

STAFF REPORT: The Blue Mountains Fire Department

REPORT TO: Committee of the Whole
MEETING DATE: June 6, 2016
REPORT NO.: FAF.16.56
SUBJECT: False Alarm Billing – Grey Condominium Corporation No. 24
PREPARED BY: Rob Collins, Fire Chief

A. Recommendations

THAT Council receive Staff Report FAF.16.56 “False Alarm Billing – Grey Condominium Corporation No. 24”;

AND THAT Council deny the request of Grey Condominium Corporation No. 24 to void or cancel Invoices #12084 and #12156, totalling \$2300;

AND THAT Council deny the request of Grey Condominium Corporation No. 24 to amend By-Law 2014-3 as it relates to assessing fines.

B. Background

Council received a letter from Grey Condominium Corporation No. 24 on April 22, 2016. The letter was a request to have invoices regarding false fire alarms cancelled.

The events leading to the multiple false alarm invoices occurred in March of this year, and involved a malfunction in the fire alarm system at the above-mentioned property. As a result of these malfunctions, the fire department was dispatched several times. These incidents resulted in billing under our By-Law 2014-3. These charges are intended to deter property owners from operating fire alarm systems which generate false signals. False alarms are a significant expense to a composite department such as ours. More importantly, false alarms have a significant impact to the life safety of the occupants of these buildings, as well as to responding firefighters. Repeated false alarms have a “cry wolf” effect on building occupants, and each false alarm increases the chance of an occupant ignoring a legitimate alarm. A similar effect is seen in first responders, as it becomes easy to assume that the next alarm is false.

The author of this letter, Nancy Kane of Kane Property Management, refers to a request to implement a Fire Watch which was denied by the fire department. This request was in fact denied, but only because the proposed Fire Watch procedure was not compliant with requirements for such measures. Fire Watch procedures are quite specific, as specified in the property’s approved Fire Safety Plan. The plan proposed at the time of these incidents fell short of meeting all of the requirements. An acceptable fire watch procedure involves personnel dedicated to the task, who must be on site throughout the incident. The proposal to have Blue Mountain Resort security staff make the property part of their patrol falls short of the requirements, and was not accepted as an alternative to a working alarm.

Another concern expressed in the letter is the perceived inequality of assigning false alarm billing to individual unit owners. The building in question has a single fire alarm system which protects the entire property. We track billing to the address, not to individual units. Tracking false alarm causes to specific units is easy in some cases, but could be contentious in others. In this particular case the unit owners would likely argue that the fault was with the central system, not with their unit. We have no desire to become involved in such disputes. The alarm system is the responsibility of the Corporation, and they should deal with assigning any charges to their individual unit owners. The increasing charges attached to the By-law are intended to act as deterrent to repeated false alarms and to encourage property owners to comply with the conditions set out in their approved Fire Safety Plans. In this case, the Corporation's failure to comply with its own FSP resulted in several unnecessary fire department responses to the property, and so the false alarm billings are justified.

C. The Blue Mountains' Strategic Plan

This project addresses the Town's Strategic Plan Goal #2: Engage Our Communities and Partners

D. Environmental Impacts

None

E. Financial Impact

The disputed invoices total \$2300

F. In Consultation With

N/A

G. Attached

1. Grey Condominium Corporation No. 24 correspondence dated April 22, 2016

Respectfully submitted,

Rob Collins
Fire Chief



Grey Condominium Corporation No. 24

HAND DELIVERED

April 22, 2016

City Council Members, Town of Blue Mountains

Re: Grey Condominium Corporation No. 24 – Cachet Crossing (G.C.C. 24)
104 Ann Heggeveit Drive, Blue Mountains

Dear Council Members,

I am writing this letter as a formal request on two issues which follow.

1. Invoices to G.C.C. 24 are voided/canceled. (See attached statement)
2. By Law #2014-3 is amended to mention of multi resident complexes such condominiums and assessing fines to individual owners.

March 2015 G.C.C. 24 was experiencing intermittent fault issues with the fire alarm panel at panel B causing the building to go into full fire alarm which dispatched the fire department on a couple occasions. Georgian Bay Fire & Safety (GBFS) was called immediately by my office to investigate the situations. Time was spent trouble shooting by GBFS; however, the panel indicated a no fault and it appeared to have cleared itself. A few hours passed and the system went into full alarm again with the fire panel indicated trouble in unit 116. After further investigation by Georgian Bay Fire & Safety, fault was indicated by the pull station in unit 116 which was in turn replaced. We believed the situation to be rectified; however, once again the building went into full alarm. Georgian Bay Fire & Safety was called back to site and found more intermittent problems with more man hours spent investigating. After some time a wiring issue was found outside unit 113. At that time I instructed Georgian Bay Fire & Safety, with the assistance of a second fire safety company Huronia Fire to investigate further. Additional hours of investigating, meetings and discussions were held which led us to determine to look into the *underground wiring from the fire panel to the building. Understand please, this wiring is surrounded by underground conduit which is not a regular maintenance issue. After digging the length from the panel location to the building we found the existing ground wire broken. New wiring, conduit and trenching were soon carried out to the entry point located at unit 113.*

