### **East Sooke Fire Protection and Emergency Response Service Commission**

6071 East Sooke Road, East Sooke BC, V9Z 0Z8

commissioners@eastsookefirecommission.ca



#### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

November 27, 2024 - 7:00 pm

Location: Community Hall, 1397 Coppermine Road, East Sooke

Commissioners Present: Al Wickheim (Regional Director), Falk Wagenbach (Chair),

Ed Helm (Treasurer), Wendy Herring, Mike Yeager,

Anita Preto

**CRD Representative:** Chris Vrable, Manager, Fire Services

**FD Present:** Chief Nathan Pocock

**Public Present: 20** 

Territorial Acknowledgment - Wendy Herring

1. Adoption of Agenda

Moved: Mike Yeager Seconded: Ed Helm Carried

2. Adoption of Minutes from October 23, 2024

Moved: Ed Helm Seconded: Mike Yeager Carried

3. Reports

a. **Commission Chair report** (Falk Wagenbach)

As Per Addendum

Moved: Wendy Herring Seconded: Mike Yeager Carried

b. **Fire Chief report** (Nathan Pocock)

As Per Addendum

Moved: Mike Yeager Seconded: Ed Helm Carried

c. Finance report (Ed Helm)

As Per Addendum

The budget process for the following year was reviewed, from development by the Fire Chief together with CRD staff beginning in February each year, through the review and approval by the Commission, submission by July each year to CRD Finance for review and approval, and subsequent submission to the Regional Board for provisional approval, and final approval by the CRD Board so that funding is available in April of the following year. The Regional Board granted provisional approval of the 2025 budget on October 31<sup>st</sup>, 2024.

The fleet size requirement is still under review, but any necessary changes to the proposed budget to accommodate this review can be made as late as January, 2025.

As of the end of October, 2024, the Fire Department Is 11% under budget on the operating costs. At the end of the year, any balance is moved into the Capital Reserve fund. The 2025 budget has been provisionally approved with an about 34% increase in funding for 2025. This is a 28% increase in the Fire Protection portion of property taxes.

Moved: Al Wickheim Seconded: Mike Yeager Carried

d. Community Hall report (Wendy Herring)

As Per Addendum

Moved: Ed Helm Seconded: Al Wickheim Carried

#### 4. Old Business

There was no old business for discussion.

#### 5. New Business

There was no new business for discussion.

#### 6. Nominees for Commission 2024

Chris Vrable reviewed By-Law 3654 and outlined the process for selection of Commissioners. The By-Law is accessible on both the CRD website and on the East Sooke Fire Commission website.

There are 9 Fire Departments reporting to the Manager, CRD Fire Services. Of these, seven of the service areas have Commissions. Chris Vrable reviewed the requirements of membership as a Commissioner, and the change of Commissions from an administrative role to an advisory role. The change in roles was effected in May 2024. Potential Commissioners are reviewed for eligibility and, if accepted, must sign a Non-Disclosure Agreement. He also reviewed the role of a Commissioner who is a member of the Fire Department – to provide local information to the

Commission of needs and issues within the Fire Department. Electoral Area Directors could choose not to fill a Commission position, or could choose to fill a vacancy later in the year.

Chris Vrable polled the sitting Commissioners to ascertain their intentions for 2025. Two Commissioners resigned within the last three months.

Falk Wagenbach, Ed Helm, and Anita Preto are stepping down as of 31 December 2024 and will not complete the second year of their term, expiring 31 December 2025. Mike Yeager and Wendy Herring indicated they will not stand for re-election. Their terms expire on 31 December 2024.

There were no nominations or expressions of interest from the public in attendance. Any future expressions of interest should be submitted to Chris Vrable, CRD Fire Services Manager.

Simon Miles would like to be the representative for the East Sooke Fire Brigade.

#### 7. Community Questions and Answers

The public in attendance were invited to pose questions:

A FireSmart question was asked whether anything could be done about the buildup of dry fuel along the roadsides left over from cleanup of the downed trees after the storms. Chief Pocock offered to look into the matter.

A resident queried the reason why the move was made away from a Regional Commission. It was explained that the public and the Commissions did not want to lose the local passion and functionality; and there is a need for dedicated volunteer time and a Commission that works well with the Fire Chief.

#### 8. Adjourn of public meeting

Moved: Mike Yeager Seconded: Al Wickheim Carried

Meeting adjourned at 9:30 pm.

