



WATCH LAKE - NORTH GREEN LAKE VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT



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

www.wlnqfiredept.org

Summer Newsletter 2020

Notice of Annual General Meeting:

Saturday, September 5th at The Watch Lake Community Hall, at 10:00 a.m.

Introduction

For the few people in the community who may not have met me, I am Ron Thurston, the new President of our fire department. My late wife and I have lived here part time since 1971 and full time since 2000. I have been involved with the fire department as a firefighter and Communications Officer for the past nineteen years. Physical restrictions are now keeping me from serving as an active firefighter, but believed I could continue to contribute some expertise to the department by joining the Board of Directors. With the retirement of Roy Allan after 13 years as President, I was elected to that position. As Roy takes a deserving rest from the President's job, he remains as the Past President and Director. He remains available to me as I take on this new challenge. I would be remiss in my duties if I did not thank him for the thousands of hours he has put into the Department. He has brought the Department from a failing one to one that has more than a million dollars in assets. With the help of community members, directors and firefighters he has built 2 new fire Halls, replaced the broken down fire equipment with 2 new to us, pumper engines and 3 tenders to haul water, and the installation of 2 Dry Hydrants which were required by WorkSafeBC. His efforts to obtain grants has allowed the Department to replace old turnout gear, obtain new safety equipment to fight interface fires as well as a vast amount of fire fighting equipment. He submitted the Capital Grant that will allow us to get The New Engine, discussed below. For all your hard work and the sacrifice that Kathy has endured, The Department Thanks You.

Fortunately, we have had no fires to contend with so far this year, but the long-range weather forecast is calling for a hot and dry summer with a dangerous wildfire season. Under the guidance of our Training Officer, most full and part-time residents have taken the precaution to FireSmart their properties and your fire department is fully equipped and the members are trained and ready to deal with any emergency that may come our way.

The Impact of Covid-19

As I begin my term in office we have had to deal with two unusual challenges. First of all, the Covid-19 pandemic has had a major impact upon our community. The permanent residents have, for the most part, respected the quarantine and stay-at-home procedures and many of the part-time people have made the sacrifice and stayed away as well. The social distancing requirements have had major impact upon the department's training and practice sessions. All group activities have been cancelled since March with individual members checking-out the vehicles on a regular basis to assure that everything is ready to go in the event of an emergency. For the first time in many years the annual Garage and Bake Sale, generally held on the May long weekend, had to be cancelled. The Annual General Meeting was scheduled for July, but that has now been postponed until Saturday, September 5th. Hopefully by then the worst will have past and we will once again be able to safely meet in groups.

As you may remember from our past newsletters, one of our major concerns in keeping the department ready for a fire emergency is locating, storing and transporting water. Now, we have an abundance of water everywhere. It started with an excessive run-off as soon as the upper level snow began to melt. Normal drainage ditches and streams soon began and a couple of major roads in the area were washed out. Keeping our roads passable is important in providing access for our emergency vehicles to all properties in the Fire Service Area. The Elephant Hill Wildfire destroyed so many thousands of the trees that would normally absorb a large portion of the ground water that the water table has risen considerably and will continue to do so until the snow melt has completely run off. There are ponds everywhere (great for the mosquitoes) and many fields are flooded.

Our trucks couldn't get close to the Tristan Road storage tank, but water can be pumped from the surrounding pond. The lake level is higher than has ever been recorded. Low-lying lakeshore properties are being damaged by the wave action and septic systems are being flooded with a danger of contamination of the lake water. I personally have received considerable damage to my foreshore area and have been assisted by several of the firefighters and friends in filling and placing numerous sandbags along the shoreline in front of my property and that of six of my neighbours. To date we have gone through six truckloads of sand and several thousand bags. There is sand and sandbags available at both halls if anyone needs some. The only outflow from the lake is the creek over to Little Green Lake that flows through the culvert under the Pressy Lake Forest Service Road. The volume of water there is held at 65% due to the venturi effect and the excess water is about fifteen to twenty centimeters over the road. The current rain and volume of water may soon wash out the culvert completely in a few days. If this happens it may be good for us, but certainly not for Cache Creek since a drop of 50 centimeters in the road level at the culvert would result in seven billion gallons of water being released into the Rayfield River and from there into the Bonaparte River.



of your community. Come on out Tuesday nights for 2-3 hours, starting at 6 pm and become part of the team.

A few years ago we had numerous firefighters trained as first Responders; however, with transitions we didn't have enough trained members to continue that extra service. If there is enough interest and volunteers to be trained in first response the Board may be willing to offer this service in the future. So go to our website and let us know by volunteering.

