



STAFF REPORT TO COMMITTEE

DATE OF REPORT July 31, 2019
MEETING TYPE & DATE Electoral Area Services Committee Meeting of August 7, 2019
FROM: Public Safety Division
Community Services Department
SUBJECT: Penelakut First Nation Fire Dispatch Services Agreement
FILE:

PURPOSE/INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to provide information about a proposed new fire dispatch service provided by the CVRD Public Safety Division to the Penelakut First Nation, and to seek Board approval to enter into an agreement with Penelakut First Nation for the delivery of this service. Providing Penelakut First Nation with fire dispatch services will harmonize fire dispatch in the region for all fire departments and establish working relationships for other emergency management considerations.

RECOMMENDED RESOLUTION

That it be recommended to the Board that a five year agreement with the Penelakut First Nation, ending December 31, 2023, for fire dispatch services be approved.

BACKGROUND

In October 2018, the Penelakut First Nation (PFN) approached Central Island 911 (CI911) with a request to join the fire dispatch radio system including alerting (paging), incident management (dispatch) and fire communications (radio). As the CVRD manages the fire dispatch radio system within the CVRD, the request was forwarded to the Emergency Telecommunications Coordinator, Public Safety Division. This request was for service delivery on Penelakut Island specifically, as the Penelakut Reserve #7 at Tussie is serviced by the Crofton Fire Department under fire services agreement and therefore part of the existing fire dispatch system and not subject to this report.

During the formation of the regional 911 service in the 1990's and subsequent build-out of the CVRD fire dispatch radio system, PFN did not participate as they did not have a fire department. Though eligible for 911 service funded by a telecommunications levy, local first response was ad hoc and loosely organized. Relying on local responders, mutual aid response from Thetis Island and additional support responding by boat, medical and firefighting response was minimal at best.

In recent years, PFN has developed a local fire department on Penelakut Island with fully qualified officers and firefighters. Equipped with modern apparatus and training methods, the Penelakut Island Fire Department has developed a qualified local fire response. The development of the local fire department coincided with the formation of a medical first responder team that works in concert with the fire department.

As part of the regional 911 call answering service, medical and fire incident calls on Penelakut Island are duly answered by the Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP), delivered by EComm under contract to the CVRD as part of CI911. Fire and medical assistance calls are then transferred to Firecomm in Nanaimo. The Penelakut Island Fire Department and Medical First Responder group are then notified by phone calls and an inefficient phone tree system, which

introduces significant delays in response and ties up fire dispatch resources for the other 29 fire departments within the CI911 fire dispatch system.

With the addition of the Penelakut Island Fire Department to the fire dispatch radio system, 911 calls and incident response on the island can be streamlined and dispatched appropriately with the radio system. This will establish safe, reliable radio dispatch communications for fire fighters and medical first responders, bringing Penelakut Island inline with regional fire dispatch delivery.

Utilizing existing dispatch and radio system infrastructure, any impact by adding the Penelakut Island Fire Department to the system would be minimal. Given the small population of Penelakut Island (542, 2016 Census), the additional load on dispatchers would again, be minimal. A telephone backup system will need to be installed at the Penelakut Island Fire Department and this would be included in the annual preventative maintenance cycle managed by the CVRD Emergency Telecommunications Coordinator (ETC).

The ETC will be the point person in establishing the fire dispatch service with the fire department and medical first responders on Penelakut Island with some assistance from the CVRD Fire Rescue Services Coordinator and Firecomm staff (Nanaimo Fire Rescue). Oversight of the agreement would rest with the Manager of Public Safety.

The agreement outlines an annual fee for delivery of fire dispatch services, including capital costs to be borne by PFN for establishing a telephone backup system to support fire dispatch.

ANALYSIS

It is expected that the addition of the Penelakut Fire Department and Medical First Responder group to the CVRD radio dispatch system will have minimal impact on the system, due to the low call volume. Call volume is estimated to be less than 25 incidents per year.

Existing CVRD radio infrastructure will be utilized with additional capital costs for a telephone backup system be borne by the PFN.

Improvements will be made to existing fire incident handling, as the inefficient phone tree will be eliminated; reducing complexity of dispatch for Firecomm operators.

Adding the PFN Fire Department and Medical First Responder group will harmonize fire dispatch in the region for all fire departments and establish working relationships for other emergency management considerations.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Similar to agreements the CVRD has with other First Nations for the provision of fire protection and response, and emergency response services, this five-year agreement details fees for services provided by the CVRD to the PFN at an agreed upon formula based on the number of residential units and the BC assessed and un-assessed non-residential units. Based on the 2016 Census data the revenue for 2019 would be \$5,478; however, actual revenue will reflect the date of the signed agreement. All fire dispatch services start-up capital costs, and the PFN portion of any future capital costs required to operate the fire dispatch services, are borne by PFN for the entirety of the agreement.

COMMUNICATION CONSIDERATIONS

If approved, Public Safety Division staff will work with Communications and Engagement staff to coordinate a communications plan to inform the citizens in the region about the new service.

STRATEGIC/BUSINESS PLAN CONSIDERATIONS

N/A

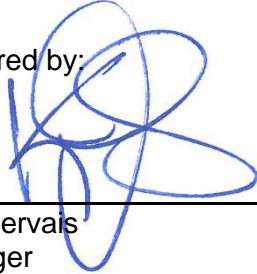
GENERAL MANAGER COMMENTS

☐ Not Applicable

Referred to (upon completion):

- ☐ Communications & Engagement
- ☐ Community Services (*Island Savings Centre, Cowichan Lake Recreation, South Cowichan Recreation, Arts & Culture, Public Safety, Facilities & Transit*)
- ☒ Corporate Services (*Finance, Human Resources, Legislative Services, Information Technology, Procurement*)
- ☐ Engineering Services (*Environmental Services, Recycling & Waste Management, Water Management*)
- ☐ Land Use Services (*Community Planning, Development Services, Inspection & Enforcement, Economic Development, Parks & Trails*)

Prepared by:



Keir Gervais
Manager

Reviewed by:

Not Applicable
Not Applicable



Terri Askham
A/General Manager

Reviewed for form and content and approved for submission to the Committee:

Resolution:

Financial Considerations:

☒ Corporate Officer, Legislative Services

☒ Manager, Finance

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment A – Fire Dispatch Services Agreement

