

Willis Point Volunteer Fire Department Report

March, 2013

Fire Chief Aran Puritch

Hello Willis Point residents,

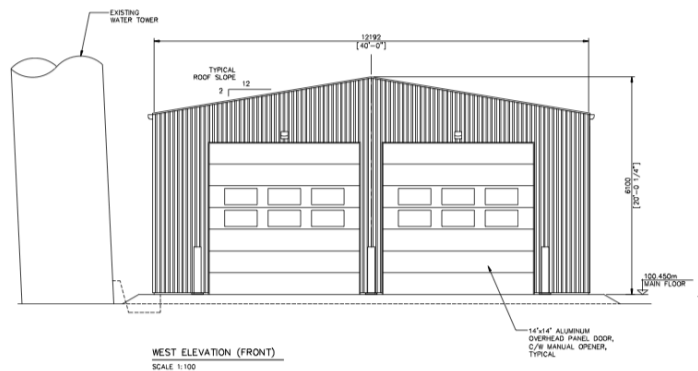
It's with great pleasure that I submit my first fire chiefs' report to the Pointer. It has been an eventful fall and winter at the fire department with various activities including: fire department elections, capital projects, recruitment, training, and planning meetings. Thankfully, the one thing we haven't been busy with is emergencies. Aside from a few first responder calls, the mild winter resulted in no serious motor vehicle incidents, downed power-line events, or chimney fires.

Elections

In October 2012, the fire department held its annual elections and I became the new fire chief, taking over from Greg Elvedahl. Greg remains a valuable member with the department but needed to step down from the fire chief position to focus on new commitments at his work. Our captain's positions remain the same with Graham Orr, Al Campbell, Kathy Crawley, and Darren Pine. Darren also remains the deputy chief. Finally, the firefighters association elected Art Wynans as the new chair.

Projects

As you may have read in the Times Colonist, or heard from your neighbours, we will be making two large capital purchases in the coming months. The first is for the replacement of our dilapidated rescue shed. It might just be folklore but I recently heard this shed was originally built to conduct training exercises and

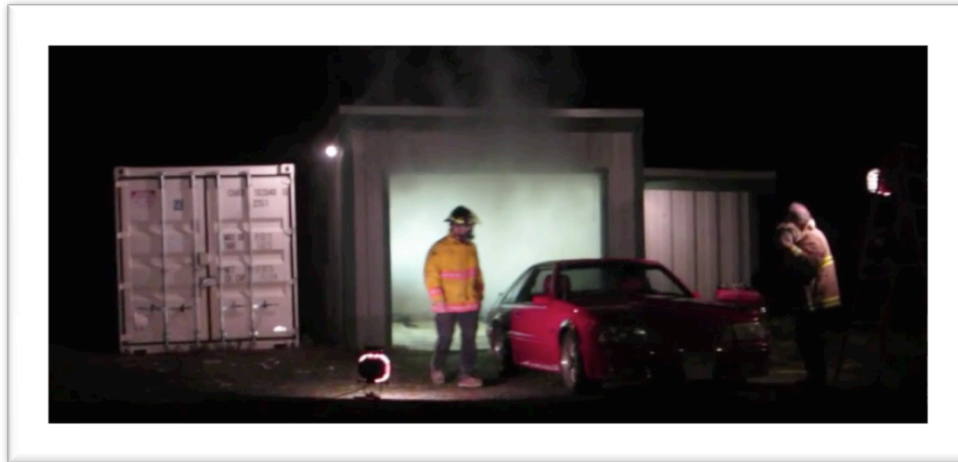


was subsequently nicknamed the "smoke house". Then at some point (well before I moved to the point) the department needed more garage space and began using it to house the rescue truck. Fast-forward to 2013, and after the building has almost collapsed on a few different occasions; we now have a project underway to erect a 40x40 post-disaster rated metal building in its place. A smaller yet related project is in moving the large green reservoir as it is too close to the site of the replacement shed.

