

April 28, 2016

RURAL RESIDENTS ASKED TO WEIGH IN ON FUTURE OF FIRE SERVICES DELIVERY:

SLRD convenes community meetings in Birken, Seton Portage/Shalath, Bralorne and Gun Lake to present fire protection options

Pemberton, BC – The SLRD is holding a series of community meetings to engage with property owners in the communities of Birken, Seton Portage/Shalath, Bralorne and Gun Lake about their fire services.

The meetings will discuss the recommendations that came out of the 2013 Fire Services Review, and the work done over the past years to begin implementing many of those recommendations. Residents will be presented with various options for the potential restructuring of their volunteer fire departments and protective services, and asked to provide their input.

40 years of changes in the overarching legislation and regulations and the wildly diverse arrangements across the various rural volunteer fire departments prompted the SLRD to instigate a review of the Fire Services provided throughout the region, as a critical first step in updating and modernizing their operation and administrations.

Fire fighters face inherent risks. Standards for training, occupational health and safety, equipment and deployment have become much more stringent over the years to mitigate those risks, and the potential liability. This has made the operation of volunteer fire departments more difficult, demanding and expensive than in the past.

The fire protection services under discussion at the 4 upcoming meetings originated between 17 and 40 years ago, as volunteer initiatives of the various local communities:

- Birken (established in 1999);
- Bralorne (established in 1975);
- Gun Lake (established in 1994);
- Seton Portage/Shalath (established in 1992).

Despite incredibly dedicated, energetic and creative volunteers, many of these departments and brigades lack a capital asset plan, so equipment is ageing and buildings are outdated.

“For more communities, delivering safe, effective and sustainable rural fire services is a growing challenge,” says SLRD Board Chair Jack Crompton. “Service delivery costs and mandates are increasing and insurance premiums are going up. These meetings are an opportunity for the SLRD residents currently being served by these fire services to learn about their existing fire service and discuss the options for moving forward.”

The SLRD Emergency Manager, Ryan Wainwright, says, “The Regional District is committed to supporting communities that wish to maintain or establish fire services. We’ll present the scenarios and options we’ve researched and discuss the operational realities and impacts of those scenarios with local community members, so they can decide the future direction for their fire protection services.”

Meeting Schedule

Birken VFD

Wednesday, May 4rd, 2016

6:30 – 8:30 p.m.

N'Quatqua Community Hall

Seton Valley VFD

Saturday, June 11th, 2016

1:30 – 3:30 p.m.

Seton Fire Hall

Bralorne VFD

Sunday, June 12th, 2016

1:00 – 3:00 p.m.

Gold Bridge Community Centre

Gun Lake Fire Protection Society

Sunday, June 12th, 2016

6:30 – 8:30 p.m.

Gold Bridge Community Centre

Residents with questions or concerns should contact Ryan Wainwright, SLRD Emergency Program Manager at 604-698-6442 or rwainwright@slrd.bc.ca.

For more information, please contact:

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