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

# Chair Report 2024

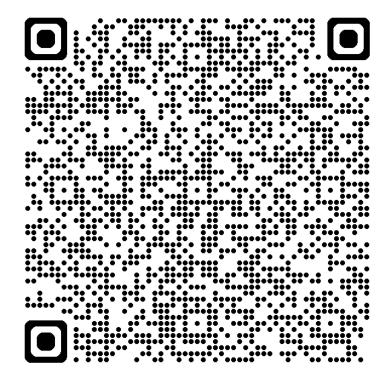
**Falk Wagenbach** 

### Significant change in reporting/responsibility structure 2024

In 2023, the CRD contracted a consulting firm to conduct a Governance review for all of its fire departments. This has led to significant changes in 2024, e.g.

- The Fire Chief no longer reports to the commission but to the Manager Fire Service (Chris Vrabel)
- The budget proposal is prepared jointly by the Fire Chief and the Manager Fire Service and then presented to the Commission, which approves the proposal or returns it for revision.
- Responsible for ensuring that the Fire Department complies with all Acts and Regulations – such as Fire Services (Safety) Act, WorkSafe BC, Minimum Structure Firefighter Training Standard and CRD policies now lies exclusively with the office of the CRD Manager Fire Service

The revised BYLAW NO. 3654 is available on the commission's public drive and on the CRD website.



### The commission's take on this change

Long before the new bylaw, we had come to realize that it is impossible for volunteer commissioners to keep up with the significant increase in government acts, regulations and policies.

The new bylaw addressed this problem and, as called for in the governance report, the East Sooke Fire Commission has taken on a more advisory role.

As part of the FD management, the Manager Fire Service has brought in his extensive knowledge of the existing regulations and processes and has become a competent and more adequate contact person for our Fire Chief.

### Another change: First full year with a paid Fire Chief

In order to have the funds for a (part-time) paid Fire Chief, the CRD and commission agreed about 3 years ago to a 30% higher operating budget.

Our expectations were that a paid professional would be able to provide better training for our volunteer firefighters and better prepare our force to handle emergency situations.

Nathan Pocock has delivered! Our firefighters today present themselves as a better trained, close-knit group of highly motivated volunteers that are willing to spend a lot of their free time on training and call outs.

Nevertheless, for the volunteer group of commissioners, the transition from a volunteer fire chief to a paid person has brought more challenges than we had anticipated.

We have not been able to communicate to our firefighters that major changes especially the ones that require additional funds must follow strict rules, regulations and procedures in a government-owned fire department.

Unfortunately, the impression has persisted that the commission voted down most or any requests submitted by the Fire Department leadership.

This impression, which is circulating in our fire department, is incorrect!

To set the record straight, I will report on each request submitted by our fire chief and the commission's corresponding vote on this topic.

Request to **increase** the budget for firefighter benefits (Health/Dental/Accident) insurance from \$1,859 to \$8,744



Request to approve the budget 2024 (prepared by the outgoing and incoming fire chief).



The fire department requested to auction off our unused **Structural Protection Unit (SPU).** Since we spent \$144,000 on the trailer the commission proposed a similar amount as a minimum retainer. April 2024 (Chiefs report): The fire chief convinced the commission to set a substantially lower minimum retainer of \$58,383 (equipment and trailer not in compliance with BC's deploy regulations).



The unit was auctioned off for \$110,000

Request to deploy one of our trucks together with 2 fire fighters in summer to fight wildfires in other regions of BC



Fire Chief's request to amend our SOG's



Every request for capital investments to improve/enhance our station's functionality



Shortly after the new Fire Chief took up his post, the Deputy Chief, the Training Officer and the FR Officer resigned. The new Chief has taken over the duties of the DC and the Training Officer. This was not possible for him within the contractually agreed 21 hours/week. In January, the commission decided to pay the Fire Chief a maximum of the equivalent of 32 hours/week for 2024.



Request to **increase** the 2025 wages **budget** (Chief salary+stipends) from \$80,000 to \$139,000 (+74%)



Every single request that came from the Fire Department (except for the FR truck that was not covered by the CRD approved capital budget) was approved by the commission

All other demands (more paid officers, more equipment, paid on call etc.) have have not yet submitted to the commission for voting and are still under debate between the Fire Chief and the CRD staff.