The second big project is for the replacement of our first line pumper, Engine 1 (aka 102). One of the criteria for maintaining our fire insurance rating is in having a first line fire apparatus that is no older than twenty years. Engine 1 was purchased new in 1994 and must therefore be replaced sometime in 2014. All of the above projects are well within budget

and overseen by the Willis Point Fire and Recreation Facilities Commission (WPFRFC) and the CRD.

Practice in the smoke house!



Membership

We currently have 15 volunteers on call, 2 junior members, 3 auxiliary members, and 3 new recruits. Of this group, 14 have their first responder certification including endorsements for spinal management and AED. While this membership is healthy, volunteer fire departments are recommended to strive for over 25 on-call members to ensure firefighter availability at all times. Yes, we're looking for new recruits!

Recruitment

WPVFD provides several very important services to the community in rescue, first response, and fire suppression. Without our fire department, insurance rates would skyrocket and fast response to critical medical calls would not be possible. To maintain this level of service, we really do need a large group of volunteers and encourage you to join our team.

You don't need any special training or skills to join and in fact you might possess very important competencies we could use already, such as having an air-brakes endorsement or medical training. If not, we'll teach you everything you need to know. Any firefighter will tell you that it's a lot of fun and very rewarding so I encourage you to start thinking about yourself as a volunteer firefighter today!

Come by the hall any Wednesday evening at 7pm to check us out or contact any one of the members.

Training

We have all kinds of training initiatives on the go this year from First Responder certification to Basic Firefighting Certification and beyond. Recently, four of our members completed a "train-the-trainer" course with the Justice Institute of BC. This group (Matt Tregear, Brendan Pause, Art Wynans, and Jeff Irwin) will now lead the rest of our members through an accredited training program tailored to small fire departments and funded by provincial grants secured by the Fire Chiefs Association of BC and the BC Training Officers Association. We also have several members scheduled to attend weekend training conferences in Salmon

Arm and Penticton as well as regional one-day courses. In the fall, we plan to visit another CRD Department, Otter Point VFD, to use their live-fire training facility. First Responder certification and training will continue to be delivered in-house by Captain Crawley. Finally, as fire chief, I have been taking fire officer courses and continue to work toward a degree in public safety administration.

Who's Coming and Going?

Last year, Russ Odnokon, Ben Parker, and Uwe Pause left the department. Russ inexplicably moved to Bear Mountain, Ben is attending university in the Okanagan, and Uwe has retired. All will be missed and were formally thanked for their service to Willis Point at our annual firefighters appreciation banquet. Uwe Pause still resides in the point and, on account of having over 15 years of service, (he joined in 1983) has become a Honourary Lifetime Member. Congratulations and thank-you Uwe.

This year, we will also be without Jason Connor, Connor Braun, and Andy Orr as they take the year off to follow personal pursuits. Jason and Andy are travelling the world and Connor is off to work in northern Alberta. All the best to those three!

Thankfully, we have had a few new recruits to fill some of the vacant positions. Welcome Nigel Ablack, Lorne Hutchins, Kevin Weiss, and Trevor Espin. Lorne recently moved to the point and owns a home on Mark Lane, Kevin is actively looking to purchase a home in the point while he rents on Mark Lane, and Nigel rents with past deputy chief Dean Hyland. Trevor makes the third member of the Espin clan to join the crew. All four are very enthusiastic and valuable members of the team. Welcome aboard!

Planning

One of the hidden activities of the fire department is all the behind the scenes planning. Over the past few months, fire department members and the WPFRC have been spending hours of their time in meetings both in the point and at the offices of the CRD. This is all being done to carefully manage the fire department budget and to ensure we get the best value for our money in the aforementioned large projects. We are very fortunate to have such dedicated people in our community. On behalf of the fire department, I would like to thank our WPFRC for their efforts. What a fantastic group.

Keeping Safe

That concludes the fall and winter report. Summer is coming so please get any backyard burning done soon. Be safe and check your smoke alarms.

All the best,

Fire Chief Aran Puritch
www.willispoint.ca/fire