our great and wonderful community think they can have a VFD and not pay for it.

Maybe if more people thought about what a safe and wonderful community we have and asked themselves, What can I do for my community and less of, “what is my community going to do for me, we would have 100% support for the VFD. If you do not vote you cannot complain about the government. So maybe we need to ask our fellow neighbors and community members, “Why are you not paying your VFD Dues and supporting the family you have in your community?”

So I guess the answer is “Membership has its Privileges,” and a big part of that privilege is a responding, well trained and well equipped fire department.

Highest Regards,
Brian J. Rusaw
VFD Vice President and community member

The following article is from the May edition of the *Coastal Fire Centre - Wildfire News*. It is rewarding to see a tribute to volunteer fire departments like this coming from a professional source.

What motivates someone to join a volunteer fire department? The answer, of course, depends on the individual. Staff at the Wildfire Management Branch have had the privilege of working with some amazing and highly dedicated people. They come from all walks of life and donate considerable amounts of time and energy to help protect their neighbours and communities. Volunteers must commit to regularly attending fire practices and training sessions— some optional and many others mandatory. They often rearrange their personal schedules so they can be on call to serve their communities, which may mean turning down event invitations and missing out on other opportunities. They are ready and able to respond whenever they're needed, day or night. They manage to juggle their work

and volunteer commitments and, if they run their own businesses, they take steps to ensure that their businesses can continue to operate if they are called away. Many employers support their community's volunteer firefighters by giving them the flexibility to respond to incidents during normal working hours. Firefighters work closely with the other volunteers on their team and always endeavour to interact with other agencies and the public in a professional manner. When the alarm bell sounds, volunteers don't always know how serious the incident is or how long they'll be working at the site. It could be a burning bylaw infraction, a house fire, a traffic accident or anything in between. The training courses that the volunteers must complete and the certification standards they're required to meet are set by the Office of the Fire Commissioner, which is part of Emergency Management BC at the provincial Ministry of Justice. Many of them take the same courses that full - time firefighters take, depending on the needs of their communities. Volunteers must complete course modules and work to earn certifications so they're qualified to undertake certain types of work. Similarly, the volunteer fire department itself must maintain certain standards, including ongoing training to meet provincial standards and WorkSafeBC requirements. Managing the administrative needs of the fire hall can also be onerous sometimes, since people who are experts at managing a fire hose may not be equally adept at preparing a spreadsheet. Given our aging population, maintaining a cadre of highly trained, experienced firefighters can be a challenge, especially in areas of the province with high rates of absentee homeowners. It can take years for a volunteer to achieve different certification levels, so it's a big loss whenever a volunteer has to leave the organization. Volunteer firefighters work hard on behalf of their communities and, in turn, they are supported by the communities they serve. Some of the backing that their departments receive is financial, through a tax base that provides funding for needed equipment and training resources. Many communities also support their fire departments by regularly holding fundraising events. However, one of the best ways that people can support their volunteer firefighters is by showing how much they respect and value the extraordinarily important work that these "ordinary folks" do, and understanding how they deal with a variety of challenges, from WorkSafeBC requirements to the demands of emergency response calls. Above all, perhaps, volunteer firefighters deserve our respect because of their willingness to put their physical and mental well-being to the test in order to serve their communities. If you are one of the fortunate British Columbians who live within the jurisdiction of a volunteer fire department, please take a moment to think about everything that firefighters do for you. Then think of what you can do for them. They certainly deserve it.

First Responder Service Temporarily Suspended

Until further notice our first responder medical response service has been suspended. We have a good roster of firefighters, but keeping up the numbers of fully trained first responders who are available 24/7 has proven to be impossible at the present time. The first responder service is not part of our mandate as a fire department and, as stated in our bylaws, would only be provided when sufficient numbers of trained personnel were available. It is disappointing to have to cancel this service since over the past couple of years our crews have responded to more medical aid call-outs than fire calls. In spite of a recruitment program in which requests were sent out to the community and notices posted in several locations inviting new members to take part in the program, the response was so poor that Chief Andy Palaniak had no choice but to close the service as of the end of January. We hope as new people move into the area we can encourage more participation and once again offer continuous medical aid to the community. First responders do not necessarily have to be firefighters, but it is a good idea if you can afford the time. We are always hoping to recruit new members.



