

**DATE:** November 9, 2017

**FILE:** 7200-20/Mt Washington

**TO:** Chair and Directors  
Black Creek/Oyster Bay services committee

**FROM:** Russell Dyson  
Chief Administrative Officer

Supported by Russell Dyson  
Chief Administrative Officer

*R. Dyson*

**RE: Service Provider, Mount Washington Fire Protection**

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### **Purpose**

The purpose of this report is to recommend a service provider for the Mount Washington fire protection service and to develop a policy regarding the apportionment of costs for services delivered between the Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD) functions.

### **Recommendations from the Chief Administrative Officer**

1. THAT the Comox Valley Regional District provide fire protection services to the Mount Washington fire protection local service area by way of the Black Creek/Oyster Bay fire service and the Oyster River Volunteer Firefighters Association;  
AND FURTHER THAT the agreement with the Oyster River Volunteer Firefighters Association be amended to include administration of the Mount Washington fire protection service operating grant.
2. THAT staff develop a policy for the board's consideration with regard to the calculation of service cost apportionment for services between the Comox Valley Regional District functions.

### **Executive Summary**

Staff provided a questionnaire to the possible service providers to clarify the willingness, ability and estimated cost of providing fire protection services to the Mount Washington local service area.

The City of Courtenay's submission indicates that they would not be able to provide the service ahead of the Mount Washington fire hall's construction, which is anticipated for late 2018.

The Village of Cumberland's submission includes an estimated service agreement cost of \$150,000. This cost is not sustainable within the maximum requisition of the Mount Washington fire protection service.

The submission from the Black Creek/Oyster Bay fire protection service indicates that the Oyster River Fire Rescue department, led by the Black Creek/Oyster Bay fire chief and deputy, would be able to provide a fire protection response ahead of the construction of the fire hall. Further, the estimated cost to the Mount Washington fire protection service is sustainable within the current maximum requisition level.

The current agreement with the Oyster River Volunteer Firefighters Association for the provision of bookkeeping and accounting services of the operational grant funds for the Black Creek/Oyster Bay fire local service area would need to be amended to include bookkeeping and accounting of the operational grant funds for the Mount Washington fire protection service.

In order to guide further service provision between CVRD functions, staff are recommending that a policy regarding service cost apportionment be developed.

Prepared by:

Concurrence:

***J. Bast***

***T. Ian Smith***

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James Bast  
 Manager of Fire Services

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T. Ian Smith, MCE  
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**Stakeholder Distribution (Upon Agenda Publication)**

City of Courtenay	
Village of Cumberland	
Mount Washington fire service steering group	
Oyster River Volunteer Firefighters Association	

**Background/Current Situation**

The development of a fire service on Mount Washington is identified as a strategic priority of the board for the Community Services Branch.

The Mount Washington fire protection service was established following the consultant’s report and a subsequent successful referendum. The consultant’s report recommended a fire protection service with the following features:

- A defensive firefighting service provided by way of service agreement with a Comox Valley local government/fire department. The possible fire departments identified are that of Courtenay, Cumberland and the Black Creek Oyster Bay fire service.
- Construction of a storage building/fire hall at Mount Washington, on land currently owned by the CVRD for this purpose.
- The purchase of Mount Washington fire apparatus and equipment to be stored in the storage building/fire hall, and accessed by the contracted fire department.

Staff provided a questionnaire to each of the possible service providers seeking clarity regarding their willingness, ability and estimated cost to provide the service. A comparative matrix of the responses received is attached as Appendix A to this report.

Courtenay fire department submission:

It is anticipated that fire hall construction on Mount Washington could be completed by late 2018. At of its August 25, 2017, meeting, the Mount Washington fire service steering group indicated that the priority for the community was to establish a fire protection response as soon as possible and ahead of the anticipated fire hall construction completion.

The submission from the City of Courtenay indicates that they would not consider providing a fire protection response ahead of the construction of the storage building/fire hall and the purchase of Mount Washington specific firefighting equipment. This aspect presents challenges in the context of the community’s priority.

Cumberland fire department submission:

The approved 2017-2021 financial plan for the Mount Washington fire protection service includes an estimated service agreement cost of \$81,000 in 2018. The maximum requisition for the service is estimated at \$158,000 for 2018.

