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40 pages

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NEWS photo Mike Wakefield

A very shiny nose

SANTA and Mrs. Claus wave goodbye as the Reindeer Bus gets ready to leave the North Vancouver transit depot on its annual collection of toys. This year marked the 25th participation by Coast Mountain Bus Company and TransLink in the Toys for Tots campaign, collecting unwrapped toys for the Lower Mainland Christmas Bureau from employees.

DNV utility charges jump 10% in 2012

HOMEOWNERS in the District of North Vancouver will see an almost 10 per cent rise in their overall utility charges next year, rising from \$1,177 to \$1,294.

An even steeper hike — 12.9 per cent — is expected for 2013, before the rate increases level off into the twos and threes. By 2016, district utility rates are projected to rise 34.1 per cent from today's costs.

District council approved the 2012 rates Monday.

Solid waste and recycling charges for a single family home will tick up by \$13 to \$283. Although Metro Vancouver tipping fees will almost double over the next five years, district staff are hopeful that increased diversion through recycling and composting can offset this. The district currently diverts 61 per cent of its waste away from landfills. Metro's target is 70 per cent.

Water charges will rise by 8.1 per cent, or \$41 for a single-family home. As with many Lower Mainland communities, the district's per capita water usage has been falling, but this actually makes for a higher unit cost as Metro has to cover its fixed costs over a smaller number of cubic metres.

The largest rate increase is for sewerage, which will tack on an additional 15.8 per cent or \$63 to reach \$461 in 2012. This covers both growing Metro Vancouver charges and increased district spending on new connections and proactive storm sewer cleaning. This number does not address the "significant" funding needed to construct the planned Lions Gate Wastewater Treatment Plant, according to utility manager Lorn Carter.

— Benjamin Alldritt

WV's lifeboat to move to new home

Benjamin Alldritt

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WEST Vancouver's Coast Guard Auxiliary unit will be moving to a new home in Horseshoe Bay early next year after district council approved a licence Monday for the volunteer rescue force to use the pier and an empty warehouse.

Station leader Dugal Purdie said the move is prompted by a review of the unit's operations and the need for a larger berth for a bigger, more powerful rescue boat that is expected to arrive in mid-January.

Coast Guard Auxiliary unit welcomes move to Horseshoe Bay

"We can get our crews to Horseshoe Bay, because it's right on the highway, a lot faster than we can get to Fisherman's Cove," Purdie said, "especially in the summer when all the tourists are strolling along Marine Drive. In our line of business, minutes count. The temperatures are so cold that if people are in the water and we can't get to them for five more minutes, their lives could be in peril."

In return for use of district facilities, the auxiliaries will keep an

eye on the pier and alert district bylaw officers to infractions like overnight mooring or the use of overweight vehicles.

Purdie said the unit is also working to raise \$20,000 to re-roof and renovate the warehouse, and will also need to find \$30,000 to equip the new boat. West Vancouver's current vessel, complete with gear, will be passed to another auxiliary unit once Purdie and his 34 volunteer colleagues are fully trained on the new one.

"Normally we get called out in the worst weather," he said, "so the standards we train to are some of the highest in the country for marine training. We do a lot of time training on the vessel. When we are out training, we are on call because we can respond

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Fundraising dogs volunteers

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instantly. The boat is out a lot when people are out, evenings and weekends, especially in the summer. In addition to that we are on-call 24-7. We have a roster of people who are available to get to the boat within 15 minutes of a call, any time day or night. So we always have a crew standing by."

The Joint Rescue Co-ordination Centre in Victoria will only dispatch Coast Guard Auxiliary units if lives are in danger or in the event of a serious environmental hazard. Nevertheless, the West Vancouver boat was called out 38 times in 2010, and 32 times so far in 2011. BCAA-style towing is left to commercial operators.

The new rescue vessel, a 36-foot, diesel-powered jet boat, is capable of a blistering 40 knots. It's also "roll-over capable."

"So if it gets in a situation where it's turned upside down in rough weather, it will right itself," Purdie said. "Not something you ever want to do. You have to be strapped into your seat or you'd be in a real mess."

The Falkins Class design, developed specifically for Pacific auxiliary units, is named after former Coast Guard Auxiliary president and West Vancouver resident Bruce Falkins. Its \$535,000 price tag was covered in part by \$100,000 from B.C. Gaming, but largely by private donations. Fundraising is an ongoing challenge for lifeboat teams, said Purdie. While the federal government pays fuel costs for rescue missions, that's a fraction of the money required to maintain



photo submitted

VOLUNTEERS Mike Cupit, Christine Corbett and Scotty Grubb train in the waters of Howe Sound. The North Shore Lifeboat Society, Coast Guard Auxiliary Pacific Unit One, will have a new base in Horseshoe Bay and a powerful new boat in January.

training standards. The unit is even considering rebranding to help raise that \$50,000 in capital costs.

"One of the downsides of our name is that most people think the Canadian government pays for our operations, and they don't. It makes fundraising really challenging. Our key at the moment is getting people to recognize we're out there. We are a charity, we need donations to function and I'm faced with two unfunded issues to deal with."

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