



Media Release:

9 July, 2018

Title : Clarification regarding the implementation of the Township's Establishing and Regulating By-law governing the Lanark Highlands Fire Service (LHFS).

Due to the continuous and unfortunate dissemination of misinformation that has been circulating amongst Lanark Highlands residents published recently in the Lanark Era by a Former Fire Chief - Kirk Cannon and subsequently distributed on Social Media, the Township would like to clarify the implementation of the Establishing and Regulating (E&R) By-law which governs the operations of the Township's Fire Services.

On May 17th, of 2016, a draft of the revised E&R By-law for the Township's Fire Service was passed "in principle" in the Committee of the Whole to be passed in Council and implemented thereafter. However, due to the departure of the then Fire Chief Morehouse, the By-law was delayed in coming back to Council for final approval. It was subsequently passed by Council on May 29th, 2018.

On May 16th, 2018 staff held a general meeting with the Fire Service to go over the 2016 E&R By-law and the proposed changes. This meeting provided an opportunity for all members to ask questions and provide input before its final approval. One of the changes to the By-law included a minor restructure of the Officer level of the Service which allowed for a less ambiguous hierarchy and ensured the LHFS organization structure aligns with many of the rural fire services in Ontario. This change reduced the (3) Deputy Chiefs to (1) Deputy Fire Chief, changed the title of (5) Station Chiefs to (5) Station Captains and added additional Station Lieutenants and a new Training Officer position. These changes provide for a clear chain of command and opportunity for advancement within the Fire Service. These changes also help resolve several of the issues identified by members of the LHFS as part of a review of the Fire Service carried out by Mr. Nigel Bellchamber in July 2016 (for a copy of Mr. Bellchamber's report, see Minutes of the Special Council meeting of July 20, 2016 on the Township's website).

Competitive processes for new and vacant positions will be and are being launched. The positions with a "title" change (example: from Station Chief to Station Captain) will require a process to update and validate the officer's personnel records.

Through the review process of the E&R By-law a vulnerability and liability to the Township was uncovered by the new Interim Chief Bell and Clerk Administrator Vereyken. Personnel files of the existing officers were not kept up to date with the necessary documentation supporting their qualifications and certification required of the positions they held. This documentation includes the following: Vulnerable sector police checks, drivers abstracts, resumes/applications, internal testing, signed off job descriptions, annual performance reviews, expired CPR/First Aid etc.

As presented at the May 16, 2018 meeting, all current officer rankings will be respected, and their years of service will be taken into consideration during the process. The incumbent Officer process will involve the following:

- Providing an application or resume to ensure personnel files are up to date and to address any Ontario Health and Safety Act or Ministry Of Labour concerns regarding previous work experience, training, etc. This step also informs the Chief that the Officer is interested in continuing to be an officer.
- A brief (approx. 30 minute) written test will be booked with the Chief at a time convenient to both parties. Again, this is to fulfill the Township's obligation to ensure there is documented knowledge of the skills, experience and abilities required of an officer. (The reason for this knowledge test is similar to the requirement for conducting the operations of equipment/vehicle in house testing that was completed in the fall).
- An "interview" with Interim Fire Chief Bell (which will be considered as the annual personnel review for 2018), and will be mandatory for all officers moving forward.

I trust this information will help clarify the impact of these changes on the LHFS.

Please contact the Township's Clerk Administrator Allison Vereyken at 613-259-2398 ext. 222 should you wish any additional information or have any concerns.

Brian Stewart,

Mayor, Township of Lanark Highlands