The submission from the Village of Cumberland includes an estimated service agreement cost of \$150,000 for 2018. In the context of the approved 2017-2021 financial plan for the Mount Washington fire protection service, the cost of a service agreement with the Village of Cumberland is not sustainable within the maximum requisition established by bylaw.

Black Creek/Oyster Bay fire protection submission:

The CVRD currently has an agreement with the Oyster River Volunteer Firefighters Association for the provision of bookkeeping, accounting and disbursement of operational grant funding regarding the Black Creek/Oyster Bay (BC/OB) fire protection service. The fire chief and deputy of the BC/OB fire protection service are employees of the CVRD, which owns the BC/OB fire hall and fire apparatus.

The submission from Black Creek/Oyster Bay fire chief indicates that they would be able to provide a fire protection response ahead of the construction of the fire hall. Furthermore, the estimated cost to the Mount Washington fire protection service is sustainable within the current maximum requisition level. Accordingly, this report recommends engaging the services of the Black Creek/Oyster Bay fire chief and deputy and the members of the Oyster River Fire Rescue department to provide fire response services to the Mount Washington service area. This report recommends that the existing agreement with the Oyster River Volunteer Firefighters Association regarding administration of the operational grant funds be amended to recognize the inclusion of administration of the Mount Washington fire protection service operational grant.

The BC/OB fire protection service is anticipated to benefit from the provision of service to Mount Washington in two key aspects:

- Mount Washington volunteer firefighters would be trained at the Oyster River Fire Rescue department. These volunteers will increase the pool of available volunteers should they be required for an incident within the BC/OB fire protection service area.
- The assessed values within the Mount Washington service area, when added to the BC/OB fire protection service area, will provide a greater total assessment with which to share the operational cost of the BC/OB fire protection service.

**Policy Analysis**

The Mount Washington fire protection service is established under Bylaw No. 433.

The *Local Government Act* authorizes regional districts to enter into agreements with other local governments for the provision of services. Alternatively, a regional district may deliver services through a combination of internal resources and/or contracted services as necessary.

**Options**

The Board may consider providing the service by:

1. Engaging the services of the Black Creek/Oyster Bay fire chief, deputy and members of the Oyster River Fire Rescue department to provide fire response to the Mount Washington fire protection local service area, and the Oyster River Volunteer Firefighters Association to provide administration of the operational grant funds;
2. Entering into negotiations for an agreement with either the City of Courtenay or the Village of Cumberland fire departments.

This report provides information in support of option 1.

### **Financial Factors**

The approved 2017 financial plan for the Mount Washington fire protection service includes \$20,000 for service agreement costs. These funds are sufficient to begin service delivery as soon as possible within 2017.

#### Service agreement cost apportionment:

In other fire protection agreements the CVRD currently has with both the Village of Cumberland and City of Courtenay, the cost of the service agreement is based on the total cost to operate the fire service, including capital and operating costs. These total costs are then apportioned based on the assessed values within the service areas being protected.

The Cumberland submission includes Mount Washington's apportioned capital cost of a new Cumberland fire hall currently in development. Although the Courtenay submission does not specifically include the capital cost of Courtenay's planned second fire hall, it is anticipated that these additional capital costs would be realized in 2019-2020.

Unlike the other contracted fire protection service agreements the CVRD has with Cumberland and Courtenay, the Mount Washington fire protection service will be undertaking its own capital expenditures with the construction of a fire hall and purchase of equipment. It is anticipated that the service agreement costs to engage the Black Creek/Oyster Bay fire service, which includes the operational grant to the Oyster River Volunteer Firefighters Association, would be based on the operational costs only, as Mount Washington will fund its own capital costs directly. It is, however, recognized that any increased capital costs of the Black Creek/Oyster Bay fire service that are directly attributable to Mount Washington fire protection would be captured appropriately.

As the CVRD does not currently have a policy regarding the calculation of service costs apportionment between regional district functions, this report seeks authorization for staff to develop a policy for board deliberation at a future meeting. This policy development would include:

- A formula for the calculation of apportioned costs
- Recognition of both capital and operating costs

### **Legal Factors**

The Municipal Insurance Association (MIABC) will provide liability protection coverage for the Black Creek/Oyster Bay fire protection service and the Mt. Washington fire protection service.

