

RICHMOND FIREFIGHTERS REVIEW

I have taken the time to prepare comments as I believe this is a very important milestone.

It is important for Council to continue to provide leadership and get a handle on these issues. It is important to the community to restore full confidence in the City and Richmond Fire Rescue (RFR), and perhaps most important of all, it is important for RFR personnel and their families to close this chapter.

This report has confirmed that there are real strengths in RFR and we should all be proud that we have some of the best fire fighter personnel right here in Richmond, most of who have great pride in their department, which has made this process additionally difficult.

Ms. Paish is to be commended. The report is extensive, and I found it to be fair, balanced and credible, and it gave me confidence that we have embarked on the right course.

There is work to be done. I would venture a guess there is work to be done in any Fire Rescue Department, in any city in the country.

At our most recent Community Safety Meeting we discussed the need for a five year plan and a vision for the future of RFR. As Chair of the Community Safety Committee, I am committed to this, and I look forward to it.

I believe a new sense of team, between the City and the RFR will emerge, including training, and the responsibility to fund this training, and the facilities and equipment that are required. I am concerned that there are politics at play, and I am disappointed in this, and only wish that I had the time to speak to each and every RFR member, at some length, about the good that will come from this process.

As difficult as this has been, I believe we will emerge as a stronger team. The intent of my original motion was to put an end to what threatened to be a drip-feed torture test, with bits of information coming out over time

Sometimes the best way to solve a problem is to shine a light on it and ask pertinent and sometimes difficult questions. I do wish the media coverage had been more balanced.

It is clear to me that we got to where we are as a team . . . over the years systematic failures were either not recognized, or not acted upon.

So, as a team, we will take certain corrective action now, and move forward.

I am very disappointed that the women fire fighters did not participate. I am convinced they were given every opportunity, and I sincerely wish they took it. But they did not and we must move forward. So move forward we will.

I would like to thank City management and staff, RFR leadership, Union leadership and Personnel, as it was their commitment to this process that enabled it to be successful.

Sincerely, Councillor Rob Howard