Recruiting signs now at both halls

Women's Auxiliary 2014/15

It is with great pleasure to have learned how to be a president. (I Think) It's been an honor to work with some incredibly talented and dedicated women who have conscientiously worked for the improvement of our area's fire/first responders needs in this district. We had a total of 7 meetings this year. We are all very lucky to have such amazing women who have worked to keep this Auxiliary going for many years.

I would like to especially thank Marjorie and Barb for keeping me on track while I learned the ropes as the New President of the Auxiliary. I took over this title on Mar. 8th 2014. I presided over my first meeting with Giselle's guidance first meeting with 14 in attendance. We had many decisions to make as it was the push to get ready for the May 2014 Long Weekend Events. It of course came off with great success and I had again another great experience of how to be a pie maker plus a poop counter and what I could do at the barbecue while I waited for Alan Watrich to take over for me. Not a problem occurred of course since the ladies have this down to a fine art for preparations and take down.

Our Event on Sept 12th was a sad but enjoyable time saying goodbye to Kathy Wilson. We enjoyed a fun time at the Little Horse Lodge getting to say our good lucks and goodbyes. We sadly miss her smiling face and her hard work during her time with us. I am sure most of you know she is doing very well in her new digs and her occasional letters let me know she is missing us but so happy to be near her family now. I am sad to say that the Appreciation Dinner was not something I could attend and gratefully Giselle our past president was kind enough to step in to say a few words from the Auxiliary that night. Thanks Giselle. The report of the event sounded like it was great fun and if you did not attend you missed a good Shin-Ding.



The annual bake and garage sale in May this year was once again a great success. During the day we were able to dedicate the Firefighters' Memorial Flag Poles. Kathy Wilson encouraged us to have the poles installed in memory of past members of the department. As soon as the ground thawed this past spring members of the Board assisted by a couple of the firefighters poured the concrete bases and raised the poles at both halls. The flags are now flying and the project is complete.

The popularity of the bake sale has prompted us to plan a similar open house, bake sale and crafts market to be held at Hall #2 on Saturday, August 1st from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. If local artists and craftspeople wish to display their wares, tables will be available for \$10.00 each. Please contact Pat Kent at 250-456-7436 to reserve your table.

All of us will have the pleasure of another year of fun and laughter at all our auxiliary meetings and events. Please if you have any time to join us and pitch in with our events we would be so very happy to have you. Our ladies will be working on plans for the coming year for events and ideas for helping the men and women who dedicatedly volunteer to help keep our area safe. Again thanks to all of you who supported me for a wonderful past year. Joyce Smeltzer, Auxiliary President.

Fire Dues Invoicing

When the invoices for the 2016 annual fire dues arrive in your mailboxes this fall they will contain a notice regarding a payment deadline of January 1. The payment date has always been January 1 of every year, yet members who had not paid at that time were not considered delinquent until March 1 of that year. This has led to the situation where payments are coming in throughout January and February and many property owners who travel South for the winter have not been paying until they return. Director Bill Thomas, who looks after collections for the Department, is usually still knocking on doors until the end of June and sometimes later. It has been pointed out by our lawyer that according to our bylaws we are not obligated to respond to fires at unpaid properties even for members who had been paid-up for the previous year. Furthermore, property owners cannot legally claim to have a responding fire department when applying for insurance if dues for the current year are not paid. The bottom line is:

- **Dues are payable by January 1st.**
- **If a fire occurs on an unpaid property the owner will be charged the set rate for fighting the fire.**
- **Overdue accounts will be charged 2% monthly and coverage begins upon receipt of payment.**

