



## Parksville Fire Department Fire Hall Renovations

### *Frequently Asked Questions*

The City of Parksville operates a volunteer fire department. The Parksville Fire Hall is a 35 year old building that houses 40 career and volunteer firefighters as well as the department's equipment and administration, education, inspection and fire training facilities. Built in 1974 and located at 160 Jensen Avenue West, the fire hall serves the City of Parksville and through a fire service agreement with the Regional District of Nanaimo, also provides protection to surrounding RDN areas.

#### ***When was the Parksville Fire Hall built?***

The fire hall is a 35 year old building that houses 40 career and volunteer firefighters as well as the department's equipment and administration, education, inspection and fire training facilities. Built in 1974 and located at 160 Jensen Avenue West, the fire hall serves the City of Parksville and through a fire service agreement with the Regional District of Nanaimo, also provides protection to surrounding RDN areas.

#### ***Is 160 E Jensen the right location for the Fire Department?***

The fire hall serves the City of Parksville and through a fire service agreement with the Regional District of Nanaimo, also provides protection to surrounding RDN areas. A location study completed in 1999 determined that the present location is in fact the most appropriate location for the City's fire hall.

#### ***What is the background of the project?***

Several studies confirmed the need for an expanded facility. The first of these was a Station Location Study completed in 1999 by Firecon. This study supported an expanded facility if it was not financially feasible to move to a two-station model. The City of Parksville at that time felt that a single station model would be the preferred choice. A single station model is still the preferred method of delivering fire services to the community from both a financial and operational point of view.

In 2001, the fire department, in conjunction with members of the public, completed the first strategic plan for the department. This plan also identified the need to expand the current facility in order to meet the needs of the community. A further update in 2004 re-confirmed the need to expand the current facility.

In 2004, the City was able to purchase 211 Alberni Highway. This was a key parcel for the expansion of the fire hall. Talks had been ongoing with the owners of the property since the mid 1980's. After the purchase, the fire department was able to develop preliminary plans for an addition. Until then, some plans were developed that did not include the property at 211 Alberni Highway, but a functional plan that would suit the needs of the department and community could not be developed.

Consideration was also given to developing a joint facility with the BC Ambulance Service. A feasibility study was completed; however, with the timing of the project it was not possible to put it together. There were also discussions regarding the construction of a "quad-service" building including police, fire, ambulance, and court house. Again, trying to get all levels of government together to complete the project was not possible.

In 2005, a plan was developed and budgeted in preparation of the 2006 budget deliberations. During these deliberations, Council requested an independent study to confirm the reports completed on the fire hall expansion. This report was completed in October 2008 and presented to Council. The findings of that report supported the recommendations that had previously been brought forward. Plans were reviewed while this process was ongoing and some modifications were made to plan for the future needs of the department over the long-term.

Several construction options were reviewed; these included a two station model, construction of an entirely new facility, including other emergency services into the plan. For various reasons, these other options were not fiscally viable.

### ***Why is an upgraded fire facility needed?***

The renovated fire hall is of major importance to the future growth of the City and is required to meet the needs of the community, to improve emergency response time, upgrade the fire hall to current standards, consolidation of all fire department resources into a central facility, and provide an improved facility for volunteer firefighters.

- The number of emergency calls has increased significantly from 1974 when the existing fire hall was built and it is expected that demand will continue.
- It is extremely important that all equipment be consolidated into one single location to facilitate improved response times to emergencies.
- To meet capacity as defined by the fire underwriter, a new fire engine is required however, there is no space in the existing fire hall to house this much needed new equipment.
- There have been no upgrades to the fire hall since it was built in 1974. The current facility is outdated and is in need of upgrades to meet current standards for a facility of this nature. The fire hall will need to serve as the base for emergency operations in the event of a large-scale disaster.
- The current facility does not provide dedicated training or classroom space and there are no shower/locker facilities for members to keep a change of clothes and to decontaminate after a call before they return home to their families.
- The proposed expansion is necessary to retain existing volunteer firefighters now and in the future.

### ***What will the proposed renovations provide?***

The proposed renovations will include:

- **Equipment storage** - consolidated storage of firefighting equipment in one facility will reduce response times. Storage will be provided for turnout gear, hose storage and spare equipment and shop space needed for maintenance and repair of equipment.
- **Administration area** - will receive minimal improvements to accommodate office space for career staff and volunteer firefighters and also provide for meeting space on the ground floor.
- **Health and safety concerns** - improvements to shower facilities for member clean up and decontamination will be adequate to meet current needs.
- **Training area** - will be improved for members and provide for proper storage of essential training materials.
- **Future considerations** - accommodation of future needs of the department for such things as apparatus and equipment storage, crew accommodation and training needs have been considered in planning for the renovations.



### ***How much will it cost and how will it be paid for?***

The need for an upgraded fire hall was identified as early as 1999. A referendum held in November 2008 to approve borrowing for the project was defeated. During the past year, the City has attempted to obtain funding grants to support the upgrade.

Unfortunately, those applications were not approved. This coupled with the community's direction for no borrowing has resulted in a much smaller project limited to a maximum amount of \$3 million.

The cost to upgrade the existing fire hall was approved by Council as part of the 2009-2013 revised budget bylaw which will receive final approval at the December 21, 2009, and January 18, 2010, Council meetings.

### ***What are other communities doing?***

Over the past few years, our neighbouring communities have made significant investments to improve their fire department facilities with several fire halls recently constructed. When the Parksville Fire Hall expansion project is compared to these facilities, the cost per square foot was found to be in line with similar facilities. In some cases, the fire halls used for comparison were satellite halls that were essentially the size of our current facility which we know must be expanded.

### ***What are the next steps?***

Over the next two months, drawings will be finalized, a firm budget developed and a tender issued for the project which will utilize local trades wherever possible.

### ***Where do I go for more information?***

The City recognizes that upgrading Parksville's fire facilities is a major undertaking and many residents have raised questions about the project. As soon as final drawings are available, the Parksville Fire Department will host an open house to provide the public with the opportunity to view the proposed renovations.

As soon as final drawings are available, the Parksville Fire Department will host an open house to provide the public with the opportunity to view the plans.

The Parksville Fire Department encourages residents to stop by the fire hall at any time to tour the fire hall and ask questions about the history of the project or about the proposed renovations. Hours are 8 am to 4 pm; Monday to Friday.

### ***Contact information:***

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