For more information and application forms please contact:

Acting Fire Chief, Mark Bulman: phone - 250-456-2151 email - dragnmit@bcinternet.net

FireSmart

Check fire restrictions before lighting a campfire and, above all, participate in the FireSmart program.

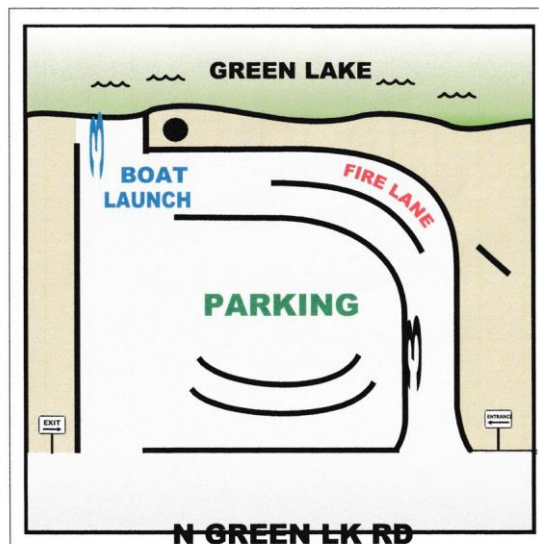
Booklets are available at either fire Hall or from the government web site at:

https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/farming-natural-resources-and-industry/forestry/wildfire-management/prevention/prevention-home-community/bcws_homeowner_firesmart_manual.pdf

More information will be also provided at the Annual General Meeting. Answer the questions in the *Assess Your Risk From Wildfire* pages and find your *Home and Yard Hazard Score*. Are you really prepared for a repeat of the summer of 2017 ?

Access 14

Over the past couple of years, as time allowed, we have been working on a compromise solution to BC Parks decision to block-off access to the lake at the "y". With assistance from Highways, Alan Boyd has put considerable effort into developing a shared usage plan that allows for public parking and boat launch facilities while reserving a protected area for fire department access to the dry hydrant. We hope users will heed the "no parking" signs so that the department's trucks will be able to draw water from the lake in the event of an emergency. If you are using the boat launch, please park your vehicle and trailer in the parking area, so the department tenders and pumps have free access to the hydrant.



In closing, I wish to recognize the BC Community Gaming Grants Branch for their support over the years and the South Green Lake VFD (Del and Dave) for their ongoing assistance with our training programs their contribution to the development of our department is greatly appreciated.

Please enjoy all of the wonderful summer activities our lake has to offer - safely.

Ron Thurston

President, WL-NGL VFD

Department Activities Online

Director Bob Nathane maintains the website with its up-to-date news and useful links. He also keeps our Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/wlnglfiredpt/>) interesting with fire department related news.

Other than the flooding issues mentioned earlier and most residents sticking close to home, things have been relatively quiet in our community. Consequently, the web page (<https://www.wlnglfiredpt.org/>) has also seen a drop in activity. Most people are now taking advantage of the convenience of paying their annual dues online.

WLNLVFD Website Visits				
	<u>2017</u>	<u>2018</u>	<u>2019</u>	<u>2020</u>
Jan.	1036	1747	4104	1636
Feb.	952	1590	4174	1807
Mar.	1188	2093	3474	2265
Apr	1302	1536	3685	1771
May	1180	3763	3052	1804
Jun.	1411	3178	2379	
Jul.	2360	2908	2330	
Aug.	3478	3167	2386	
Sept.	2232	4946	2091	
Oct.	1520	4095	1888	
Nov.	1312	4109	2750	
Dec.	1394	4041	2362	

Membership Update:

We have had a tremendous response to having an online payment option for paying the 2020 fire dues. In total, we have had nearly 200 property owners pay their dues by either credit card or e-chequing. The online payment option also provides an “instant” receipt for members as the receipt is sent immediately following payment. The convenience of paying online is beneficial for the fire department as well. It allows us to have the most up to date contact information for our membership and it cuts down on the cost of mailing out receipts. The online payment system works for both computers and hand-held devices, such as iPads and smartphones. Other than a handful of “glitches”, the system is working well!”. For example, we have discovered that an anti-fraud mechanism prevents members from paying by credit card when outside of North America, but the e-chequing option still works.

To date, we have had 419 out of 500 members pay their 2020 fire dues. We anticipate that this total will increase as more and more people are finally able to visit their properties and are reminded of their dues when passing the fire hall. Thanks so much to all who have paid so far. We look forward to seeing you soon.