### Conclusion

The commission has the impression that our firefighters are a good and mutually supportive team. This is the most important thing for our community and for the future, we believe that a volunteer commission is more in the way than helpful for their success and happiness.

The remaining commissioners (2 commissioners have already resigned this year) feel that it is best for our Fire Department to be directly supervised by the competent professional CRD staff.

We will therefore all be resigning as commissioners as of the end of the year.

### East Sooke Fire Rescue 2024 Department Report



**November 2024** 

The last 12 months have been a very busy year for East Sooke Fire Rescue.

Key performances;

Creating and filling an organizational chart, assigning three officers to training and additionally another 3 to operations.

Brining on a new IT technical support member

On boarding new software system

Coordinating with multiple other agencies for training, response, and community engagement Working to catch up on many maintenance items and repairs

Working with the East Sooke Fire Commission and CRD to create long term planning initiatives for East Sooke Fire Rescue and the Community it serves

Training, training and more training

Introduction Category	Period starting	Cumulative Hours	Weekly Average (Hrs)		
Calls	Nov 1st '23 – October 31st24	709.5	13.6		
Training	Jan 1st '24	3659	79.5		

#### **Training and Membership**

Where we were November 2023 compared to Today November 2024

#### **ESFR Training Plan**

**Training Level Completed** 

Training Devel Completed			
Service Level	November 2023	November 2024	Staffing Goals
_	(22)	(25)	
Recruits	3	4	3
Full Service	3	12	15
Interior	5	3	10
Exterior	9	4	0
Support	2	2	0
Qualification training			
NFPA 1407 members	4	11	15
NFPA 1002 Drivers	2	5	12
Roper Rescue	5	7	12
FR license	11	17	25 *recent
			recruitment could see 4 more FR licenses in first quarter 2025
Leadership Training			
Officer Mentorship	0	4	4
program			
Fire Officer 1	1	1	2
Qualification			
Fire Officer 2	0	1	2
Qualification			
Fire Officer 3	0	0	1
Qualification			
Fire Officer 4	1	1	1
Qualification			

We have seen 8 members complete their NFPA 1001 training

Gained 5 more Interior qualified firefighters

Gained 7 more NFPA 1407 qualified members

Gained 3 more NFPA 1002 qualified drivers and pump operators with 4 more completing the program currently.

Have 4 members now enrolled in Fire Officer training

#### Where we were November 2023 compared to Today November 2024

For our required wildfire training to work with BC Forestry services our certified members have increased;

Wff-Spp-1 wildland firefighter level one by 8 members (training in how to be a front-line firefighter in wildland fires)

Spp-115 Structure protection firefighters certified has increased by 4 (training to manage and specifically be work at structures in an interface fire)

Engine Boss certified members have increased by 5 (required to lead a team of firefighters on a single apparatus)

Task Force Leader 1 certified members have been increased by 2 (required to lead a larger group of apparatus within a wildfire event)

Interior FFs on pagers: 14 FR/Support on pager: 5 FR/Support not on pager: 1 Recruits not on pager: 2 Fire firefighter on leave: 1

Total: 23

To maintain the current rating levels of 3a and 3b in East Sooke we must maintain a staffing level of "15 fully qualified members". The difference between a 3a rating and a 3b is dependent on water supply and if you are close to a fire hydrant or not.

East Sooke Fire Rescue currently struggles with keeping, creating and upkeeping training documentation such as, lesson plans, certificates, other official and required documentation. This results in increasing timelines to get members trained to their required service level and increases department liability.

March 16-17 and April 13-14 say East Sooke Host NFPA 1407 training required by Office of the fire commission. This training required use of the Fire Chief's Personal equipment, training props and trailers. This course would normally cost \$1100.00 per student. Just in registration fees East Sooke saved \$11,000.00 dollars over these two weekends. A spot was opened to an outside Student and East Sooke Fire Furthermore, able to profit \$800.00 dollars from these two weekends.

With the OFC Mandated NFPA 1002 driver and pumper training course fees are combined approximately \$1800.00 per student. The Fire Chief was able to bring in a NFPA 1002 program that he built and enroll and deliver it to 8 members since starting with East Sooke. Saving the department approximately \$14,400 in registration fees. Furthermore one of our own members is using their own grant funding from their professional sports career was able to enroll and pay for their officer 1 and 2 training which has so far saved East Sooke \$5,824.00.

