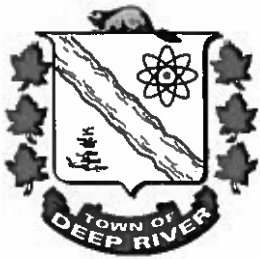


TOWN OF DEEP RIVER



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – JULY 13TH, 2017

Deep River Council Moves all Firefighters to Day Shift and Institutes Call-out System

DEEP RIVER, ON – At a Special Council Meeting held July 12, 2017, Council for the Town of Deep River directed staff to move all firefighters to day shift Monday to Friday to address decade old concerns relating to supervision and training. Council also directed the Mayor and Reeve to meet with Atomic Energy of Canada and Canadian Nuclear Laboratories to request assistance with the training of firefighters.

Fire Chief Rob Shaw provided Council with an update (attached) of the status of the Deep River Fire Department at the meeting. Council passed the following resolutions:

Motion Number 1

WHEREAS numerous reviews, reports and studies published by the Office of the Fire Marshal, Dillon Consulting and POMAX have identified over the past 30 years that firefighters employed by the Deep River Fire Service lack training and competency, and

WHEREAS the Deep River Professional Firefighters Association has made complaints to the Ministry of Labour and the Office of the Fire Marshal regarding the lack of training and supervision over the last 30 years, and

WHEREAS the Deep River Firefighters have refused to attend scheduled training to improve qualifications and competencies at the Ontario Fire College,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT staff be directed to place all firefighters on day shift from Monday to Friday to facilitate supervision, and

THAT the appropriate steps be taken to implement a call out system of Fire Department personnel after hours and on weekends.

Motion Number 2

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the matter of Fire Training Services be tabled by the Mayor and the Reeve at a meeting to be called with Atomic Energy of Canada Limited and Canadian Nuclear Laboratories to request assistance relating to Fire Services in the Town of Deep river.

Mayor Joan Lougheed stated, "Council is faced with no other choice but to address the deficiencies that have been identified for many decades by the Fire Marshal's Office, Insurance Underwriters' and numerous consulting studies with this Fire Department. Placing all firefighters on straight days will address the lack of training and supervision highlighted repeatedly for many years. Implementing the call out procedure for afterhours response will ensure that dispatch pages all firefighters, notifies the Deep River Police Service and is ready to contact Laurentian Hills Fire Service in the event that

Mutual Aid is required and requested in the event of a structure fire.”

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For more information, please contact:
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COUNCIL UPDATE – DEEP RIVER FIRE DEPARTMENT

12 JULY 2017

Incidents

- The Department has responded to 67 incidents to date in 2017. On average one every three days. This is consistent with 2016 stats. There has been no structure fires to date. The last time mutual aid was requested from LHVFD was 23 Oct 2016 to assist with a basement dryer fire.
- **Staffing –**
- On my arrival there were 10 Firefighters and 1 Captain. Two firefighters were on extended sick leave and two probationary firefighters had been hired in 2016 to backfill on a fixed contract that expired on 06 July 2017. The nine (9) working were assigned two (2) to shift with the 9th being used as a 'floater' assigned to days to cover off absences for vacation. Two firefighters were being maintained on duty due to the statutory freeze imposed by the ongoing contract arbitration
- Since my arrival the Captain and two Firefighters have retired. Two additional Firefighters were hired on a six month contract basis to maintain coverage pending the results of arbitration. The DRPFFA grieved both hiring's.
- With the retirements and reduction of contract staff as of 07 July we have seven (7) firefighters remaining of which two are on extended sick leave. The five (5) working firefighters are assigned one (1) to a platoon covering 24/7 with the remaining probationary contract firefighter on days covering scheduled absences. The DRPFFA has submitted two grievances regarding this.
- An "Unstaffed Fire Hall" procedure was developed and implemented (Despatch, DRPS, Chief and D/Chief notified – Dept. call out and DRPS notification if response required) in the event the one firefighter scheduled for duty was unable to attend.
- Since 07 July on two occasions firefighters have called in sick for their scheduled shift and the fire hall was unstaffed as no one was available or willing to fill in. The DRPFFA President has made it clear they are not

obligated to carry pagers as they are not paid to and advised the Chief at least one firefighter does not take the pager home and others take them home but do not take them out with them or monitor the pages as they do not want to be bothered. On average over the past several years a department wide page has resulted in less than five (5) members of the Department attending the scene including the two on duty.