Stay safe and healthy,

Laura Dewar, Membership Director

Finances

Halfway through the Department's fiscal year we are still in a good financial position. Members annual fire dues go directly to our Operating Budget to pay for things like: heat and light for the two halls, vehicle licensing and fuel, insurance to protect our members, firefighters, and vehicles (our largest expense) and various maintenance issues.

In addition to members fire dues we were successful in obtaining three grants to purchase and replace equipment for this year:

1. A Red Cross Community Resiliency Grant (administered by the Fire Chiefs' Association of BC) that we have used to replace safety gear and equipment used during interface firefighting.
2. A Community Gaming Grant that we have put towards training and equipment renewal.
3. A Gaming Capital Equipment Grant that we have applied to the purchase a new fire truck.

Some members have asked me why we need a New Fire Engine Truck. My answer is that over the department's years we have been given used engines (2) and have had to purchase old engines. Vehicles that have "timed out", that were used by the major Municipal Fire Departments. No matter what condition the trucks are in, the big-budget Municipal Departments are required to replace them after 20 years. We have purchased these used vehicles hoping that they will last 5 years without too many repairs and that they will pass the pump tests every year. We have paid upwards of \$100,000 for these vehicles every 5 years with continued maintenance and overhauls. With each replacement of our required two engines, it requires retraining in the operation of each by our firefighters. So, we decided that the purchase of a new engine that our Department can keep up to thirty years would save tens of thousands of dollars in replacement, maintaining, repairing and training costs. With the Community Gaming Grant, a significant donation (only to be used for the purchase of a New Engine) and funds earned by our firefighters during the 2017 fire, we were able to purchase it without using any of our community members annual, operational fire dues.

I must emphasize once again that if the dues are not paid on your property, **you cannot legally claim to have a responding fire department** when applying for fire insurance. If the dues are not paid, we do not respond. If you do have a fire on your property and there is a threat to your neighbour's property or surrounding forest, we will respond to provide community protection and bill you accordingly. There is a difference in insurance premiums between having or not having a responding fire department that more than covers your annual dues. Claiming to have a responding fire department when you haven't paid the annual fire dues may in fact result in a lack of coverage if you were to have a fire on your property. Please remember this is your fire department and we are there for your protection.

Tom Manion, Treasurer

NEWS ALERT (June 2020)

The CRD no longer supports 10 independent fire departments in their area. At the time of writing this News Letter, I received notice from the CRD that “the CRD has made a difficult decision to deny current funding requests from five independent volunteer firefighting organizations in the region, and establish a board policy against grants for assistance to all independent fire departments within the district”.

We are not one of the 5 departments denied assistance as we had not applied for assistance this year. It should be noted that the 14 fire departments currently operating as CRD, taxpayer funded and CRD managed organizations will not be impacted.

The notice goes on to say the in camera meeting “decision was made largely because of the 10 halls legal status. Three are member societies and seven are unincorporated societies. Both categories present legal and financial challenges for organizations such as the CRD.” “...grants for assistance MAY be seen as tacit support for the independent departments. This leaves the regional district open to lawsuits if it is “perceived” as an ‘authority having jurisdiction ...’ further “... we felt we would be putting the district and taxpayers at risk if we maintained the status quo”.

The CRD then goes on to list the 10 departments impacted by their decision which shows 3 are unincorporated societies and 7 (including our Department) that are incorporated societies. The Notice says nothing about getting legal advice about the “incorporated societies” departments only “member societies” and “unincorporated societies”.

I find the CRD’s legal reasoning questionable as using their reasons of “perception” could then apply to any organization they give assistance too. Some of those organizations are: the Arts and Culture Project and Business Facade Improvement Project. The CRD’s reasoning would make the district and regional taxpayers liable to legal action if one of those projects committed an actionable mistake.

Personally, I feel the CRD’s nose is out of joint because our members refused to give the assets of our Department to them to manage through a vote. They may also be upset due to the fact that our Department was able to raise \$400,000 to buy a New Fire Truck for cash without having to finance it over 10 years as they do.

In closing I must advised all our members and taxpayers “**That We Are Not A CRD Governed Fire Department and the CRD is NOT an ‘authority having jurisdiction’**. - liable for actions taken by The Watch Lake/North Green Lake Volunteer Fire Department. We will continue to train and outfit our firefighters to the best of our ability.

Ron Thurston

President, WL-NGL VFD

If you cannot attend the Annual General Meeting on September 5th in person, please forward this proxy to a paid-up member of your choosing who will be attending and can vote for you.



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 Annual
General Meeting of the
Watch Lake – North Green Lake
Volunteer Fire Dept. (Society)
to be held on
Saturday, September 5, 2020*
The Watch Lake Community Hall.

Signed: _____

**valid only on date shown above*