Due to the facts above G.C.C. 24 could not determine the intermittent problems, the fire department was asked by me to place G.C.C. 24 on "Fire Watch" until the issue could be resolved to prevent the return of the fire trucks. That request was denied. What was related back to me by Blue Mountain Security is the following context:

"We will return and keep returning and billing appropriately until the situation is rectified/fix/repared."

The term "fire watch" would instruct Blue Mountain Security to conduct foot patrol around the units and property site on scheduled times until which time the fire alarms could be reactivated. All of a cost associated back to G.C.C. 24. With the situation at that time; I believe it was unreasonable to be denied



Grey Condominium Corporation No. 24

fire watch as my office kept the fire department updated with emails and calls on the corrective measures being carried out by G.C.C. 24. The Fire Department was acting upon the By Law, No 2014-3 which also in opinion does not clearly define a non emergency description, in opinion the bylaw should be amended for clarity on unit definition for multi unit dwellings; for example;
G.C.C. 24 has 42 residential units. Unit 101 has accidentally or in full intention released the fire pull station in his unit. As outlined in the existing Bylaw the 2nd occurrence fine is \$300.00 in a twelve month period. An invoice of \$300.00 is generated. The owner is responsible and he is billed for the call. Five months later the pull station is activated in unit 205 and the owner is found at fault, he is also charged the \$300.00. The 4th occurrence occurs and unit 209 is charged \$1000.00. Why is the 4th occurrence in a separate unit, who is not associated to units, either owners in units 101 and 205 penalized with a fine of \$1000.00? I am in agreement an owner or occupant of the unit should be held responsible if an alarm is activated in his unit and is so deemed a false alarm, however only at \$300.00 per visit across the board.

G.C.C. 24 was not negligent or created a false alarm to generate \$2300.00! Actions displaying due diligence was carried out to the best of our ability to identify and rectify the issues. G.C.C. 24 displayed full co-operation and attentively reacted to the situation as outlined above.

G.C.C. 24 and I are very familiar with by-laws, as bylaws are also enacted in condominiums. When Board of Directors proposes a bylaw they are required to have the bylaws delivered in fair and reasonable content. We would expect the same consideration to be enacted upon when Bylaws are passed by Town Council. Reviewing the said By Law, I also draw your attention to the \$50.00 per hour rate charge for a prevention officer / inspector to attend groups. Fire safety awareness programs should not come with a price tag.

I look forward to your response.

Thank you.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nancy E. Kane'.

Nancy E. Kane, R.C.M. N.A.C.M.

Kane Property Management Inc.

Acting agent for Grey Condominium Corporation No. 24

Attachments



Town of The Blue Mountains

32 Mill Street, P.O. Box 310, Thornbury, ON N0H 2P0

Tel: (519) 599-3131 Fax: (519) 599-2474

Toll Free: 1-888-BLU-MTNS (1-888-258-6867)

info@thebluemountains.ca www.thebluemountains.ca

STATEMENT

**CACHET CROSSING
KANE PROPERTY MANAGEMENT INC.
P.O. BOX 506
THORNBURY ONTARIO N0H 2P0**

Date:	0000-00-00
Account:	CACHE0002

Finance Charge APR: 15.00%

Finance Charge: 1.25% Charged Monthly

Document No.	Date	Code	Description	Amount	Balance
INV00012084	2015-04-23	SLS	INV00012084	\$1,600.00	\$1,600.00
INV00012156	2015-05-26	SLS	INV00012156	\$1,000.00	\$2,600.00
CRREC00000439146-001	2015-07-14	PMT	Applied: INV00012156	-\$300.00	\$2,300.00
				Amount Due:	\$2,300.00

	<u>Current</u>	<u>0-30 Days</u>	<u>31 - 60 Days</u>	<u>61 and Over</u>
Total	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$2,300.00
Interest	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00

Codes: SLS = Sales / Invoices FIN = Finance Charges CR = Credit Notes
 SCH = Scheduled Payments SVC = Service / Repairs RTN = Returns
 DR = Debit Notes WRN = Warranties PMT = Payments

This document can be made available in other accessible formats as soon as practicable and upon request.