

Sunshine Valley Volunteer Fire Department Society  
2024 AGM - President's Report

This past year has been both fulfilling and challenging for the SVVFD.

We can be proud of the fact that our fire department is well trained and equipped to handle fire suppression, medical emergencies, accidents, search and rescue operations, and a variety of other situations that present on a regular basis.

All of our staff ... firefighters, board directors and support persons, are dedicated to ensuring the SVVFD is as effective as possible, and I thank each and every person involved.

The demands placed upon a volunteer fire department are ever increasing. The call load, and complexity of calls is increasing. The requirements for various firefighting qualifications, which is imposed by governing agencies, continues to be more involved, time consuming and costly.

Recruiting volunteers for a volunteer fire department in a small community is always a challenge. While the experience can be incredibly fulfilling, firefighting requires a commitment to service to others, time and energy that can be very taxing, and should not be taken lightly.

Trying to provide such an essential service to our community is costly, in several measures. Our budget has soared from approx. \$50,000 per year not that long ago, to the hundreds of thousands now.

Finding ways to increase revenue continues to be a struggle. Grants are never assured, and just the task of finding a grant that we might be eligible to apply for is very time consuming, followed by the demands of the application itself. Being unsuccessful in a grant application is disappointing and demoralizing, but the process goes on.

Fundraisers also take a great deal of organization and preparation, with many volunteers needed for the event to be a success. Our board, firefighters and community volunteers invest many hours in our fundraisers and I thank them for their dedication.

Fire dues are crucial to the SVVFD being able to fulfill our mandate. Without government assistance it will remain a necessity for our dues to increase annually, at a reasonable rate, in order for our fire department to maintain it's ability to respond as necessary.

I want to thank the neighbourhood councils and SVDL for coordinating and arranging for members paying of fire dues. This has increased our revenue and made collection of dues much easier, however many lot owners in Sunshine Valley do not pay their fire dues, which puts a strain on those that do pay, as well as putting our firefighters in situations where fire suppression at a lot that is not a dues paying member becomes a liability issue.

There has been great change in the leadership of the SVVFD in the past few months. Chris Terry stepped down from the Chief's position after several years of leadership. There was incredible growth and improvement in many areas during his time as Chief. Equipment, training, and partnerships and agreements with other agencies all flourished. On behalf of the SVVFD board, firefighters and the SV community, I thank Chris Terry for his service and commitment.

There were, admittedly, some issues with the process of appointing a new fire Chief. Regardless, I would like to thank Aaron Dodd for accepting the position for the brief time he was in office, and for being gracious in what resulted in him stepping down from that position. There are now guidelines in effect for the process of appointing a new fire Chief, and we are pleased that Aaron Harris has accepted the position of Chief of the SVVFD. He has been an integral, valuable member of the SVVFD for many years, and the community thanks him for taking on this challenge and responsibility.

Personally, I have been involved in the SVVFD for approx. 17 years. I was a firefighter for 10 years (much to the chagrin of the police officers I formerly worked with), then transitioned to the board, for which I have served as President for the past 5 years.

It has been a privilege to serve the community in this way, and will let my name stand for re-election to a board position so that I may assist in a transitional phase leading towards leaving the board at some point to focus on other endeavors that have arisen in my life.

I also want to thank each of the board members I have worked with this past year. I appreciate each of you. The work has often been challenging, but also satisfying, and I know that you will continue to make things better. Thanks for your commitment.

With respect,  
Garry Vath