

Parksville Council Approves Renovations to Fire Hall

PARKSVILLE, BC: It's official, the residents of the City of Parksville will be getting an updated fire hall in 2010. 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.

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 budgeted amount of \$3 million.

Mayor Ed Mayne said, "It is unfortunate that we were unable to obtain a grant for renovations, however, we are pleased that Parksville residents will be getting an updated fire hall without borrowing and without an increase in taxes as a result of the cost of the proposed renovations."

The community has outgrown the existing fire hall and the proposed upgrades will allow the Parksville Fire Department to continue to serve the community. Consolidation of equipment into one location will provide improved response times and will also make possible the purchase of a new fire truck originally planned for 2008. The renovations to the fire hall will be on a much smaller scale than the project proposed and presented to the public for the 2008 referendum.

"The Parksville Fire Department looks forward to these long-awaited improvements and to have the resources to continue to offer the best possible service to meet the demands of the community," said Chief Doug Banks. "It is important to point out that the improvements are significantly less than previous plans brought forward. The proposed renovations are not ideal, however; these basic minimal operational improvements will maintain the department's fire rating and meet the minimum requirements of the department for the next 10 to 15 years."

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. 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 plans.

The 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.

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.

For further information:

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