

Part One
Anmore Alternative News March 5 2015 Retirement Interview
with Sasamat Volunteer Fire Department
Chief Larry Scott

Retirement is a time for reflection and for new beginnings. As you retire from so many fruitful years as the Chief of the Sasamat Volunteer Fire Department the Anmore Alternative News pays tribute to you and would like to ask the following questions.

1. How long have you been involved with the SVFD?



SVFD Chief Larry Scott (Left) and SVFD Association President Rob Schofield (Right) working in the community in the early years.

Chief Scott: I received my bars for 37 years of service last year. I evolved from Firefighter to Captain, to Training Officer, to Assistant Chief, and I have been the Fire Chief for 32 years.

It was a natural evolution, with the Chiefs before me wanting to move on. I just fell downwards or upwards, depending on how you look at it. I always felt it to be a natural evolution. I didn't aspire to the position as Chief; it just presented itself to me. As a team player I felt I could contribute in any number of ways and, because of my stature, carrying a 100 pound person out of a burning building wasn't one of them.

This is where all of our strengths as a department kind of flow. I became chief because it was a flow that fit my stature, my character, and my desires. That is a

constant throughout the department since I've been there. Other members just seem to flow to their strengths.

From my experience, you can direct people and tell them what to do, or you can empower them to make what you stand for look better. Sometimes people just need a nudge and the comfort to do better. That works well here - many little pieces fit together. It has worked well in other areas in the past.



The department tends to be paramilitary organization, most departments are. It has to be because in times of stressful need, firefighters need to take comfort knowing that they will fall into a 'take direction' mode and carry out that direction. But because those occasions are so few and far between, the empowerment thing is to allow them to grow within the department and to create the things that they will fall default to. It's not that you just tell them what they will do in crisis. It's an evolution. They suggest approaches that make sense. Then I support and recommend it, and we implement the approach. This way they fall back on something they helped to create. It is very natural to fall into.

AAN: I have often said that the department has esprit de corps. Esprit de corps is a military term but it also is the love of what you're doing and your part in that.

Chief Scott: That's right and the key is 'your part in it.'

2. Please describe your role as the Fire Chief.

The Chief is responsible for the due diligence to meet the expectations of the province, the community, the governance and the membership. As a manager of a department, I had responsibility for legislative and community-based expectations. The GVRD governance bylaw provides the Fire Chief with certain authorities and responsibilities. The trustees are the governors of that bylaw. They have expectations to meet the provincial standards.

The department membership relies on the Chief to ensure the training and the tools are there to enable them to do their jobs. As Chief you try to look forward and see where your team is going, then to find the resources to enhance the direction.

Finally, the constituents have expectations ranging from “Save my baby, no matter what the cost,” to “I’ve just moved here from Vancouver, when I hit 911, I expect you to be here in 3.5 minutes”. Typically they support us, although they don’t know much about the department’s structure and operations. All they know is that when they need us we are there.

In general, the public has very little understanding of what it took for that knowledge to be there at that time. They don’t know what they are paying, and some think it is too much. They don’t realize that no one in this office gets paid.

AAN: Since there is no pay, what do you think motivates the members?



Chief Scott: It is purely individual. I think there are as many motivations as there are members. If you were to list the reasons, you may find some hard to define common threads like camaraderie. I appreciate that.

One time I did a sounding of the members. I wanted to determine if remuneration was a strong motivation, it was not. The motivation is largely camaraderie and a huge sense of giving back. The firefighters are good people with strong values and integrity. The sounding and a subsequent third party survey we did confirmed that we were on the right track.

Carrying this a bit further, whether they are wearing the uniform of a firefighter, the Anmore Alternative, or Canada Day committees, they're exactly the same people giving back to the community. They are basically the same people who love their community and want to serve it.