

East Sooke Fire Protection and Emergency Response Service Commission

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Commissioners Present: John Clarkson (Chair), Wendy Herring, Edward Helm (Vice Chair), Jon Kuzyk (Secretary), Al Wickheim (In video), Mike Yeager, Simon Miles

FD Present: Chief Fiona Larkin

Public Present: 3 Members of Public



MINUTES - COMMISSION MEETING

Date: Wednesday, January 28, 2026 at 7:00 pm

1. Adoption of Agenda

Moved: Edward Helm Seconded: Simon Miles **CARRIED**

2. Adoption of Minutes from November 26, 2025 AGM Meeting

Moved: Wendy Herring Seconded: Mike Yeager **CARRIED**

3. Election of Chair and Vice Chair

At the request of the Capital Regional District (CRD), the East Sooke Fire Commission conducted a further review of the Chair and Vice Chair positions. Chair John Clarkson advised that the Commission would canvass the table to determine whether any Commissioners wished to express interest in either position. No Commissioners indicated interest at this time. A motion was then called to maintain the current appointments, with John Clarkson continuing as Chair and Ed Helm continuing as Vice Chair. The motion was carried unanimously.

Moved: Mike Yeager Seconded: Jon Kuzyk **CARRIED**

4. Reports

a. Chair's Report (John Clarkson)

Chair John Clarkson presented the Chair's Report.

The Chair provided updates on:

- There will be no “Fit Panel” in the New Fire Chief Selection Process, Commissioner Miles will now sit on the “Selection Panel.”
- The **Fire Chief recruitment process**, noting there are currently **eight (8) applicants**.
- Commissioner participation on the selection and interview panels, with scheduling flexibility to accommodate holidays.
- The need for improved **CRD agenda and minutes processes**, including earlier agenda circulation and clarification of header wording.
- A reminder regarding the vacant Commission seat.

b. Fire Chief’s Report (Chief Fiona Larkin)

Chief Fiona Larkin presented the Fire Chief’s Report **as per addendum**.

The report included:

- **Membership and staffing updates**, with current membership at **24 members** and plans to increase to **27 members by March**.
- Training activities, call response statistics, and continued improvements to in-house training programs.
- Preparations for the upcoming **wildfire season**, including coordination with CRD regarding deployment of Tender 2 and identification of deployable members.
- Equipment updates, including inspection of the squad replacement vehicle prior to delivery, turnout gear availability for new recruits, and ongoing facility and equipment upgrades.
- Updates on pending grant applications, including the **2025 UBCM grant**, which remains under review.

c. Finance Report (Chief Fiona Larkin)

Chief Fiona Larkin presented the Finance Report **as per addendum**.

The Commission reviewed:

- A projected **budget surplus of approximately \$82,000**, largely attributed to increased revenue from **Silver Spray area protection** and salary funding adjustments.
- Budget performance across salaries, equipment maintenance, building maintenance, and training costs.
- Ongoing **CRD budget coding and reporting challenges**, particularly related to protective clothing and turnout gear, where mis-coding resulted in an apparent overspend.

- The Commission's limited visibility into CRD expense categorization and the absence of a dedicated treasurer role, resulting in reduced budget clarity.

The Commission agreed to continue clarification efforts from the CRD in regards to clearer explanations of budget line items and coding structures.

d. Community Hall Report (Wendy Herring)

Wendy Herring presented the Community Hall Report **as per addendum**.

Discussion included:

- Review of the **2025 budget surplus** related to the Community Hall.
- Approval of amendments clarifying that surplus funds are to remain within the appropriate cost centre.

e. CRD Staff Report - Treatment of 2025 Budget Surplus (Chris Vrabel)

Chair John Clarkson has distributed the CRD Staff Report that discusses the 2025 Budget surplus. Wendy Herring has an amendment to the wording in the staff report.

Motion: I move that the wording in Alternative 1 for the proposed allocation of "... the Community Hall surplus of \$20,552 be carried to the 2026 operating budget – 508260 -Purchase Maintenance, Buildings..." be amended to read "... the Community Hall surplus of \$20,552 be carried to the 2026 operating budget – 102163 - 508260 - Purchase Maintenance, Buildings..." to clarify that surplus will be retained within the Cost Centre (102163) for the East Sooke Community Hall. The same edit to be applied to the allocation in Recommendation 1.