In total this has seen a **savings** in registration fees for OFC mandated training of approximately **\$31,224.00** and a profit of \$800.00.

#### **RESPONSES**

Alarm Bells	13	8%
<b>Duty Calls</b>	17	10%
Hydro	6	4%
Medical	75	44%
MVI	7	4%
Rescue	12	7%
<b>Structure Fire</b>	16	9%
Wildfire	6	4%
Car/garbage/other	7	3%
fire		
Smoke	11	6%
investigation		
Total	170	

East Sooke has not had the required minimum staffing since October 31st 2023 till November 1st 2024 for 5 of the 16 structure fires and 4 of the 75 medical calls

East Sooke Fire currently struggles to provide daytime response for all calls 7 days a week primarily due to the geography and make up of East Sooke members work, household chores, children's activities all take members outside the district in the daytime hours.

#### Succession planning and Budgeting for the future

New science and standards are constantly changing and coming out in the fire service having a team that can continue to get educated, learn and then implement these new changing ways is a mandatory part of any fire service. Fire halls must constantly prepare for the future and in a rank-and-file structure always need to be bringing the next person up with education, experience and training. A fire department can not rely on a select few individuals, if they were to leave everything stops.

While making considerate efforts to bring up the next set of officers this is coming at a critical capacity to budget, and members time they are able to commit in teaching and learning the required skills.

<sup>\*</sup> This means between the fire chiefs time, donation of equipment and materials along with an individuals grant money we have saved more in training than we have training budget this year in East Sooke

#### **Apparatus:**

Car 1 2013 GMC Sierra 1500: Currently meets needs due for replacement 2033

Engine 1 2015 Spartan Metro Star: Currently Meets needs due for replacement 2055

Engine 2 1999 Freightliner: Current due for replacement 2035. The pump and water tank onboard are undersized for rural department needs and the increased size of the community over the last 25 years.

Squad 1 2000 GMC 1 ton: Currently does not fully meet the requirements for its current use, mainly due to lack of storage space. was due for replacement 2024, complications on budgeting for apparatus needs has delayed this replacement, working with CRD on alternatives.

Tender 1 2007 Freightliner: Currently meets needs Due for replacement 2047

Tender 2 1996 Freightliner: Must have engineering work done to the tank to keep it in a serviceable condition due to 1986 water tank showing signs of failure. due for replacement 2027.

Support trailer 2009 Mirage: Does not currently meet needs the trailer is not a reliable way for us to transport equipment as we only have two vehicles capable of towing it and they will usually already be on scene where we need the trailer. There is also considerable amounts of additional training required to teach members to hook up and drive with a trailer. Possible option would be with replacement of Tender two (2027) we could budget to repurpose the old chassis to become a support truck that would carry the items in the trailer along with additional needed rehab items.

SPU Trailer: 2024 saw the sale of the Sprinkler protection unit trailer. This trailer had been started to be built by East Sooke Fire Rescue several years ago with the intention of wild land deployment. With changes in BC Forestry requirements the trailer became obsolete for deployment before being completed. East Sooke Fire Rescue also had no apparatus capable of towing the trailer. The trailer was sold in 2024 for \$110,000 at auction. These funds will be put back into the East Sooke Fire Replacement Fund.

#### **Annual maintenance and testing:**

Being an emergency service not only do all our members need to be trained and ready but our equipment must be well kept and well organized not only to provide good response but also to ensure we meet the requirements of legislation.

Currently East Sooke Fire Rescue relies on this to be done on purely volunteer hours which is averaging over 15 hours a week. We currently are doing well, staying on top of most legislated checks, but have struggled to meet the mandated requirements of Pre-trips of our apparatus set out by CVSE and CRD. Non legislated checks have fallen behind along with replacement of older gear/equipment largely due to great inflation of equipment costs exceeding budget increases and the time required to stay on top of these items.

We have found many facility deficiencies over the past year and are working to bring these up to working conditions. This catch up has been a challenge both with budget and time. We have had

a number issue with our bay doors, our deacon set up, air compressor assembly, apparatus repairs, and sink holes on the property that have been or are waiting to be addressed.

#### **Engaging with service partners in operational and training planning:**

Over the past 12 months East Sooke Fire has been working closely with our mutual aid fire departments, RCMSAR, BC Wildfire and JDFSAR to collaborate areas for joint training initiatives and to streamline administration and operations for nonemergency and emergency situations.

