



## Municipality of the District of Argyle

Item: Emergency Services

Date: January 9, 2020

### VISION

We see Argyle as home to a healthy and thriving rural population. Our municipality promotes and supports economic and social opportunities for the region and engages in the active expression of our unique Acadian heritage. We are a place of choice for rural living and are widely recognized for our warm hospitality and joie de vivre. Surrounded by fresh air and cool ocean breezes, we work and play in the great outdoors. People choose to live in Argyle because of our commitment to each other, to our community and to our neighbors. Argyle is a place we are proud to call home.

### **Background:**

The staff and council members have been approached by a concerned group of dedicated volunteers. They expressed the need to improve training opportunities for our volunteers, and expressed a desire to work alongside the Municipality to improve the delivery of training and practice sessions, as well as assist us in the creation of a standard for our 9 fire departments in the Municipality of Argyle.

Currently, our reality is that each department uses their own set of safety guidelines & standards, and that these standards are not necessarily coordinated and known by other departments, or even the Municipality. This raises concerns when they respond to a call or request mutual aid, and the potential inconsistencies that could occur on a given call.

It was abundantly clear that our concerned group of volunteers wished for the long-term success of the departments and the wellbeing of our volunteers. Subsequent to a meeting with this leadership group, staff was instructed to research what our neighboring units have in place insofar as standards, and which really showed superior approaches to meet training and other standards. The Municipality has the obligation to ensure that each department receives consistent guidance in this area.

Staff, in concert with our leadership team of volunteers and councilors present at an initial meeting, are proposing to create a policy in coordination with all 9 departments & support them with the implementations and maintenance of these standards.

Based on the research done by our staff, it was clear that the process and policies put in place by the Municipality of the District of Barrington represented the best template for Argyle, and our initial contact with their fire coordinator was well received. As Barrington is a mutual aid responder for some fires in Argyle (and vice versa), there are mutual benefits to a similar standard.

The volunteer fire departments have historically raised concerns & issues within each department for the last couple of years. We held a meeting in December 2019 with Fire Chiefs, Volunteer Fire Fighters & EMO. The biggest concerns we heard are: improved training

opportunities, need for minimum standards & safety guidelines, need to improve communication across departments, a better tagging system & mutual aid training.

While these items have been raised, the departments often have difficulty coming to consensus on how to address these concerns, and truly require the Municipality to navigate these changes.

**Request for CAO's consideration:**

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We are asking Council for permission to create a standing committee with volunteer firefighters & council members. This committee will coordinate with the firefighters to develop a comprehensive Fire Response & Emergency Services Policy. When concerns are addressed, the committee wants to work together with the 9 departments and support them within this policy.

**MGA considerations:**

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Under the Fire & Emergency Services – Municipal Role Section 293: A municipality may maintain and provide fire and emergency services by providing the service, assisting others to provide the service, working with others to provide the service or a combination of means.

**CAO's Recommendation:**

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As CAO, I recommend we move forward with creating a standing committee to help us develop a policy to improve our Emergency Services and better protect the volunteers. The committee may consist of members of the fire departments, chiefs & council members. The terms of reference shall be developed should council be inclined to approve our request.

**Suggested motion:**

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Move that a standing committee be struck, and that the CAO develop a draft terms of reference for Council's consideration, which will outline the nature of the work to be done, membership, deadlines and other requirements.