

NOTICE OF OPEN HOUSE

NEW NORTHSIDE VFD FIRE HALL PROPOSAL

WEDNESDAY, MAY 19th - 5 - 8 PM

CRAIG ROAD FIRE HALL

Northside VFD needs a new fire hall. The Craig Road hall was built in 1970 on a shoestring budget. The building has served the Department for many years but has pretty much reached the end of its useful life. Barebones from the beginning, the structure now falls far short of current and future fire department needs and standards.

The purpose of this flyer is to provide some information on a new hall proposal and to invite taxpayers and residents in the Northside Fire Protection area to attend the May 19th Open House to find out more.

What's wrong with the existing fire hall?

The building is in an overall state of decline: there are rodents in the roof space and windows don't open; there is no on-site water supply, no proper sewage or waste water disposal system; plumbing and electrical systems are substandard; heating is inadequate - wood heat means the building is cold when firefighters come to practice or clean-up after a call; and volunteers must manage the wood supply. In short it does not meet most BC Building Code standards or Work-Safe BC (WCB) requirements for ventilation and indeed presents a health and safety risks to volunteers.

The limited space constrains training opportunities, impedes maintenance of vehicles and equipment and cannot accommodate the increasing administration and record-keeping required of all fire departments. There is no room for inside storage of the vehicles or for Department social activities which contribute greatly to building a cohesive and effective fire fighting / 1st responder team.

The sub-standard hall conditions affect department morale and limit the ability to recruit and retain members and to provide good-quality fire protection and 1st responder services. Northside volunteers provide invaluable services to the community responding to fire and 1st responder calls. These calls come at any time of the day or night and may require the volunteers to deal with serious medical emergencies and vehicle accidents as well as structure and brush fires. Fire fighters are also expected to attend weekly practices and other training sessions. Fulfilling these responsibilities requires a substantial time commitment and a willingness to deal with distressing and dangerous situations.

Provincial initiatives indicate fire department responsibilities are likely to increase as are the demands for training, equipment and accountability – all of which require space.

What's planned for the new hall?

The new hall would be approximately 4,900 square feet and would incorporate bays for pumper and tanker trucks and a rescue vehicle, a training room, workshop and storage area, SCBA refilling station, office and communications rooms, a meeting room, two washrooms, a shower and a laundry area for firefighters bunker gear. The vehicle bays would have adequate space for truck maintenance and to keep emergency equipment accessible to firefighters responding to calls.

The building would be manufactured steel which has a longer life than wood or metal clad structures and is quicker to erect. Some interior finishing would be done by FD volunteers or other community members who would like to contribute to the project and some areas may be only partially finished at this time to

reduce costs. All construction will comply with the BC Building Code and ventilation will be installed that meets Work Safe BC standards.

The site will incorporate a well, septic system and adequate off-road parking for emergency and firefighters' vehicles. A back-up generator will be located outside the building to ensure electrical power is available at all times. A water cistern to collect and store run-off water will also be developed on the site to supplement the water available to refill the tanker trucks.

Details on the site layout and building design will be provided at the open house.

What will it cost?

Estimated costs for building construction are \$599,570. Site works (grading, well, septic, parking and water cistern) are expected to cost about \$140,000. Other costs will be incurred for design, specifications and tendering; project management; financing; and public consultation. Total project costs are approximately \$935,852.

About \$190,000 will come from existing Northside VFD funds. Community Works Funds (a federal funding program) will cover approximately \$96,000, including the water cistern cost. The remaining \$645,592 will have to be borrowed through the Municipal Finance Authority. The annual debt payment for this borrowing will be \$50,083. Electors in the Northside fire protection area must approve the borrowing bylaw in order for the project to proceed.

Tax Impacts

In order to cover the annual debt payment, taxes on residential properties will increase by about \$29 per \$100,000 of residential assessment value. Increases to taxes on Commercial and Industrial class properties will be higher. Further information on project costs and tax implications will be available at the open house.

Residential taxes for the Northside VFD services are relatively high due to the limited commercial and industrial properties in the fire protection area. However, these taxes must be weighed against the costs for house insurance if the Department did not exist. A local insurer advises that household premiums would increase between 80-120% if the fire department lost its present insurance grading.

What is the Approval Process?

After the open house, the Regional Board will consider a bylaw to authorize the borrowing. That bylaw must receive the approval from Victoria before it can be presented to a vote of electors in the Northside fire protection area. General Voting Day is tentatively scheduled for Saturday, July 17, 2010. Advance Voting would be on July 14. Mail ballots will be available for voters who will be away on these dates.

Want More Information?

If you would like more information on the fire hall, attend the open house on May 19th. Fire Department members, your area director Patrick Brabazon, the architect who designed the building and Regional District staff will be there to answer your questions and hear your comments.

Prior to the vote, further information on the project and voting requirements will be provided to electors via a mail-out, newspaper advertising, and the Regional District website at www.powellriverrd.bc.ca