

PIID Board Chairman's Report for the 2015 Annual General Meeting

The latter part of 2014 and first half of 2015 has comprised a very challenging year on Piers Island for your executive group and many involved islanders.

Fire Department: Major changes issued by the Office of the Fire Commissioner, combined with an unprecedented staff turnover in our fire department, created a situation that few would want to tackle.

At this time I would like to express my sincere appreciation to Steve Cruise for taking on the position of Fire Chief and providing an amazing level of leadership during such a trying time. He recently challenged the very difficult "Train the Trainer" program and achieved a near perfect score despite having had no prior career level training. This achievement Provincially certifies Steve to train department members in-house which will save the District thousands of dollars.

Our Fire Chief is ably supported by Pauline Olesen. Pauline has also passed a difficult course in order to be certified as our first Risk Management Officer, the second of two positions required by a fire department under the new regulations. In her spare time, Pauline has also developed websites that raise fire prevention awareness and address onerous documentation demands that have come along with the new minimum training standards.

On the fire ground, current members are working hard to try to meet the Playbook minimum levels of skill, and I would like to thank them sincerely for their increased effort. The community must realize that this endeavour is at the moment rather daunting, and only time will tell whether we can be successful at fully achieving the goal, but nonetheless, our fire department is training to an unprecedented level and every member deserves our thanks.

Medical Response: I would also like to express my appreciation to Gerry Kristianson for his ongoing role as our in-house medical first responder instructor. He has recently prepared three new recruits for their Provincial exams which means we will have eleven trained members ready to respond to a 911 medical call-out.

Fire hall support staff: Lynn Pritchett, our Librarian, has rallied a number of volunteers who now manage the firehall and grounds and it looks better than it has for many years. Manon Hobbis managed the interior painting project and Guy Plante stripped and waxed the floors – five times! Others too many to mention individually continue to contribute huge time and effort in support of our fire department and I applaud their efforts.

Apparatus: Last year, the community approved Truck Task Force recommendations to replace several of our vehicles when monies became available. Fairly minor maintenance expenditures and equipment purchases have improved existing trucks and equipment to a level that has enabled us to defer replacement for the time being. This deferment has fit well with the department's primary need to focus on fire prevention and basic skills and safety training for fire fighters. And, with the advent of a more aggressive asset replacement savings program, the majority of required funds should be available when needed, without the burden of debt.

Water Department: The major operations challenge for the water team this past year has been the lack of sufficient chlorine in our water supply from North Saanich. That new deficiency caused unsatisfactory water quality issues for several months in 2014 but through the vigilance and tenacity of our Piers Island water operators, the CRD, VIHA and North Saanich were inspired to take a higher level of responsibility for ensuring better quality and improved microbiological monitoring of our water--at their expense. The water report covers those details.

The major administrative challenge this year is finding one or two new recruits for the water operator position. Our current operators have all provided service for a number of years and we should expect they will want to retire at some point. This is a critical issue in that we are relieved by our Drinking Water Officer from greater VIHA oversight and testing expense as long as an islander with the required certification has responsibility for testing and monitoring water quality. If we cannot continue to provide that expertise on-island, we may have to hire external contractors. This is not an onerous commitment so if you are interested please contact the water operators or myself.

At this time, I would like to express my thanks to the entire Piers Island water team for their ongoing service in the day to day operations and maintenance tasks of our water system.

Water Tank: As time moves on, efforts will focus more intently on the preparation of a succession plan for our 43 year old storage tank. Again, with forward planning, fiscal resources should be available when necessary, and in the meantime it is hoped that timely maintenance will prolong the tank life for another few years.

Dolphin Road Parking Lot: I think we have all enjoyed Lenny Green's folksy messages advising why he might want to tow you out of the compound. Thanks to Len for handling this thankless task with a degree of patience threatened only by the locks on the gates.

Finances and Long Range Plan: Over the past year, the Piers Island Improvement District has continued to remain debt free and services continue to be provided at relatively low cost due to volunteer labour. Our infrastructure, while aging, is in fair to good condition, and increasing awareness and attention to preventative maintenance will hopefully enable us to delay having to replace any major components until adequate savings are available.

To this end, the Trustees have spearheaded a project to prepare a long range capital asset replacement and maintenance plan. The goal is to provide ability to renew our infrastructure when necessary and without significant debt loads through gradual but persistent accumulation of reserve funds and effective preventative maintenance. This project is the topic of an agenda item but I would like to thank the Task Force members for their invaluable assistance over the past months. Together I hope we have embarked on a journey that will leave a largely debt-free legacy for future Piers Island residents.

Closing: This AGM meeting is my first served as Trustee and Chair of the Piers Island Improvement District, and I wish to acknowledge the co-operation of my fellow Trustees, Len Green and Denis Jesson during this past year. They have made consensus an easy task.

And last but not least, I wish to express my gratitude to our two support members: Gisele Dallaire, our Corporate Secretary, who, in addition to her PIID official duties, has built and managed much of the new communications and documentation technology intended for better community transparency and record-keeping; and Brenda Allen, our long serving Financial Administrator for her capable assistance and much-needed patience. While always professional, they have been fun to work with even when the tasks were not, and I have learned much from both of them.

Sincerely,
Maureen Crooks,
Board Chair