

1. Introduction

1.1 The purpose of this policy is to establish the key features of the relationship between the Municipality of the County of Colchester (“Municipality”) and the volunteer fire and emergency services operating within the Municipality, and to establish a means of consultation on matters relating to fire and emergency services in the County of Colchester.

2. Definitions

- 2.1 Area Rate – means the area rate imposed by Council to fund fire protection services.
- 2.2 Council – means the elected Council for the Municipality of the County of Colchester
- 2.3 Emergency Service – means a Non-fire Emergency Service located within and registered with the Municipality.
- 2.4 Fire Fighter – means a person who works with a Fire Service.
- 2.5 Fire Service – means a Fire Emergency Service or Commission located within and registered with the Municipality.
- 2.6 Ratepayer – means a person liable to taxation under the *Assessment Act*, RSNS 1989 c.23 as amended

3. Principles Supporting Policy

- 3.1 The Municipality recognizes and commends the extensive effort that is put forward by volunteer first responders. In many of the small communities throughout the Municipality the volunteer fire and emergency services not only provide an essential service but also are a key component of the community’s spirit.
- 3.2 The Municipality recognizes and endorses the concept that the Municipality’s fire and emergency services are operated by the respective communities.
- 3.3 This policy must be interpreted within the context of the Municipal Government Act or any other laws applying to fire and emergency services. In the case of conflict between the terms of this policy and any provincial or municipal law, the latter will prevail.

4. Protective Services Co-Ordinator

4.1 The Municipality designates the staff position of Protective Services Coordinator (Coordinator) to act as a liaison between the Municipality, the CFFA and each registered fire and emergency service. The Coordinator is the primary point of contact for the Municipality on all matters addressed by this policy and is responsible for advising Council on issues related to the provision of fire and emergency services.

5. Colchester Fire Fighters' Association (CFFA)

- 5.1 The fire and emergency services operating within the Municipality have created the Colchester Fire Fighters' Association (CFFA) and adopt it as the representative of their collective interests.
- 5.2 The Municipality will consult with the CFFA on any matter affecting fire and emergency services that are advanced to or advanced by Council and will ensure that any advice received by the CFFA will be presented to Council. In turn, the CFFA is responsible to ensure that all fire and emergency services operating within the Municipality are consulted on issues that the CFFA advances to Council or in response to any policy matters that are being considered by Council.
- 5.3 The Municipality will engage directly with an individual Fire Service or Emergency Service on matters relevant to them, including the area rate.

6. Area Rate Funding for Fire Services

- 6.1 The Municipality will impose Area Rates as the prime source of funding for fire services as approved annually by Council in its budgeting process.
- 6.2 The Municipality will supply to any Fire Service on request the relevant publicly available assessment information for the purposes of Area Rate identification and verification. The information will be supplied in February and any errors or omissions must be brought to the attention of the Municipal Clerk and Coordinator no later than April 1.
- 6.3 Any Fire Service wishing to recommend a change in their Area Rate shall give notice in writing to the Municipal Clerk and Coordinator on or before April 1 in the fiscal year of the proposed effective date of change.
- 6.4 Prior to a change in Area Rate, a ratepayers meeting shall be called by the area councillor to discuss the proposed change. Any person identified as a ratepayer on the assessment roll for the area serviced by the fire service may attend and participate. The Fire Service shall participate in the meeting and provide all requested financial and operational information available and relevant to the requested change.
- 6.5 The Municipality will make quarterly payments to each Fire Service on or about the first day of each of April, July, October, and January. The quarterly payments will be based on estimated Area Rate revenue due to the Service less any charges or reductions stipulated in this policy.
- 6.6 The Municipality will retain two (2) percent of all Area Rates collected to cover adjustments for uncollected area rates.
- 6.7 All expenditures that are incurred by the Municipality for the benefit of a Fire Service will be deducted from the Area Rate revenue for that Fire Service.

7. Grant Funding for Non-Fire Emergency Services

- 7.1 An Emergency Service may apply to the Municipality for an operating grant inclusive of all funding needs and shall not apply separately under other funding programs offered by the Municipality to non-fire or non-emergency community groups.