Moved: Jon Kuzyk Seconded: Mike Yeager **CARRIED**

5. Old Business

-Rejuvenation of Community Fire Awareness Program:

Chief Fiona Larkin provided an update on the rejuvenation of the Community Fire Awareness Program. Discussion included progress on the development of a new department website and the potential use of a grant to fund address signs to improve address visibility within the community.

Commissioner Al Wickheim commented that he did not believe the Fire Department should be responsible for paying for address signs, stating that this responsibility should

fall to the homeowner. A member of the public noted that the District of Sooke offers an address sign program for residents at a cost of \$20 per sign, paid by the homeowner.

The Commission also discussed the need for more effective fire prevention measures once the Fire Chief position becomes full-time.

-Funding Request to CRD to support ESVFD firefighting costs for the East Sooke Regional Park Service Area: Ed Helm updated the Commission on this recurring business item and is going to bring forward a motion regarding the September 25, 2024 CRD Staff Report. Staff Report is attached in the reports portion following the meeting minutes.

Motion:

In following up from the September 25, 2024 Staff Report re: Service Levels for Silver Spray and East Sooke Regional Parks, the Commission requests staff to further explore the responsibilities and authorities of providing services to the East Sooke Regional Park response area and report back with findings.

Moved: Simon Miles

Seconded: Jon Kuzyk

CARRIED

-Nominees for New Commission Member Update

Commissioner Al Wickheim mentioned there were no new candidates for the commission at this time.

5. New Business

Update on Fire Chief Recruitment

Regarding Fire Chief recruitment:

- There are currently **eight (8) applicants**.
- The selection process will include interviews and a **fitness assessment**.
- Commissioner availability during holidays was discussed, with confirmation that interview participation would be prioritized and pre-interview discussions could proceed in the absence of some members.

CRD Agenda and Minutes Process

The Commission discussed concerns regarding the **CRD agenda and minutes process**, including past formatting errors, header wording, and lack of orientation or training for new Commissioners.

It was agreed that:

- Meeting agendas will be circulated **earlier** to allow review by CRD Legislative Services.
- Minor header changes will be made while maintaining approved content.

6. Public Question & Answer

A member of the public asked whether the 40th anniversary of the East Sooke Fire Department and the 10th anniversary of the new fire hall would be formally acknowledged. It was confirmed that:

- Both milestones were acknowledged in the November 2025 AGM meeting minutes, which will be made public once this January 2026 Commission Meeting concludes.
- The Department and Brigade have organized a spring celebration event in April 2026 to mark the anniversaries.

7. Adjournment of meeting

MOVED: Jon Kuzyk SECONDED: Mike Yeager **CARRIED**

Meeting adjourned at 8:50 PM



East Sooke Fire Rescue

Chiefs Report

January 2026

Membership Status – 24 total

- Interior/Full-Service Firefighters: 15
- Exterior Firefighters: 4
- Support Members: 2
- Recruits: 3

Staffing Jan - March 2026

- Part time Chief: 24 hours/week
- Part-time Captain Operations: 16 hours/week
- Part time Captain Training: 16 hours /week
- Monthly long weekend duty crew.
- 40 workdays.

Callouts *Nov 01, 2025– Jan 26th, 2026*

Type of Call	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Total
Alarm Bells		2											2
Duty Calls	1		1										2
Hydro													
Medical	8	9	7										24
MVI	2	2											4
Rescue													
Structure Fire	2	2											4
Wildfire													
Car/garbage/other fire													
Smoke investigation													
Overall Total	13	15	8										36

Notes:

**4 Automatic mutual aid calls structure fire.*

Calls without minimums since Jan 2025 = 0

Training

Highlights

- Members working through Fire Officer 1 and Fire Officer 2 courses as needed for their positions.
- All members continuing with weekly skill reviews.

Projects/Initiatives

UBCM Grants

- 2024 leftover: remainder is being used to cover training courses completed this fall/winter.
- 2025 new application: awaiting approval from UBCM.

