

Parksville Volunteer Fire Department Fire Hall Expansion Project

PARKSVILLE, BC: The Parksville Fire Hall expansion project will be considered by the City of Parksville Council during budget deliberations scheduled for November 25, November 30 and December 7 (if required).

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.

The community has outgrown the existing fire hall and functional improvements are needed to the fire station and fire training facilities. The need for an upgraded fire hall was identified as early as 1999 and the referendum held in 2008 did not negate the need for an upgraded fire hall for the area. In fact, the situation has not improved and one year later, calls for emergency service continue to increase and as development projects are completed and the potential for new projects come on stream, the demand for service continues to grow. The basic needs of the fire department that were to be addressed by the proposed 2008 expansion have not changed and include:

Equipment storage - all equipment should be stored in one facility to reduce response times; new storage is required for turnout gear, hose storage and spare equipment and shop space is needed for maintenance and repair of equipment.

Administration area - an improved administration area is needed to accommodate adequate office space for career staff and volunteer firefighters and also provide for meeting space on the ground floor.

Health and safety concerns - adequate shower facilities for members to clean up and remove any potential contamination before leaving the fire hall and returning home is now crucial.

Training area - dedicated training area for members and proper storage of essential training materials is required.

Future considerations - accommodation of future needs of the department for such things as apparatus and equipment storage, crew accommodation and training needs must be considered in the expansion.

Earlier this year, the City submitted an application for a \$2.8 million grant under the federal government's Community Adjustment Fund, the only federal/provincial grant program that included fire halls as an eligible project. Unfortunately, the City was recently advised that the application was unsuccessful.

Continuing with the existing hall could potentially hurt the department's fire rating. The rating assigned by Fire Underwriters is determined by such factors as equipment, capacity, and response times. A negative rating will affect the insurance rates paid by residential and commercial.

The City recognizes that upgrading Parksville's fire facilities to meet the current and future needs of our community is a major undertaking and many residents have raised questions about the project. 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.

For further information:

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