

BC RETIRED FIREFIGHTERS



WELLNESS SOCIETY

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING MINUTES

March 19, 2025

No.15 Firehall, 3003 East 22nd Ave, Vancouver, BC

1030 Hrs

Call to Order 10:40 am

Quorum Achieved

- **15 members in attendance, 1 via zoom**

Moment of Silence for the Fallen

Approve Financial Statement & Budget

- Budget circulated to members. M/S to accept as presented - Carried

Election of Table Officers (4)

- Brief explanation regarding the panel members as temporary until official voting can take place election.
- Call for Nominations for Chairman: None from the Floor, Nominated Don Symington, Don Symington elected by acclamation
- Call for Nominations for Vice Chairman(2) None from the Floor.
- Nominations from the table from the table. Rick Kearney and John Hudson
- Rick Kearney(Welfare) and John Hudson (Operations) elected by acclamation
- Call for Nominations for Secretary/Treasurer from the floor None offered

- From the table, Mike Joy nominated.
- Mike Joy elected by acclamation

Election of Trustees (3)

- Nominated were – Gord Ditchburn, Dave Kent (Bby) Rod Salas, Colin Thompson and Dave Clark (declined the nomination)
- Ballots handed out voting- ballots collected votes counted
- Elected were Dave Kent (Sr.) Gord Ditchburn, and Rod Salas
- Motion to accepted results approved seconded motion passed
- Motion to destroy ballots approved and seconded, motion passed

Reports of Officers

VP Hudson gave a brief description of how the Wellness Group was formed. The Group came about from the suicide of Brother Dennis Wilson's

This tragic event took place on December 25/22. We struggled to get his claim accepted mostly due to incomplete information from Dennis's medical records.

Vice Chair Hudson spoke on the importance of making claims and getting your information on file with your doctor. Work Safe works with an attitude that if its not recorded and on file it did not take place. This is important get your ailments of file even if they are not on the presumptive list. The long run is the more claims not on the presumptive list the more information is available for the Local Unions and BCPFFA to take the claims to the BC Legislature and get more diseases placed on the presumptive list.

Vice Chair, Kearney, spoke to Retired Firefighters Wellness Network commitment and purpose. RFWN is not trying to take on Work Safe cases , however if assistance is required, we can help in that way.

While we are not professional counsellors, we are just Firefighters reaching out to other Firefighters who are in need of assistance and someone who will listen to them, Hopefully directing them to the help they so desperately need.

Chairman Symington, provided a brief history concerning his attempts to host our retirees on Vancouver Island for lunches. On January 2023, and a brief memorial for Dennis was held.

During this event, a group of individuals convened in an attempt to make sense of Dennis's suicide talked about strategies to assist retirees in addressing issues such as isolation, depression, and PTSD in retirement.

As a result of Dennis's Work Safe Claim being rejected, a small group decided to take up the appeal process knowing full well that it was going to take some time and would likely fail, at least that was the opinion of the experts. Not knowing any better, we went ahead and eventually won the appeal just over two years later.

Chairman Symington spoke on how essential it was for anyone that is going to be involved in the Group to provide confidentiality to those that are seeking help.

He spoke to the K.I.T. list (Keep in Touch), this is a list of our retirees that reached out for help. Mental health needs acknowledgment and is nothing to be ashamed about. It remains a priority to host social events through out the year in the major regions of the Province to promote a greater social network for the retired members of Locals 18 & 323.

Question from floor, how are we going to do this, what the process would be.

Chair, we are not sure when these events or where they take place, Much will be dependent on costs and interest as we move forward, Table Officers will likely to meet to plan such events.

New Business:

Rod Salas: spoke about his journey regarding PDST – it is work related but certainly also pertains to your over all life

Booked off work. He struggled with acceptance from work and eventually had challenge them with a lawyer. He was eventually won his claim.

Consequently, he moved to Kelowna on his retirement. Rod found a group in Kelowna that works First Responders principally with the RCMP.

The Company is Diversified Rehabilitation Group.

Rod was the first non RCMP member to attend the Diversified course. Because of this attendance, he feels much better adjust and has learned identify the symptoms that

causes his problems. The course in question is 12 weeks long and is only for PTSD does not rehab regarding drugs and alcohol

As a result of Rod going to the course, he has taken on the task to help other retirees. As we only get \$500 dollars a year through medical coverage most help out in the world costs considerably more.

Rod had heard of the Wellness Group being formed and reached out to Mike Joy. With contact made Rod offered us (the original group) a chance to attend a seminar offered by Diversified. Three of our members attend found the seminar very good and they made good connections with others.

We then decided to investigate further into the course for peer mentorship. Rod set about developing a course for our Society.

Course costs could run \$2000 to \$4000 this will depend on a guest speaker cost.

Manuals have been set up cost \$5,000. There is no cost to members attending the 2 day program Lunch and coffee provided. The Vancouver course will be held at Honour House in New Westminster

Rick K: then spoke about attending this seminar and says it was beneficial to attend. FF's talking to FF's this is really important as we understand the life of fire fighting.

Reminding that we are not professionals but want to help.

Don S: spoke regarding Gail Dennis's wife and while she still struggles, she would like to start a group that could help widows that have their loved ones fall to PTSD.

Good & Welfare

Dave Mitchell stood up to thank everyone for setting this group.

Aaron Feldman talked about his adventure with prostate cancer. Claim accepted all costs covered. He made the choice to have his prostate removed and now continues to get his PSA checked every 3 months. He discovered his cancer by getting regular PSA test done as the number increased on his PSA level he had a good idea as to what was happening regarding his cancer.

On a continuation of issues that we as FF's suffer from John Riemer's case of Dementia was brought up.

Marty Tammen wondered if John's wife should put in a claim.

John Hudson responded certainly, again referring to making claims that were not on the presumptive list.

While it is not likely to be accepted it gets a claim registered that the BCPFFA can refer to.

Dave Mitchell spoke about our Local 18's first cases that we won in the mid 80's if the claims had not been made we still would have been trying to get a presumptive list created. File your claims

Blair Franklin wondered if there had been any studies on dementia that made reference to FF's nobody seemed to know.

Dave M, probably not need to know.

Rick spoke again the need to make claims

Main point was also made to keep a journal any time you speak to your Dr. from the first moment of discovery to any time you speak to anyone WorkSafe, lawyer, clinician

Write down date and time what was spoken of. Your disabilities, what can't you do, how often, when time of day.

Albert Drinovz: Tony Neratini sends is regret and wishes he could have attended

Tom Sullivan spoke about how the adjusters at Work Safe have a complete lack of knowledge as to what we do as FF's. He found astounding.

Once Tom gave a brief description on what FF's go through, his adjudicator called Tom to find out more, he spent the next 45 minutes explaining what we did and just how exposed we are to cancerous and other contaminants. Including our so-called protective clothing

We need to educate everyone from your own Doctor to Work Safe and in between so all have a better understanding as to what we do.

Adjournment 11:15

- Motion to adjourn - Carried

Next Meeting: TBA