Treasurer's Report

**WATCH LK. N. GREEN LK. VFD 2015
Balance Sheet As at 06/13/2015**

ASSET	
Current Assets	
Cash to be deposited	0.00
Petty Cash	300.00
Gaming Bank Account	9,311.32
General Bank Account	<u>72,311.00</u>
Total Cash Assets	<u>81,922.32</u>
Total Cash	<u>81,922.32</u>
Current GIC	
GIC Hall 2	<u>3,400.53</u>
Total GIC Assets	<u>3,400.53</u>
Total GIC	<u>3,400.53</u>
Accounts Receivable	
Accounts Receivable	0.00
GST Rec. (50% of Pre. Year's Tax)	<u>0.00</u>
Total Receivable	<u>0.00</u>
Capital Assets	
Fire Fighting Equipment	<u>67,317.59</u>
Net - Fire Fighting Equipment	67,317.59
Vehicle	<u>351,891.44</u>
Net - Vehicle	351,891.44
Building	<u>335,400.00</u>
Net - Building	335,400.00
Land	<u>22,100.00</u>
Total Capital Assets	<u>776,709.03</u>
TOTAL ASSET	<u>862,031.88</u>
LIABILITY	
Current Liabilities	
Accounts Payable	0.00
WCB Payable	0.00
PST Payable	0.00
GST/HST Paid on Purchases	<u>-2,307.97</u>
Total Current Liabilities	<u>-2,307.97</u>
TOTAL LIABILITY	<u>-2,307.97</u>
EQUITY	
Owners Equity	
Retained Earnings - Previous Year	881,903.02
Current Earnings	<u>-17,563.17</u>
Total Owners Equity	<u>864,339.85</u>
TOTAL EQUITY	<u>864,339.85</u>
LIABILITIES AND EQUITY	<u>862,031.88</u>

Generated On: 06/14/2015

Income Statement 01/01/2015 to 06/13/2015

REVENUE	
Donations	
Donations	<u>1,431.77</u>
Donations	<u>1,431.77</u>
Other Revenue	
Dues Revenue	<u>50,642.00</u>
Total Other Revenue	<u>50,642.00</u>
TOTAL REVENUE	<u>52,073.77</u>
EXPENSE	
Vehicle Maintenance	
First Responder 11	85.60
Tanker 11	50.40
First Responder 21	476.46
Engine 21	588.50
Shop Supplies.	<u>586.19</u>
Net Vehicle Maintenance	<u>1,787.15</u>
Vehicle Fuel Costs	
Fuel For Pumps (Gas)	<u>38.68</u>
Net Vehicle Fuel Expense	<u>38.68</u>
Donations Forwarded	
Donations Forwarded to Auxillary	1,080.00
Total Donations Forwarded	<u>1,080.00</u>
Freight Expense	
Freight Expense	<u>1,086.75</u>
Total Freight Cost	<u>1,086.75</u>
Payroll Expenses	
WCB Expense	<u>721.44</u>
Total Payroll Expense	<u>721.44</u>
General & Administrative Expenses	
Accounting & Legal	1,150.00
Advertising & Promotions	1,097.83
Business Fees & Licenses	1,853.70
Courier & Postage	340.00
Bank Charges	61.00
American Exchange	1,607.70
Office Supplies	415.04
Fire Fighting Supplies	726.02
Fire Fighting Equipment	30,332.45
1ST Responder Expenses	43.45
Miscellaneous Expenses	599.01
Rent	643.94
Building Repair & Maintenance	5,990.14
Training	3,805.09
Mileage	747.30
Meals & Lodging	<u>275.00</u>
Total General & Admin. Expenses	<u>49,687.67</u>
Utilities Expenses	
Utilities. Hall 1	1,187.88
Utilities Hall 2	<u>1,162.37</u>
Total Utility Expenses	<u>2,350.25</u>
Insurance Expenses	
Building & liability Insurance	<u>12,885.00</u>
Total Insurance Expenses	<u>12,885.00</u>
TOTAL EXPENSE	<u>69,636.94</u>
NET INCOME	<u>-17,563.17</u>

FIRE DUES / TAXATION – The Answer (?)