East Sooke Fire has also started working with Juan De Fuca Emergency Management to collaborate in community engagement and education in the district of East Sooke. Hosting its first community education event November 30th 2024.

#### **Records Management:**

It is a requirement to keep paperwork and records of incidents, personal, response and training. The Fire department must be able to show proof of meeting the standards of training as well as be able to provide information on members, call response and equipment maintenance when and where required. These documents will help ensure we are shielded from liability and assist our members should the become ill or injured with claims.

The last 12 months has seen East Sooke Fire Rescue working with the CRD to implement electronic software capable of recording and documenting all our department activities.

Whilst we are stilling working out some bugs and training our membership on the system, East Sooke Fire is steadily adopting the new digital system into our day-to-day operations.

#### **Standard Operating Guidelines Review:**

Standard Operating Guidelines create the rules and standards in which a fire department is to operate safely and efficiently. The fire service and the community are constantly changing, and the guidelines need to shift and adapt with those changes, to maximize efficiency and safety of the community and members.

CRD has been working to create and has created some working standard operating guidelines that will potentially allow East Sooke Fire the ability to adopt and more easily adapt off this framework to build and have up to date policies and guidelines to work from moving forward.

#### **New Infrastructure in East Sooke:**

In 2024 we have worked with CRD to install; An addition 11 new hydrants on a new water main system on Seagirt road An additional 2 hydrants on existing water main systems closing some current gaps An additional 2 hydrants on East Sooke Road Planned out an additional 22 extra hydrants to be installed over the next 7 to 8 years. These hydrants will be installed on existing water mains to fill in current gaps within our current hydrant system.

#### **Pre-incident planning:**

Pre-incident planning is an extremely high valued project to take place. It allows us not only to get face to face with the community and provide a chance for life safety education, but also provides a chance to create documents and plans that will aid our firefighters when responding to these addresses.

2024 saw:

Conducted four driveway inspections

Worked with RCM SAR to identify site maps and have them on our apparatus Several Location of Interests were filled with our dispatch for properties that have unique response attributes such as locked gates, inaccessible driveways for fire apparatus etc.

#### **FireSmart:**

Fire smart assessments are a fantastic way for our members to get out and engage in public education and communication. This program is currently supported through grant funding and provides the following benefits:

Compensation to our members for their time

Potential reimbursement back to citizens for doing wildfire mitigation work on their own properties.

Lower wildfire potential

Insight into properties and locations to better know response area

Face to face education with community members

#### **FireSmart Assessments completed**

July 1st 2024 till October 31st 2024 = 39 completed and 12 more inspections requested

Successful Chipper days with four fully booked days of piles being chipped.

#### **Training Building:**

Having our own training facility allows East Sooke Firefighters the ability to be trained and certified to the Office of the Fire Commissions set standards that need to be achieved and relate to the Fire Underwriters insurance ratings and standards.

East Sooke has been working on this building since approximately 2017 and is slowly progressing with some major items still required for completion. This project has relied almost solely on two volunteers giving their time when they can, which is almost every Sunday plus additional evenings. Budgeting and time continue to be the largest hurtles to this projects completion.

Main items to complete the training facility:

- #1 Stairs from upper C-can to lower
- #2 Wooden frame roof section with attic access provisions
- #3 Steel partitions layers with wood to simulate walls which can be folded flat against inside walls to change layout of rooms.
- #4 Wired with lights inside
- #5 Finish platform for below level practice.
- #6 Setup Wood stove to give practice for chimney fires
- #7 propane props are required for car fires, dumpster fires, propane tank fires and class b fires
- #8 Hose tower requires a standpipe installed for training purposes

Currently all skills required needing these facilities involves sending members out of district at a much-increased cost for training else where.

#### **UBCM grant funds 2024 & 2025:**

Industry and NFPA standards dictate that the minimum flow of a fire hose at a residential structure fire shall be not less than 150 gallons per minute.

Currently East Sooke Fire Rescue flows 95 gallons per minute.

Our current hose is 1.5" diameter has a flow limit under the required 150 gallon per minute minimum laid out by industry and national fire protection association standards.

The 2024 grant has been submitted to CRD. We were given a \$23,000 cap to submit for. 56 lengths of 1.75" hose was requested, to help bring us up to industry standard and to be compatible with our mutual aid partners. We will still need to purchase new nozzles and some additional hose outside of this grant to get to the full standard. We are expecting delivery of this hose in December 2024 or January 2025.