### **Regional Growth Strategy Implications**

Objective 7-C of the Regional Growth Strategy (RGS) is to improve regional fire safety. Mount Washington is identified as a settlement node. The RGS states: long-term considerations for this area will need to focus on safety issues such as provision of adequate fire protection.

The recommendation of this report is consistent with this objective.

### **Intergovernmental Factors**

Through consultant interviews and the CVRD questionnaire, the Village of Cumberland and the City of Courtenay have expressed their willingness and ability to provide the service. These aspects have been analysed and helped to form the recommendation of this report.

**Interdepartmental Involvement**

The community services branch and financial services have collaborated to develop this report and its recommendation.

**Citizen/Public Relations**

The Mount Washington fire protection steering group met on November 6, 2017, and reviewed the recommendations of this report. By consensus, the group has agreed that the recommendations meet the priorities of the Mount Washington community and the steering group supports engaging Oyster River Fire Rescue department to provide the service.

Attachments: Appendix A – Mt. Washington Service Provider, Decision Matrix

**Appendix A – Mt. Washington Service Provider, Decision Matrix**

Decision Matrix, Service Providers:

Possible Service Provider	Courtenay	Cumberland	Oyster River
<b>Response to Questionnaire</b>			
<b>Q1) Describe services and how delivered?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Exterior fire suppression on property only.</li> <li>Unable to contribute additional personnel for wildfire.</li> <li>Up to 6 FFs and their PPE delivered to Mt Washington.</li> </ul> <p>Equipment to be supplied by Mt. Washington, but not budgeted for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Radios for each FF</li> <li>Thermal Imaging Camera</li> <li>Breathing apparatus and spare bottles.</li> <li>First responder equipment including O2 and AED.</li> </ul> <p>CVRD required to confirm a contractor to keep hydrants clear at all times.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>24/7 duty coverage</li> <li>Supervision and scene management.</li> <li>Fire safety planning and inspections.</li> <li>Training of Mt. Washington and Village of Cumberland (VoC) personnel</li> <li>Training of Mt. Washington personnel to initiate scene management.</li> <li>Fire hall management.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Respond to Mt. Washington with 5 to 10 FFs.</li> <li>Includes full PPE and SCBA.</li> <li>Will train Mt. Washington personnel to initiate exterior attack.</li> </ul>
<b>Q2) Vehicle and equipment maintenance?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Will perform routine firefighting equipment checks.</li> <li>Vehicle maintenance to be provided by CVRD.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Will perform routine firefighting equipment checks.</li> <li>Will keep records of equipment maintenance checks.</li> </ul>	<p>Yes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Will include in ORFR annual maintenance program.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Q3)</b> Community fire prevention program?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May consider providing annual inspections of commercial properties only.</li> </ul>	<p>Yes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Will provide fire safety planning</li> <li>• Inspections of public building areas and businesses.</li> <li>• Public education and FireSmart.</li> </ul>	<p>Yes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with residents to FireSmart the Mt. Washington community.</li> <li>• Inspection of public and commercial buildings if future bylaw allows.</li> <li>• Public education as requested by residents.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Q4)</b> Training Mt. Washington volunteers?</p>	<p>Yes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Either as part of the Courtenay FD (2 years) or by independent trainer. Need clarification as to authority for volunteers.</li> </ul>	<p>Yes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training to full-service level and officer program if possible.</li> </ul>	<p>Yes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training to exterior level at the Oyster River fire hall.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Q5)</b> Estimated annual cost?</p>	<p>\$65,000 (2017) to \$70,358 (2021).</p> <p>Note: the proposed new Courtenay fire hall (east) construction in 2020 is not captured in this estimate.</p>	<p>\$150,000 (2018) to \$140,000 (2022).</p> <p>Note: This estimate includes the Mt Washington portion of the new Cumberland fire hall construction.</p>	<p>Estimated 2018 cost \$52,500</p> <p>2019 to 2022 estimates to be determined through the development of the 2018-2022 financial plan</p>
<p><b>Q6)</b> Fire department response ahead of equipment and hall construction?</p>	<p>No.</p>	<p>Yes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Will send FFs and supervision to use equipment currently on mountain</li> </ul>	<p>Yes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Will send firefighters and officers to use equipment currently at Mt. Washington.</li> </ul>