Records Management

- First due is consistently used for truck checks and incident reports.
Still needs work on use for training reports.
- Starting the progress of setting up First due to document hours worked, and payroll.

Website Changes

- New website is still under construction.

Training Building

- Exterior is mostly complete; there will be ongoing construction of props for NFPA 1001 training.

BC Wildfire Deployment

- We have registered Tender 2 for wildfire deployment.

Recruitment:

- 3 recruits for the 2026 year.
 - One is enrolled in the regional recruit training.
 - The other two are registered in courses and will be training in East Sooke.

FireSmart:

- Continues to be a steady stream of assessments being done.

Squad replacement:

- Almost finished with Custom Express in Parksville. Next it will be having radio and electronics components installed with CREST. No ETA of completion.

East Sooke Community Hall Report

2026-01-28

1. Regular rentals continuing. Community Carol sing was held in December. New Pilates class presented by Seaparc in January. One private rental in January.
2. One faulty poilet was replaced.
3. Awaiting estimates to repair and upgrade asphalt apron of Hall driveway in 2026; expenditure was approved in 2025.
4. Minutes of meeting of 14 Nov 2025 eetig of ESCH group are attached.

East Sooke Community Hall Finances

as of 31 December 2025

	YTD	Budget	% of Budget
Income			
Lower Hall rental	6,478	1,770	366
JDF SAR rental	25,224	25,224	100
Interest Income	781	210	372
Surplus	8,781	8,781	
TOTAL	41,264	35,985	
Operating Expenses	20,612	35,985	57
TOTAL	20,612	35,985	* budget includes \$13,730 contingency
ESCH TOTAL	20,652		57 Account balance
ESCH Capital Reserve	14,116		

Notes: The Hall was rented as both an advanced polling station and a regular polling station for the Federal Election in 2025. This contributed to the significant increase in rental income for the lower Hall.

East Sooke Community Hall Group Meeting

14 Nov 2025

Present: Bruce Manning, Wendy Herring, Wendy Lane, Leslie Leus, Armin Sielopp.

Call to order at 7.05 pm.

Minutes: Moved by Bruce to adopt the minutes of September 12, 2025. Seconded by Wendy L. Carried.

Treasurer's report: Leslie presented the monthly financial statements. Financial statements have been reconciled. All expenditures remain within income and savings in our account. Moved by Wendy L. to adopt the report. Seconded by Wendy H. Carried.

Hall rentals: Wendy H. reported that spring 2026 will see more SCHRN and Seaparc programs. Regular users continuing. Also, the Rough Voice Singers (now disbanded) will leave their music equipment for hall use.

Old business:

Armin reported that we are still waiting for the food scrap bin for SAR to be delivered. Waiting for the yellow driveway rail to be painted. Also waiting for the driveway entrance paving repair estimates.

New business: We will need a gutter repair to the front section above the SAR doors. Armin to arrange repairs. A request from SAR to put up some Christmas lights by their section. No objection. The men's toilet left stall needs to be repaired or replaced. Armin to arrange.

Meeting adjourned at 7.35 pm.

Respectfully submitted. Armin Sielopp



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**REPORT TO EAST SOOKE FIRE PROTECTION AND EMERGENCY RESPONSE SERVICE
COMMISSION
MEETING OF January 28, 2026**

SUBJECT 2026 Financial Plan and Treatment of 2025 Surplus

ISSUE SUMMARY

To consider the allocation of the 2025 surplus funds for the East Sooke Fire and Community Hall service.

BACKGROUND

The 2025 combined surplus for the East Sooke Fire and Community Hall service is **\$103,392**. These surplus funds may be transferred to reserve accounts or carried forward to offset and stabilize future operating costs.

The Community Hall portion of the surplus is **\$20,552**, and the Fire Department portion is **\$82,840**.

Budget Considerations

Community Hall – \$20,552

Historically, the Community Hall budget relies on prior-year surplus to balance the subsequent operating year. Continuing this practice is currently sustainable, and the operation is currently self-funded with no annual impact to the requisition. There is a capital reserve fund specific to the Community Hall.