Our 2025 grant application is in and we are eligible for \$40,000.00 dollars. It was agreed upon by regional chiefs that we would all allot \$5000.00 from each departments grant towards a joint CRD training coordinator position to help facilitate regional training. The additional \$35,000.00 will be used towards finishing the required hose upgrades and preparing to have enough hose to outfit our new tender scheduled for 2027. started with the 2024 grant.

#### **East Sooke Fire Rescues Largest hurdles to overcome:**

Currently still our largest hurdle in the department, is resources needed to complete high priority and mandatory tasks.

Much of East Sooke Fire Rescue's struggles come from the lack of resources both in ability to have members commit to the massive time requirements of the huge administrative and organizational load that comes with running a fire hall and much of our programs and training.

Due to large inflation of fire equipment over the last few years we are seeing our equipment replacement funds current and forecasted falling short of requirements.

#### **East Sooke Fire Rescues Greatest Advantage:**

East Sooke community continues to show overwhelming support for our membership and the department and understands the need for a well equipped and trained response. Allowing the prioritizing of safety for our community and the department members.

East Sooke Fire Rescue currently has an extremely positive membership that has seen large increases in morale and attendance over the past 18 months from previous years. We have seen this in the close to if not the highest attendance to training and calls on record to date for East Sooke. These members have pushed hard from years of noncompliance to get to insurance rating minimum requirements in just 18 months. The membership continues to show strong desire in wanting to help their community and are starving for knowledge, equipment and opportunity to do so.

With continued effort to give the right support and resources, East Sooke Fire Rescue has a solid foundation to build on and attract in new membership to create an effective fire service for the community.

#### **Conclusion:**

East Sooke Fire Rescue has a motivated membership who is putting in large amounts of work to aim to grow the departments compliance and services to the community.

Nathan Pocock
Fire Chief
East Sooke Fire Rescue

#### Treasurer's Report as at 2024 October 31

#### **East Sooke Fire Commission**

#### **Monthly Report**

Ed Helm, Treasurer

Year-to-Date ending October 2024

	Bu	ıdget - Annual				Year-to-date		]	Budge
REVENUES	2023	2024	%change		Budget	Actual	%diff.		
Service Fee to Sooke for Silver Spray	\$56,350	\$69,350	23.07%		\$69,350	\$77,166	11.3%		
Interest Income	\$1,060	\$1,060	0.00%		\$1,060	\$1,374	29.6%		
MFA Debt Reserve Fund	\$380	\$380	0.00%		\$317	\$0	-100.0%		
Requisition - Electoral Area	\$468,579	\$477,950	2.00%		\$477,950	\$477,950	0.0%		
Total Revenues	\$526,369	\$548,740	4.25%		\$548,677	\$556,490	1.4%		
				_					
EXPENSES									
Principal for loan	\$97,959	\$97,959	0.0%		\$0	\$0			
Interest on loan	\$57,150	\$57,150	0.0%		\$57,150	\$57,150	0.0%		
Transfer to Reserve - CRF	\$103,362	\$100,000	-3.3%		\$80,101	\$80,101	0.0%		
Operations	\$267,518	\$292,130	9.2%	_	\$233,442	\$206,820	-11.4%	_	
Total Expenses	\$525,989	\$547,239	4.0%	-	\$370,692	\$344,070	-7.2%	-	

#### **East Sooke Community Hall Group**

#### 2024 November

- The ES Community Hall is a hub of activity! In the past 12 months the Hall hosted 251 Public events or classes and 5 Private Rentals.
- The ES Community Hall is entirely funded through rentals. *There is NO tax burden for East Sooke landowners associated with its operation*. The primary tenant, JdF Search and Rescue, leases the upstairs, the bays and uses the main Hall several times a month.
- The Hall is maintained and upgraded as needed. Upgrades in 2024 included replacing old, inefficient baseboard heaters with a heat pump, replacing old bifold doors and replacing wooden exterior doors with metal doors.
- A group of five volunteers manages rentals, opens and closes for events, handles invoicing and payments, coordinates contracted work, and assists with cleaning and maintenance. This equates to 400+ hours per year of volunteer time.
- To learn more, visit the website at eastsookecommunityhall.com .