THE MUNICIPALITY OF THE COUNTY OF RICHMOND
LA MUNICIPALITÉ DU COMTÉ DE RICHMOND

Fire Protection Services Committee Meeting

November 25th , 2026 @ 1900hrs - St. Peter's VFD

Agenda

1. **Call to Order**
2. **Review and approval of the previous meeting minutes**
3. **Call for items to be added to the agenda**
4. **Old Business updates**
   a. Boat Launch
   b. Dry hydrants
   c. Training courses
   d. VFD bulk insurance
5. **New business**
   a. Emergency Services Fund Application - update
   b. Review of new Terms of Reference – update
   c. Louisdale hydrants
   d. Major emergency event discussion: Point Tupper industrial area and Port Hawkesbury airport
   e. Canadian Red Cross contact – request to attend a future meeting
   f. Dispatch Concerns – roads/lanes with similar names
   g. Photos and thank-you letter to Global Medics for the 8 fire skids
   h. Potential arrangements with CBRM and bulk purchasing opportunities
6. **Updates**
   a. MOCR
   b. Fire Services Coordinator - update
   c. FSANS
7. **Correspondence:** Strait Area Ground Search and Rescue Association
8. **Items that were added to the agenda.**
9. **Round Table**
10. **Next meeting date – February 24, 2027 (tentative)**
11. **Adjournment**

THE MUNICIPALITY OF THE COUNTY OF RICHMOND
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Fire Protection Services Committee Meeting

September 23, 2026

Location: St. Peter's VFD

Present: St. Peter's VFD – Chief MacLean
Isle Madame VFD – Deputy Chief Forest
District 10 VFD – Chief Magdy
Framboise/Fourchu VFD – Chief Cowan and Deputy Chief MacLeod
Loch Lomond VFD – Chief Mayich and Deputy Chief Budden
L'Ardoise VFD – Chief Steeves and Deputy Chief Collet

Council: Councillor Brian Marchand, Warden Lois Landry

Other: Troy MacCulloch, Chief Administrative Officer, Shelley David, Municipal Clerk, Jerron Hawley, Manager of the Western Cape Breton Regional Emergency Management Organization (REMO)

Regrets: Grand River VFD
Potlotek VFD
Louisdale VFD

1. Call to Order

   Deputy Chief Forest called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

2. Election of Officers

   Deputy Chief Forest called for nominations for the position of Chair. There were no nominations. Deputy Chief Forest remains as the Chair by acclamation until January 2027.

   Deputy Chief Forest called for nominations for the position of Vice Chair. There were no nominations. The Vice Chair seat is vacant.

3. Review and approval of the previous meeting minutes.

   Moved by Chief Steeves, seconded by Chief Cowan, that the minutes of the April 15, 2026 committee meeting be approved.

   Motion carried.

4. Items to add to the agenda

   Introduction of Jerron Hawley

5. Old Business

   Brief discussions ensued on the following topics:

DRAFT

a) Boat Launch – It was noted that the boat launch is expected to be completed by the end of October 2026. It was also noted that in August, Council allocated some funds, and Everwind has provided some funding to help with the launch.

b) Dry Hydrants – It was noted that, following a brief delay caused by the rainstorm, the Cleveland dry hydrant is expected to be completed soon. The Committee discussed potential locations for the next dry hydrant installation.

Moved by Deputy Chief Budden, seconded by Chief MacLean, that the Fire Protection Services Committee recommend to Council that it proceed with a dry hydrant installation at McNabs (Westside Loch Lomond – Grand River Mouth area).

Motion carried.

c) Training Courses – Discussions ensued on upcoming training opportunities.

d) VFD Bulk Insurance – It was noted that the Municipality could further explore insurance pricing through a tender process and obtain an itemized quote. Participation would be optional for interested departments.

Moved by Councillor Brian Marchand, seconded by Chief Mayich, that the Fire Protection Services Committee recommend to Council that upon the next insurance renewal, staff explore insurance pricing and obtain an itemized quote.

Motion carried.

6. New Business

a) Emergency Services Fund Application – Application deadline is the end of October 2026.

b) Jerron Hawley, Manager of the Western Cape Breton REMO, introduced himself and presented ideas for the Emergency Services Fund application. He explained that the application would focus on a regional approach and invited the Committee to provide input. Discussion followed.

