



MUNICIPALITY OF THE COUNTY OF PICTOU  
FIRE DEPARTMENT AREA RATE POLICY

**1. Purpose**

- a. To provide uniform guidelines for the approval of area rates levied for fire protection services within the Municipality.
- b. To provide an accountability framework for the expenditure of tax dollars raised through an area rate.

**2. Legal**

- a. In accordance with Part 4 Section 75 of the *Municipal Government Act* Area Rates and Uniform Charges.
- b. In accordance with Part 10 Section 296 of the *Municipal Government Act* policies relating to fire departments.

**3. Definitions**

- a. Chief Administrative Officer means the Chief Administrative Officer of the Municipality.
- b. Commercial property has the same meaning as in the *Assessment Act*;
- c. Council means the council of the Municipality;
- d. Emergency services means services related to the provision of emergency services, including fire services, emergency medical services, search and rescue, water rescue and assistance and protection for people and property in the event of disasters including, but not limited to floods, hurricanes, motor vehicle accidents and chemical spills;
- e. Fire services means services related to the prevention and suppression of fires;
- f. Fiscal year means the period from April 1<sup>st</sup> in one year to March 31<sup>st</sup> in the following year, including both dates;
- f. Fire department means an incorporated body that provides fire services and that may, at its option, provide one or more other emergency services, and

includes a fire or emergency services department of a municipality, village, fire protection district or other body corporate;

- h. Residential property has the same meaning as in the *Assessment Act*;
- i. Resource property has the same meaning as in the *Assessment Act*.

#### **4. Area Rates**

- a. Each fire department shall recommend to Council an annual area rate to be levied on properties for which it provides fire services and or emergency services.
- b. The fire department may establish different rates for residential/resource and commercial properties.
- c. All area rates approved by the Council during the fiscal year 2017/18 shall remain in effect until changed by resolution of Council.
- d. A fire department wishing to adjust its area rate for the next fiscal year shall notify the Chief Administrative Officer or their member of Council of its intention to adjust the rate by February 28<sup>th</sup> of the preceding fiscal year.
- e. The fire department applying to the Municipality for an adjustment to the area rate shall:
  - i. Hold a public meeting to discuss the purpose for which the change in area rate is required and to provide information to the residents of the need for the adjustment.
  - ii. The public meeting may be a district ratepayers meeting if the fire department is contained within one electoral district of the Municipality.
  - iii. The fire department shall provide the district with at least 14 days advance notice of the meeting.
  - iv. Notice is deemed to have been provided if the department:
    - 1. advertises in the local media;
    - 2. posts posters in a minimum of three public places within the district or;
    - 3. by direct mail to the district.

- v. All ratepayers present at the meeting shall be entitled to cast a vote expressing their approval or disapproval for the change in the area rate.
- vi. Ballots may be cast by way of secret ballot or an open vote as determined by the majority at the meeting.

## **5. Accountability & Reporting**

- a. All departments shall be required to submit annual financial information to the Municipality detailing all revenue and expenditures.
  - i. The Municipality may provide a standardized form to be completed by the fire department.
- b. The fire department shall file the report within 60 days of the end of their operational year.
- c. The Municipality may, at its expense, request an independent audit of a fire department.
- d. The fire departments shall make their records available for inspection upon written request of the Municipality.
- e. Failure for a fire department to comply with the provisions of the policy may result in funding being withheld by the Municipality.

## **6. Repeal**

All former policies and/or practices with respect to fire department area rates are hereby repealed.