

MUNICIPALITY OF THE DISTRICT OF ARGYLE POLICY AND ADMINISTRATION MANUAL	REFERENCE NUMBER _____
SECTION PROCEDURE AND ORGANIZATION OF COUNCIL	SUBJECT FIRE AREA RATE

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1. Municipalities have a broad range of area rate powers. Section 75 of the Municipal Government Act provides that area rates may be used to finance all or part of the cost of any municipal service or facility that council deems to be of benefit to an area.
- 1.2. Fire services have been provided in this Municipality substantially through the efforts of volunteers, both in the direct provision of the service, and in fund-raising activities undertaken to finance these endeavors. The demands of modern living have made it more difficult for volunteers to undertake all of the work necessary to provide these services, particularly the fund-raising aspect.

2. DEFINITIONS

- 2.1. Applicant - an application for the establishment or continuation of a fire area rate shall be submitted by an organization, incorporated under the *Societies Act*, having as its objective the provision of fire services.
- 2.2. Ratepayer - a person residing within an area and rated on the current assessment roll of the Municipality within that area.
- 2.3. Area - an application for the establishment of an area rate shall define the area to which the rate is to apply with sufficient clarity to allow for proper implementation of the rate for billing purposes. The area shall be defined by resolution of the Council.
- 2.4. Multiple Jurisdictions - if the area to be served by the area fire rate includes more than one municipal unit, or partly includes the area of an existing fire commission, the provisions of subsection 46(5) of the Rural Fire District Act will be applied to apportion the amounts raised in each jurisdiction.

3. ESTABLISHING AND AREA RATE

- 3.1. Council shall consider the establishment of an area rate upon receipt of an application submitted in accordance with the terms of this policy.
- 3.2. An applicant shall notify Council in writing no less than thirty (30) days prior to the date of the meeting.
- 3.3. An application shall set out evidence of the organization's incorporation and good standing under the Societies Act and shall include a budget in support of the proposed area rate; a definition of the area to which the rate shall apply; a declaration setting out the fulfillment of the public notice and public meeting process required by this policy.

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- 3.4. Area rates applications will be considered by Council only during the Municipality’s budget process. Applications must be submitted by April 30, in each year, in order to ensure sufficient time to properly create the special billing.
- 3.5. An area rate for fire services established under this policy shall automatically be applied to the taxable property assessment for the area defined by the resolution of the Council. Should the applicant request a rate set in a different fashion (i.e. per household), this should be specifically requested and clarified at the ratepayers meeting.

4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

- 4.1. Prior to the submission of an application for an area rate, an applicant shall call a public (ratepayers’) meeting. Notice of the meeting shall be given by two advertisements in a newspaper having circulation in the area to which the rate will apply. The first such notice shall be published not less than 14 days prior to the date of the meeting and the second notice not less than 7 days prior to the date of the meeting. In addition to the newspaper notice, the applicant shall post the notice of the meeting in three (3) conspicuous places in the area to which the rate is to be applied not less than 14 days prior to the date of the meeting. The notice shall contain the date, time and place of the public meeting; the name of the applicant; the amount of the area rate to be requested in the application; the area to which the rate will apply; the purpose of the area rate; that ratepayers will be entitled to vote; and the method of voting.
- 4.2. The ratepayers’ meeting shall be conducted by the applicant. The applicant shall have a register in which those ratepayers attending the meeting may place their names, addresses and phone numbers. Prior to a vote being called, the applicant shall make a presentation to the meeting setting out the reasons and proposed purposes for use of the area rate funds and the amount of the rate. The support for the proposed area rate shall be determined by majority vote of the ratepayers present and voting at the meeting.

5. ANNUAL APPLICATIONS AND ACCOUNTABILITY

- 5.1. An area rate does not continue automatically from year to year. Typically, the area rate recommended by ratepayers is a multi-year arrangement; however, Council approves area rates annually, and has the right to discontinue a multi-year rate as recommended by ratepayers in any given year. Council may discontinue an area rate under the following conditions:
- a) The applicant fails to submit to Council its annual financial statements covering the preceding year and a statement of activities carried on in that year.
 - b) Where it is known (or it is unclear) that the area rate funds collected were not utilized for the purpose(s) as set out during the initial ratepayers meeting.

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5.2. Municipal staff will seek to advise the applicant when the multi-year area rate expires, but the responsibility to recommend an extension remains with the applicant. Municipal staff and Council will not automatically renew an area rate, without a bone fide ratepayers meeting and documented support for the extension.

6. DATE COLLECTION

6.1. Municipal staff shall provide mapping and assessment data to applicants and such advice to Council as Council requires. The staff is committed to providing all pertinent information to support the applicant in their ratepayers meeting. The deadlines set in this policy are to ensure that staff has enough time to prepare such information for the public.

<u>Chief Administrative Officer's Annotation for Official Policy Book</u>	
Date of Notice to Council Members Of Intent to Consider [7 days minimum]: <u>September 27, 2011</u>	
Date of Passage of Current Policy: <u>October 11, 2011</u>	
I certify that this Policy was adopted by Council as indicated above.	
<u>Original Signed</u>	<u>December 16, 2014</u>
Warden	Date
<u>Original Signed</u>	<u>December 16, 2014</u>
Chief Administrative Officer	Date