Moved by Councillor Brian Marchand, seconded by Chief Budden, that the Fire Protection Services Committee recommend that Council approve a regional approach to the Emergency Services Fund application.

Motion carried.

c) Review of the new Terms of Reference

The Committee reviewed the new Terms of Reference and discussed section 3.6, which states, "The Committee will discuss all issues related to involvement and responsibilities with the FSANS." Members noted that FSANS membership is an important source of provincial information and requested confirmation that the Municipality will continue to pay the membership fees.

Moved by Chief Mayich, seconded by Chief MacLean, that the Fire Protection Services Committee approve the new Terms of Reference and recommend that Council adopt them as presented.

Motion carried.

7. Updates:

a) MOCR – It was noted that the Fire Services Coordinator employment opportunity was posted September 24, 2026, on the MOCR website and Facebook page and will appear in The Reporter next week. The position is now full-time and includes a greater administrative role. The Municipality hopes to have the position filled by November 2026. It was also noted that the Sterling Mine Cell Phone Tower is scheduled to be completed by November 2026.

b) Fire Services Coordinator – See the MOCR update.

c) FSANS – It was noted that Chief Mayich will be attending the upcoming Directors Meeting on Sunday, September 27, 2026.

8. Items to add to the agenda

Introduction of Jerron Hawley was discussed above under New Business 6(b).

9. Round Table

For information only.

10. Next meeting: November 25, 2026 (tentative)

11. Adjournment:

There being no further business, the chair adjourned the meeting at 8:43 p.m.

To whom it may concern,

We Strait Area Gound Search and Rescue Association are concerned by the growing overlap between volunteer fire departments and Ground Search and Rescue (GSAR) teams in remote rescue in Nova Scotia. Fire departments have important advantages: they are widely distributed, integrated into 911 dispatch, and can often respond much faster than regional GSAR teams. Recent examples show departments successfully responding to injured hikers and other emergencies in remote terrain. Recently, departments have also undertaken search operations, including with drones (https://www.firefightingincanada.com/volunteer-fire-department-in-nova-scotia-uses-drone-to-rescue-man-lost-in-woods/). The latter is clearly overstepping fire's mandate, but we acknowledge that remote rescues are a bit more of a grey area. However, any rescue that requires a GPS, a map and a compass should be left to Ground Search and Rescue teams. The fact is, that fire departments are not trained in clue awareness, and in most cases are a hinderance to a search operation as valuable clues are destroyed.

This is already recognized as a governance issue by the Province. The 2026 Modernizing Ground Search and Rescue in Nova Scotia discussion paper specifically concludes that activation protocols, “particularly for remote rescues,” need to be updated. More importantly, it recommends exploring the role of Fire Services and EHS in initiating GSAR activation, aligning 911 dispatch and triage with wilderness and remote-area conditions, and strengthening joint training and communication. We agree. There is a pressing need to determine how fire and GSAR could be integrated and how they should cooperate, and which types of remote incidents require the specialized wilderness capabilities of trained GSAR teams. It's about making sure all emergency resources are being used most effectively, efficiently and safely.

It seems high time that we develop a provincial remote-rescue framework, rather than allowing practices to evolve independently from community to community. Some incidents may be appropriately handled by a local fire department with the necessary personnel, equipment, and training. Others, because of distance from road access, difficult navigation, uncertain location, poor communications, prolonged operations, terrain, weather, or the number of personnel required, may be better suited to GSAR or to a joint response. GSAR teams maintain specialized wilderness capabilities precisely for these operating environments. Perhaps, such a framework could also develop clearing funding pathways - should fire and SAR be developing the same capabilities using the very limited EM budget available?

The goal should therefore be improving collaboration rather than competition: get the fastest appropriate responders moving while ensuring specialized wilderness resources are activated early enough to be useful. Nova Scotia's GSAR modernization process provides an excellent opportunity to establish clear remote-rescue categories, activation thresholds, competency expectations and joint-response protocols. That would make better use of both volunteer systems while reducing unnecessary duplication and ensuring that particularly demanding wilderness incidents are handled by responders trained and equipped for that environment.

Ken McChesney

Ken McChesney

President
Strait Area Ground Search and Rescue Association