

Aug. 9, 2018

Municipal Units Decline fair and equitable cost-sharing on dispatch

The negotiations between the municipalities representing the users of Yarmouth dispatch service and the Town of Yarmouth, who operate the service, have ended without an agreement.

The Town was recently notified by the Municipality of Argyle that "there were insufficient municipal users remaining to negotiate an effective cost-sharing agreement". However, the Town of Yarmouth has not been notified by any volunteer fire department that they are discontinuing to use our dispatch service.

The two sides differed on key principles.

The municipalities representing the users of the service maintained that the service should be available to them at a cost competitive with other services in the province. They felt they were limited in how much they would pay, partially based on the cost of purchasing the same service, elsewhere.

The Town received a proposal that was less than three times the current rate from the other municipalities, leaving the Town taxpayers to pay 10 times the current rate. The Town's response to the proposal was simple: that any formula for sharing of costs would have to include the town, and be equitable to all users of the service, including the Town. The Town is willing to overpay for this service, relative to other alternatives, as long as the other users of the service are also willing to overpay, proportionally.

When a single formula is used, no matter what variables are chosen, the cost of the service is too high to result in a price that is competitive with other options. The Town of Yarmouth respects any municipality's right to not overpay for a service, including the right of Town taxpayers.

Over the course of the past few months, since the Town first indicated that we were looking at discontinuing our dispatch service, we have heard from volunteer firefighters and their families from across the region. They have asked us to reconsider this decision and think about the vital service the dispatch service plays in protecting our communities and the firefighters themselves.

To this end, the Town of Yarmouth will be communicating directly with the volunteer fire departments with a proposal to continue to receive dispatch services.