

DATE: August 28, 2018**FILE:** 7200-20 / Merville**TO:** Chair and Directors
Black Creek/Oyster Bay Services Committee**FROM:** Russell Dyson
Chief Administrative OfficerSupported by Russell Dyson
Chief Administrative Officer***R. Dyson*****RE: Partnership between Black Creek – Oyster Bay Fire Protection Service and the Greater Merville Fire Protection Service****Purpose**

To seek a partnership between the Black Creek – Oyster Bay (BCOB) Fire Protection Service and the Greater Merville Fire Protection Service and to introduce a cost recovery formula to provide for training and supports associated with volunteer firefighters.

Recommendation from the Chief Administrative Officer:

THAT a partnership between the Black Creek – Oyster Bay Fire Protection Service and the Greater Merville Fire Protection Service be approved that provides firefighter training for Merville volunteers on a cost-recovery basis;

AND FURTHER THAT annual financial plans incorporate a cost-recovery for volunteer recruitment and training in the Greater Merville Fire Protection Service at \$1100 per recruit per year, to be determined at the end of each calendar year.

Executive Summary

The Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD) delivers fire protection in:

- Black Creek – Oyster Bay (service delivered by Oyster River Fire Rescue); and
- Greater Merville (service delivered under contract to City of Courtenay Fire Department).

The Greater Merville Fire Protection Service includes plans to construct an auxiliary fire hall. One of the most important elements of an auxiliary fire hall are the volunteer firefighters. A decision by the CVRD Board in July 2018 was to recruit and train volunteers before an auxiliary hall is built. The board also confirmed that the eventual service provider for a Merville auxiliary fire hall will be Oyster River Fire Rescue (ORFR), subject to a financial plan that supports an interim cost sharing arrangement between the Merville and BCOB services for volunteer recruitment, training and member supports.

In discussions with the ORFR Fire Chief, recruiting for and training volunteers can be accomplished through the existing recruitment and training practices by ORFR. A cost would be incurred for such recruitment and training (at \$1100 per recruit) and the Greater Merville service must be responsible for such costs. Annual financial plans would account for these costs and a funds transfer would take effect annually to allow the BCOB cost recovery.

This partnership has positive aspects for both the Greater Merville service and the BCOB service:

- Trained firefighters will be available when an auxiliary fire hall is constructed in Merville
- Training offers additional volunteer firefighters for the BCOB service before and after an auxiliary hall is constructed

- Cost-recovery for BCOB means that BCOB taxpayers are not paying for another geographic area's benefits
- Additional volunteers in BCOB fire service training programs offers ability to provide more flexible and responsive training opportunities.

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Stakeholder Distribution (Upon Agenda Publication)

Chief Green, Oyster River Fire Rescue	✓
Chief Bardonex, Courtenay Fire Rescue	✓

Background/Current Situation

The CVRD delivers fire protection services in Black Creek-Oyster Bay (via the ORFR) and Greater Merville (via City of Courtenay Fire Department). The CVRD is considering long-term fire protection in Merville, which includes constructing an auxiliary fire hall. The CVRD has committed to ORFR being the eventual service provider. The auxiliary fire hall requires trained volunteers and a partnership with ORFR provides for benefits to both the BCOB service (additional recruits to draw upon for fire response, additional flexibility for training options, cost-recovery for expenses incurred) and Greater Merville service (trained recruits available for auxiliary hall upon construction, strengthened relationship with ORFR as new hall is developed).

Policy Analysis

The CVRD Board has confirmed that the eventual service provider for a Merville auxiliary fire hall will be the ORFR, subject to a financial plan that supports an interim cost sharing arrangement between the Merville Fire Protection Service and the Black Creek – Oyster Bay Fire Protection Service for volunteer recruitment, training and member supports. The recommendation in this report will commit the recruitment and training for Merville recruits to be conducted through ORFR, on a cost-recovery basis.

Options

This report recommends that a partnership between the Black Creek – Oyster Bay Fire Protection Service and the Greater Merville Fire Protection Service be approved that provides firefighter training for Merville volunteers on a cost-recovery basis and that annual financial plans incorporate a cost-recovery for volunteer recruitment and training in the Greater Merville Fire Protection Service at \$1100 per recruit, to be determined at the end of each calendar year.

The committee may also consider amendments to the recommendation or refer the matter to staff to consider alternative arrangements for the Greater Merville Services recruitment and training needs. The effect of such a referral could delay any recruitment and training efforts, which could occur during the fall 2018.

Financial Factors

In discussions with the ORFR Fire Chief, annual costs and related expenses for volunteer recruitment and training are on average \$1100 for each recruit. This report recommends that a budget be identified in the Greater Merville annual financial plan, and then a cost-recovery would

transfer adequate funds to the BCOB service annually, depending on the number of individuals who are in training each year.

Additionally, expenses associated with equipment for the Merville service will be included in the Merville financial plan each year.

Legal Factors

The Office of the Fire Commissioner and industry standards require trained and certified individuals in fire protection services. The recommendation in this report would lead towards suitably trained individuals for the Greater Merville service while providing added benefits to the BCOB service.

Regional Growth Strategy Implications

As a community, Merville is seeking an auxiliary fire hall. This would assist in delivering on Comox Valley Regional Growth Strategy goals associated with public health and safety (goal 7).

Intergovernmental Factors

The CVRD contracts with the City of Courtenay Fire Department for fire protection in the Greater Merville service. CVRD staff are regularly in contact with the City of Courtenay Fire Chief and will continue to work collaboratively as the Greater Merville service continues to explore the construction of an auxiliary fire hall.

Interdepartmental Involvement

Corporate Services and Community Services Branch are working collaboratively on the Merville auxiliary fire hall project.

Citizen/Public Relations

An information session was held in August 2018 to present a project update and reinforce the need for volunteers from the Merville community. Approximately 80 people attended and many relevant questions were posed about the training requirements, volunteer firefighter's role and experience, and project timeline. Ongoing recruitment and training efforts will continue, in partnership with the Oyster River Fire Rescue, subject to support by the Black Creek – Oyster Bay Services Committee and CVRD Board.