- 7.2 Any requests for increases for the next fiscal year shall be submitted to the Municipality on or before November 30 of the preceding year. If requested by Council, the Emergency Service shall make a presentation to explain its funding request.
- 7.3 The Municipality will make grant payments to each Emergency Services as approved by Council on or about the first day of June.

8. Support for Capital Funding

- 8.1 The Municipality will assist Fire Services or Emergency Services in obtaining financing for capital expenditures in accordance with this policy.
- 8.2 Provided Council is satisfied with the reasonableness of a capital expenditure and is also satisfied that the terms and conditions of a proposed loan are reasonable, the Municipality will provide the lender with a "letter of intent" stating that the Municipality will continue to levy area rates on behalf of the Fire Service (borrower) in amounts sufficient to retire a loan of the stated amount over a defined loan term.
- 8.3 Where a particular lending institution is not satisfied with the letter of intent the Municipality will consider guaranteeing the loan unless financing can be obtained with another lender.
- 8.4 When making a request for assistance for a capital expenditure, the Fire Service or Emergency Service will supply the Municipality with whatever information may be deemed necessary to assess the reasonableness of the proposed undertaking.

9. Financial Support for Fire and Emergency Responders

- 9.1 The Municipality will fund fire fighters Workers' Compensation Board (WCB) Insurance out of general revenues of the Municipality.
- 9.2 The Municipality will fund, an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and Private Insurance Program for all fire and emergency service responders out of general revenues of the Municipality.
- 9.3 The Municipality will fund Property, Vehicle, Commercial General Liability, Contractor Equipment and Director and Officer Liability Insurances for all fire and emergency services out of general revenues of the Municipality.

10. Financial Information

- 10.1 On or before April 30 of each year every Fire Service shall supply the Municipality with one copy of their most recent annual financial statements together with one copy of their current operating budget.
- 10.2 Any Fire Service failing to file the required financial data by April 30 shall have financial instalments from the Municipality withheld until such time as the information is filed.

11. Contracted Fire and Emergency Services

- 11.1 The Municipality may arrange to contract with municipalities, towns, villages, or fire service located outside the Municipality for purposes of fire coverage and/or mutual

aid. If the contract with a fire service outside the Municipality includes financial support from the Municipality, the fire service is required to file one copy of its most recent annual financial statement and its current operating budget. For greater clarity a fire service located outside of the Municipality is entitled only to the financial support set out in contract and is not entitled to any other financial support set out in this policy, nor are any of their members entitled to individual benefits set out in this policy.

12. Dispatch and Communication Services

- 12.1 The Municipality will fund the following services out of general revenues:
- 12.2 Operating and capital costs of a central dispatch facility for fire services out of general revenues of the Municipality.
- 12.3 Fire service paging and emergency talkback communication very high frequency (VHF) Infrastructure for the volunteer fire services.
- 12.4 Radio license fees for the volunteer fire services and the Regional Emergency Management Organization Coordination Centre.

13. Fire Service Radio License Fees

- 13.1 Fire service license fees will be paid directly by the Municipality for each Fire Service and the cost will be deducted from the Area Rate revenue payments due to the Fire Service.

14. Leadership Qualification

- 14.1 The Services encourage that all individuals appointed to the position of Fire Chief and Deputy Fire Chief should have a minimum of Level One Firefighter training, Incident Command and Safety Officer courses from an accredited fire service educational institution and at least five-year active experience as a firefighter within their respective service.

15. Repeal of Previous Policy

- 15.1 The previous policy on Fire and Emergency Services Protection is hereby repealed.

Clerk's Annotation For Official Policy Book	
Date of Notice to Council Members of Intent to Consider (7 days minimum):	<u>June 2, 2023</u>
Date of Passage of Current Policy:	<u>June 23, 2023</u>
I certify that this Policy was adopted by Council as indicated above.	
<u>Scott Fraser</u> Municipal Clerk (Interim)	<u>July 12, 2023</u> Dated

Date Amended: June 27, 2023
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