

# **Municipality of East Ferris**

## **Report to Council**

Report No.: FD-2021-03

Date: March 23, 2021

Originator: Frank Loeffen, Fire Chief/CEMC

Subject: Volunteer Years of Service Compensation

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### **RECOMMENDATION**

1. That Council for the Municipality of East Ferris accepts the recommendation of the Fire Chief to continue with the current practice of recognizing years of service with awards and plaques for every 5 years of service; and
2. That Council for the Municipality of East Ferris accepts the recommendation of the Fire Chief to provide, on a go forward basis beginning in 2021, all members with financial compensation for years of service as follows: 5 years - \$250, 10 years - \$500, 15 years - \$750, 20 years - \$1,000, 25 years - \$1,500, and 30 years \$2,000.

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### **BACKGROUND**

At the regular meeting of Council on February 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2021, report FD-2021-02 was presented to Council. The report provided recommendations related to East Ferris Fire Department volunteer members and officers' compensation. Council deferred the report and requested that consideration be made for compensation related to years of service. Staff were directed to review two options:

1. Provide higher point allocations to members based on seniority/years of service; and
2. Provide a one-time bonus to members when they reach service milestones.

### **Breakdown of Membership by Years of Service**

The following table indicates the breakdown of our current membership by years of service:

<b>Years of Service</b>	<b># of members</b>
Under 5 years	7
5-9	10
10-14	2
15-19	2
20-24	4
25-29	0
30+	1

Currently, four of the five members in the position of an officer have fifteen or more years of service and one is below ten years of service. They receive officer pay in addition to their points system pay.

### **Point System**

The Fire Chief does not collect points and responds to calls strictly in a volunteer capacity. All other members of the Department participate in the point system besides new recruits who have not passed the probationary period. New recruits have a 6-month probationary period to complete certain safety benchmarks, training, and paperwork before they can potentially begin collecting points. The probationary period may be extended up one year if the Training Officer or Battalion Chiefs feel the member is not ready. If after a year the new recruit has failed to meet the basics, they are released from the department. There is an exception to the 6-month probationary period which allows the period to be reduced to 3 months if a new recruit has past fire service experience, or training from another department or college. Past experience needs to be supported by documentation of successful completion of the basic safety components on fire ground safety.

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## **ANALYSIS**

### **Higher Point Allocations to Senior Members**

Not all members with seniority (years of service) have the expertise and knowledge or perform the workload that some junior members do as some senior members are classed as support staff and may assist with logistics such as running back and forth for supplies. Fairness and equity in point allocation is needed for the retention of junior members with less than 5 years of service as well as senior members.

Currently, 1 point is awarded automatically, on an honour system, when members respond to a call whether they have arrived on scene or not. If they say they are responding, they receive a point for attendance. Not everyone is required on scene and members are asked to stand down when enough members have arrived on scene. If extra points were to be provided to more senior members for being on scene, compared to the points received when members stand down, this could cause safety concerns with too many people and vehicles attending scenes. Also, providing bonus points for attendance causes a division amongst the members since some are available more often than others due to their employment or outside commitments and life schedules. Comments have been made in the past during the annual volunteer dedication award based on points for attendance. Furthermore, attracting and retaining new recruits is challenging with the competition for an individual's available time and compensation needs to be fair and equitable for the work performed. The funds available for the points system should be distributed on an equal pay for equal work basis.

To illustrate the inequity of providing higher point allocations based on seniority, if we were to use the 2019 points budget of \$43,260 and having 173 call outs, and 68 training/meeting/maintenance sessions, the point value was \$10.20 per point. If we were to allocate one (1) extra point, for emergency calls only, to members with over 5 years of service, this would reduce the point value to \$8.95. This increase to the year end honorarium to senior members, substantially reduces the junior members' compensation. A junior member would have to respond to double the calls to receive the same point value. This system would not compensate a junior member who would be doing the same if not more work during an emergency. This format does not provide the compensation Council has requested since the distribution is still out of a set points budget. If a bonus system was to be implemented and not affect the point value, a separate budget line would be required and would also create compensation challenges for the administration in the points distribution for attending members.

### **One-Time Bonuses to Members at Milestones**

Bonuses for reaching years of service milestones seems to be the most fair and equitable way of compensating members for their years of service as all members are treated equally. It is not advisable to retro these payments to compensate members for reaching milestones in the past as this would require \$10,250 to be paid in 2021 to the members who have achieved the various

years of service. If financial compensation was to be awarded to members who have achieved the 5, 10, 15, 20, and 25-year milestones as a one-time retro, some members could potentially receive two cheques in 2021 as they near the next level of service.

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## RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that we continue the current practice of recognizing years of service with the awards and plaques for every 5 years of service in addition to any compensation that Council may decide to offer. Many departments do not provide this recognition, but it is a more personal way of recognizing an achievement.

It is also recommended that Council for the Municipality of East Ferris, on a go forward basis beginning in 2021, provide all members with financial compensation as follows:

5 years = \$250	20 years = \$1,000
10 years = \$500	25 years = \$1,500
15 years = \$750	30 years = \$2,000

Therefore, years of service recognition would be based strictly on a years of service basis with members receiving a monetary contribution and token of appreciation at every 5-year milestone with no bearing as to the individual's rank, qualifications, or attendance.

The Fire and Emergency Services Committee discussed this matter at a Committee meeting on March 8<sup>th</sup>, 2021 and this recommendation is in line with how the Committee wanted to proceed.

Respectfully submitted,

*Frank Loeffen*

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Frank Loeffen, CMMIII  
Fire Chief/CEMC

I concur with this report and  
Recommendation.



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Jason H. Trottier, HBBA, CPA, CMA  
CAO/Treasurer