In last summer's newsletter we asked the following:

The Board of Directors would like to pursue one possible avenue to access these additional funds [the 20% of property owners who do not support the provision of emergency services] by having the Cariboo Regional District act as the collection agency only, for a negotiated fee, by having Fire Dues added to the property taxes. Our desire is not to have fire dues assessed based on property values or fixed to the mill rate, but rather as a fixed fee per property as per the current rate structure. Fire dues would then be paid in conjunction with property taxes, eliminating the need for billing and follow up which in itself entails significant cost. The collected dues would then be remitted to the Fire Department directly from the Cariboo Regional District. Also, any proposed increase in the amount of Fire Dues would have to be approved by the Society Membership at the Annual General Meeting.

To accomplish this goal, the Board of Directors would like to follow a process that was successful for local Search and Rescue in the South Cariboo by holding a referendum or conducting a petition for property owners in the coverage area this year with the intent of having the new process in place for the 2015 Taxation Year. Undoubtedly, further discussion with the CRD will be required to determine feasibility and the format required for such a referendum.

We would ask that all property owners give this proposal consideration and indicate approval on the following page for us to proceed.

Almost 200 property owners responded in favour of the proposal. There were three people who didn't seem to understand the question and one resident was opposed. To begin the presentation of our proposal we had two rather non-productive meetings with the CAO of the CRD, Janis Bell, and out-going Area L Director Bruce Rattray followed by newly elected Director Brian Coakley. Later, Mr. Coakley arranged for us to submit our proposal to the Directors of the CRD at their regular meeting in Williams Lake on February 18th. Although the time for our presentation was limited, we felt our request was well-received. However, at an in-camera meeting in May our proposal was rejected. On May 20th we received the following from the Corporate Officer of the CRD, Alice Johnston:

Re: Request for Collection of Dues

The Cariboo Regional District Board, at its meeting held on May 14th, resolved as follows:

That the Memorandum from Janis Bell, Chief Administrative Officer, dated March 12, 2015 regarding the Watch Lake/Green Lake Volunteer Fire Department's request for the Cariboo Regional District to collect dues, be received. Further, that the request be denied.

We asked to see the memorandum from Janis Bell to determine what her reasons were for undermining our request, but we received only the following short note, also from Alice Johnston:

"No, it is not possible to receive a copy. It was discussed at a closed meeting of the Board."

Our concern is that previous communications from Ms. Bell regarding supposed legal and insurance complications were based on a false premise. Having not been allowed to counter her argument before the directors did not give us the chance to refute her information and to point out that specifically we were not proposing to provide a service for the CRD, but that we were asking only that they collect our dues for us in a manner similar to that of 100 Mile Search and Rescue. On June 27th our neighbours in 70 Mile House will be voting on a financial proposal offered to them by the Thompson Nicola Regional District that in many ways similar to what we are requesting of the CRD. Further actions on this issue and community reaction to this lack of support from the CRD will be major topics at our summer general meeting. Also on the agenda at this meeting will be a request for membership approval of several additions to our constitution and bylaws that have been suggested by our lawyer.



NOTICE OF SUMMER GENERAL MEETING

Saturday, August 22nd at 2:00 p.m. – Watch Lake Community Hall

Proposed Agenda:

- President's Introduction
- Secretary's Report
- Treasurer's Report
- Fire Chief's Report
- Auxiliary Report
- Additions to the Constitution and Bylaws
- CRD rejection of proposal
- Tax / Fire Dues Issues
- New Business



Proxy

No: _____

I, (print): _____

of local area address: _____,

as a fire dues paid member of the
 Watch Lake – North Green Lake
 Volunteer Fire Department (Society)
 give my proxy to:

(print) _____

to vote on motions and resolutions raised
 at the Summer General Meeting of the
 Watch Lake – North Green Lake
 Volunteer Fire Dept. (Society)
 to be held on Saturday, August 22, 2015*
 at the Watch Lake Community Hall.

Signed: _____

**valid only on date shown above*