Fire Department – \$82,840

Surplus for the Fire Department may be allocated as:

- A carry-forward to 2026 operating; and/or
- A transfer to the Equipment Replacement Fund or Capital Reserve Fund.

For 2025–26, staff recommend a **blend** of carry-forward funding and a transfer to reserves.

Salary Adjustment – Fire Chief Position

As part of the 2026 financial plan, staff recommend increasing the Fire Chief salary range from **\$100,000 + 30% benefits** to **\$113,300 + 30% benefits**. This aligns the position with the 2025

compensation range for the Otter Point Deputy Fire Chief position, reflecting improved market competitiveness.

Benchmarking with the Regional District of Nanaimo indicates that Otter Point salary levels presently align most closely with market rates. Protective Services and Human Resources staff agree that Otter Point, East Sooke, and Galiano Chief Officer salaries will require further adjustment over future budget cycles to reach full market alignment.

2026 Budget for the Fire Chief Position

The 2026 budget includes **\$112,500**, covering:

- January–March: part-time Fire Chief agreement
- April–December: prorated salary at \$100,000 + 30% benefits

Maintaining the salary at **\$100,000** will require a **\$22,000** increase in 2027 (ongoing), plus any management cost-of-living adjustments. This increase is already reflected in the 2026–2030 Financial Plan (start year: 2027).

Current Budget	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
Jan to Mar	\$15,000				
Apr to Dec	\$97,500				
Total	\$112,500	\$134,277	\$138,161	\$141,462	\$144,480

Proposed salary adjustment to \$113,300 for April–December 2026 would require:

- **\$12,968** additional funding in 2026
- **\$17,284** additional in 2027

Proposed Budget	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
Jan to Mar	\$15,000				
Apr to Dec	\$110,468				
Total	\$125,468	\$151,561	\$155,956	\$160,749	\$165,133
Difference	\$12,968	\$17,284	\$17,795	\$19,287	\$20,653

A carry-forward of **\$12,968** from the 2025 surplus would fully offset the 2026 impact.

A carry-forward of **\$30,252** could fund the required increases for both 2026 and 2027.

Alternatives

Alternative 1

That the Community Hall surplus of \$20,552 be carried to the 2026 operating budget – 508260 - Purchase Maintenance, Buildings; and

That the Fire Service surplus of \$82,240 be carried forward in the amount of \$30,252 to 2026 operating budget – 599200 – Contingency, and the balance of \$52,588 be transferred to the Equipment Replacement Fund.

Alternative 2

Refer to staff for more information

Implications

Financial - Using surplus funds to offset tax requisition increases is a **short-term strategy**. Annual surpluses are not guaranteed and should not be relied upon as a consistent long-term funding method.

Conclusion

The 2025 surplus of **\$103,392** provides an opportunity to stabilize operating budgets for the East Sooke Fire and Community Hall services while also supporting necessary adjustments to Fire Chief compensation package. Market alignment for Chief Officer salaries in Otter Point, East Sooke, and Galiano will continue to be addressed over future budget cycles.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommend to the Commission:

- 1. That the Community Hall surplus of \$20,552 be carried forward \$20,552 to 2026 operating budget – 508260 - Purchase Maintenance, Buildings; and***
- 2. That the Fire Service surplus of \$82,240 be carried in the amount of \$30,252 to 2026 operating budget – 599200 – Contingency, and the balance of \$52,588 be transferred to the Equipment Replacement Fund.***

Prepared By	Chris Vrabel - CRD Manager, Fire Services

ATTACHMENT(S)

2026-2030 Operating Plan
2026-2030 Capital Plan
2026 Reserve Funds

**East Sooke Fire Protection
Reserve Summary Schedule
2026 - 2030 Financial Plan**

Reserve/Fund Summary

	Estimated	Budget				
	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
Capital Reserve Fund-Fire Dep	44,468	33,708	39,048	44,498	50,058	55,728
Capital Reserve Fund-Comm Hall	14,085	14,085	14,085	14,085	14,085	14,085
Equipment Replacement Fund	788,439	648,039	739,492	32,830	131,096	231,333
Total	846,992	695,832	792,625	91,413	195,239	301,146