- Dating back to the eighties it has been identified repeatedly by the Ontario Fire Marshall, consultants and the insurance underwriters that Deep River Fire Department does not have enough firefighters to suppress a single structure fire and we are totally reliant on mutual aid with LHVFD. In response to DRPFFA complaints to the Ministry of Labour there has been a long standing policy that restricts Deep River Firefighters from engaging in any interior search/rescue or attack until Mutual Aid arrives in sufficient numbers for them to safely do so.

Training/Supervision –

- Successive reviews by the OFM and consultants (POMAX/DILLON) have identified a lack of ongoing training and training records for firefighters as well as lack of front line supervision (Capt) and succession planning. On my arrival there was an ongoing MOL investigation prompted by complaints from the DRPFFA regarding lack of training and supervision. The first aid/CPR/AED certification for most firefighters had lapsed.
- The only member of the Department qualified above basic firefighting was the Captain. He was also the only qualified instructor/supervisor.
- Emergency First Responder training was organized for all who required it in February. The minimum class size being 4 the 6 who required it were scheduled together and overtime rules applied. The DRPFFA President challenged the “mandatory” aspect of the training maintaining that any training on their time off was “voluntary” and they may choose not to attend. In the end they all attended after a being advised of the risk of cancelling the medical aid program.
- An annual training program was put into place with the approval of and under the supervision of the Captain. The Captain retired several weeks after it was introduced leaving no qualified instructor.

- Two firefighters were selected and agreed to 3 month terms as "Acting Captain" to provide them a developmental opportunity, double the front line supervision and satisfy the MOL and OFM who were briefed on and approved the plan. The day after the Captain retired both of them submitted notice that they were no longer willing to accept the positions and indicated there was "pressure" not to accept.
- In February both were scheduled and agreed to attend Instructor 1 and Fire Officer 1 courses on vacancies that the OFC had granted beyond the normal course load due to our dire need.
- Both failed to attend their scheduled courses in June/July without notice causing the loss of valuable training opportunities, the tuition fees and embarrassment to the department. They were the subject of disciplinary action which the DRPFFA is Grieving. It is their contention that " the demand that Association members attend Fire College is outside the terms and conditions of the collective agreement"
- The DRPFFA has recently been in contact with the Ministry of Labour to complain about lack of training and supervision and have submitted a Grievance demanding that a Captain be immediately appointed.
- We have no further courses scheduled and none will be available through the Ontario Fire College until after March 2018 when the current course calendar ends. We have no Firefighters qualified above basic firefighter at this time, no prospect of qualifying any of them to a higher level until well into next year and we currently have no suitable candidates.
- The appointment of Deputy Chief Labre on a part time basis assists with supervision during the day and on the fire ground as he is a qualified Incident Commander, Fire Instructor and Fire Captain.
- We have explored other external training opportunities. CNL Fire is expanding their training capacity. Their Chief advises any request for assistance has to be made through senior management at AECL.

Conclusion –

We currently have a group of four first class firefighters without current basic training, none of whom have the qualifications for or have demonstrated suitability for an instructional or supervisory role. The DRPFFA has and continues to use every avenue to prevent progress in this department that does not align with its goals and objectives. Should council want to implement a composite department there is currently not the ability to form an effective one given the current lack of capacity to train it and to lead it. This situation has not developed overnight and will not be fixed overnight. It will take a considerable amount of time to develop a functional fire department that has the numbers of effectively trained and led firefighters to suppress a single structure fire on its own.

Returning to the status quo of spending considerable money to maintain two largely untrained/inexperienced firefighters on duty will only serve to perpetuate the issues identified in the reviews previously mentioned while giving the illusion of public safety. That decision of course rests with council. There is no easy fix for this situation.

R.A. (Rob) Shaw

Fire Chief