

CORPORATION OF THE TOWNSHIP OF RYERSON
SPECIAL TRI-COUNCIL MEETING

MINUTES

Village of Burks Falls Council Room – 7:00 P.M.

Wednesday July 11, 2018

A Tri-Council meeting with the Village of Burk's Falls, Township of Armour and Township of Ryerson was held at the Village of Burks Falls Council Room, Wednesday July 11, 2018 at 7:00 p.m.

In attendance: Ryerson Township Council: Glenn Miller, Barbara Marlow, Rosalind Hall, Doug Weddel and George Sterling.

Burks Falls Council: Cathy Still, Rex Smith, and Jarve Osborne. Regrets: Lisa Morrison, Lewis Hodgson.

Armour Council: Bob MacPhail, Marina Hammond, Rod Blakelock, Jerry Brandt and Pat Hayes.

Staff in Attendance: Nicky Kunkel, Burk's Falls; John Theriault, Armour Township; Judy Kosowan, Ryerson.

Members of the Burks Falls and District Fire Department: Chief Dave McNay, Fire Prevention Officer/Deputy Chief Joe Readman, Deputy Chief Ken Stevenson.

Guest speaker: Tawnya Roberts from the Office of the Fire Marshal and Emergency Management.

Members of the public: Judy Ransome, Penny Brandt.

The Township of Ryerson hosted the meeting and Reeve Glenn Miller called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Reeve Miller noted that the meeting was called as a result of concerns raised by Armour Township about the handling of two recent structure fires by the Burks Falls and District Fire Department. Tawnya Roberts from the Office of the Fire Marshal and Emergency Management (OFMEM) attended the meeting with the Tri-Councils as an educational opportunity to explain the roles, responsibilities and authorities of the Chief and Fire Department regarding structure fires.

Declaration of Pecuniary Interest: None declared.

Presentation

Tawnya Roberts provided background information on her career starting as a volunteer firefighter then moving to the positions of Fire Prevention Officer and Fire Chief. Currently Tawnya Roberts is a Program Specialist with the Inspection and Enforcement Unit with OFMEM.

The Fire Service has a vast range of powers under the Fire Protection and Prevention Act (FPPA). An overview of the various powers available to the fire services under the FPPA during fire ground operations or investigations were outlined including the power to use heavy equipment to pull down or remove a building.

Ms. Roberts received an e-mail from the Armour Township Clerk questioning the use of heavy equipment, and a response was provided. A further e-mail was received more specific to the two recent structure fires in Burks Falls and a second response was provided.

Details were outlined regarding the assessment of hazards at a fire scene, such as collapse zone/type of construction and distance to neighbouring properties. It is not uncommon for heavy equipment to be used when there is danger of collapse or in order to get at the seat of the fire or it can be brought in for investigation and this is at the discretion of the Chief and or his/her designate. It is not the intent of the FPPA to afford the power to use heavy equipment to remove a structure at a fire scene when not necessary or to be used in lieu of appropriate fire ground overhaul, suppression and/or fire watch activities.

Ms. Roberts noted that she had been briefed on the recent incident in Burks Falls. The Fire Department used reasonable methods, clearly within the scope of the legislation. It was a high load/content fire and the proximity to the neighbouring property including the chimney was of concern so heavy equipment was called in to support effective fire ground operations and fire fighter safety.

There were no questions for Tawnya Roberts and Reeve Miller thanked her for the presentation.

Discussion

Reeve Miller referenced the correspondence received from Armour Township (dated June 13, 2018) "... putting the Corporation of the Township of Ryerson on notice that as a partner of the Burks Falls and District Fire Department the Municipal Corporation of the Township of Armour will not be held responsible for any legal action which may occur in the future caused by the practice of tearing down structures during a fire.", and asked if this information has helped Armour and had their opinion changed.

Reeve MacPhail indicated that their letter stands.

Tawnya Roberts added that the fire service can't be "paralyzed by liability" but rather municipalities are encouraged to reduce any concerns/risks of liability through the development and implementation of Establishing/Regulating By-laws, policies and operational guidelines such that the fire service can operate within it. The Burks Falls and District Fire Department Establish and Regulating By-law approach is defensible and reasonable, and operating within legislative boundaries and established policies combined with sound operational judgement demonstrates due diligence and are defensible.

A member of the public asked permission to ask a question. The question was regarding the purpose of tri-council meetings, are they not called to resolve issues? If this is something that is sensitive in nature why wouldn't the Councils go into a closed meeting?

Reeve Miller asked if the Councils wanted to go into closed session. Reeve MacPhail indicated that Armour did not want to go into a closed meeting and reiterated that their letter stands.

Another question was asked: can a ratepayer go to their council meeting and ask questions? The response was that yes they can, however if it is a closed meeting matter then they are not permitted to attend.

Adjournment

Councillor Rex Smith (Burks Falls) moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:30 p.m.

Original signed by Glenn Miller

REEVE

Original signed by Judy Kosowan

CLERK