

NORTHSIDE VFD FIRE HALL PROPOSAL PROJECT & VOTING INFORMATION

Open House: June 28th 5-8 pm, Craig Road Hall
General Voting: July 17th Advance Voting: July 7th

In July, qualified electors in the Northside Fire Protection area (see reverse) will have an opportunity to vote on a bylaw to authorize borrowing money to construct a new Northside Fire Hall at Craig Road (actually Plummer Creek Rd.). The reasons for needing a new hall were outlined in an earlier flyer and are available on the Regional District website. In summary, the building, which was constructed 40 years ago with a minimal budget, has deteriorated overall, lacks basic water and sewer services, has substandard heating, plumbing and electrical services, does not meet BC Building Code standards or Work-Safe BC (WCB) requirements for fire halls and presents health and safety risks to volunteers.

In addition, the limited space does not allow for proper training, equipment and vehicle storage and maintenance, or the ever increasing administrative, communications and record-keeping responsibilities assigned to volunteer fire departments. Province-wide initiatives such as the Fire Services Liaison Group report "Public Safety in British Columbia - Transforming the Fire/Rescue Service," released in September 2009, and recent talks about changes to the BC Ambulance Service indicate fire departments will be required to assume an even larger role in fire/rescue services. The new hall will equip Northside to meet these increasing demands.

Feedback to the Regional District indicates that people generally acknowledge the need for a new hall, but question the costs. This flyer further explains the project budget.

Project Budget

ESTIMATED COSTS		REVENUE	
Design, specifications and tendering	29,000	Northside Reserve Funds	190,000
Site preparation/services/water storage	140,000	Community Works Funds (federal) *	96,260
Building construction	599,570	Borrowing	649,592
Contingency @ 10% (of site & bldg. costs)	73,957		
Project Management @ 10%	73,957		
Financing	14,368		
Public Consultation and Voting	5,000		
Total Estimated Costs	935,852	Total Revenue	935,852

* For heating & water storage systems

Design, specifications and tendering

We required a qualified designer/architect to design a building that ensures compliance with BC Building Code and other regulations applicable to fire halls and that has sufficient and properly organized space to meet NVFD's needs. If the borrowing bylaw is approved, the designer will also prepare detailed drawings and specifications suitable for tendering and construction. Typically this work costs about 10 – 15% of total project costs. By using a local firm (selected through public advertising) and keeping the structure design simple, the design and tendering costs will be less than 5% of the total estimated fire hall costs.

Site preparation/services/water storage

Because the site was not fully developed when the original hall was built, the project involves more than just constructing a new building. A water supply, proper sewage disposal and adequate parking are required. Site grading is also required and some basic landscaping will be done to improve the overall appearance. These items add about \$70,000 to the project costs.

A water storage system, which will consist of a tank to store 50,000 gallons of rain and run-off water, is also part of the site development costs. By substantially increasing the amount of water readily available for firefighting, this system will be a big advantage to residents in the event of a fire. **Funding will come from a federal grant, not from borrowing**, so it will not add to fire service taxes.

Building Construction

Estimated building construction costs, including foundation, electrical, plumbing, heating and interior finishing, are \$599,570. This works out to about \$109 per sq. foot. The building will be manufactured steel which has a comparable capital cost to wood frame construction but requires less maintenance and has a longer life. The volunteer firefighters have offered to do some of the finishing work in order to save money but since they already donate considerable time to train for and respond to emergencies on our behalf, we cannot expect too much more from them. Cost estimates were prepared by reputable, qualified, local contractor and are considered to be fairly generous. Actual costs will be determined through a public tendering process.

The new hall will be the Department's central hall. The Lund fire hall will be used simply to house trucks and equipment close to that community. It will not need space for training, meeting, office, communications, etc. The

fire protection area is too large to have only one hall because it cannot then meet the Fire Underwriters Service (the agency that grades fire departments for insurance purposes) requirement for all residences in a “semi-protected” area – the grading presently applied to Northside – to be within 8 km. of a fire hall in order to qualify for a reduced house insurance premium.

Contingency

The project budget includes a 10% contingency allowance to allow some leeway if tender prices come in higher than estimated or if something unforeseen is encountered during construction. The project may actually use only some or even none of the budgeted Contingency.

Project Management

Unlike a home building project which the owner may oversee her/himself at no direct cost, the Regional District will have to pay someone to coordinate the work and oversee the construction to ensure compliance with the specifications. The project management allowance will also cover project accounting which can be complex when dealing with multiple tenders, contracts, holdbacks, etc. If the construction and site development costs come in lower than estimated, the project management costs will also be lower.

Financing

This allowance is for interest on temporary borrowing the Regional District will incur during construction and the standard 1.75% Municipal Finance Authority (MFA) fee for handling the long term debt. Even with this fee, borrowing through the MFA is cheaper for local governments than borrowing through a regular bank.

It is important to note that the **costs shown are estimates only**. These estimates are conservatively high to ensure we have sufficient borrowing authority. If we based the loan authorization bylaw on low estimates, total costs could exceed the borrowing authority and we would be unable to complete the project. The bylaw authorizes a maximum amount that can be borrowed (\$649,592) but the Regional District will borrow only what the project requires, up to that amount.

Tax Impacts of the Proposed Borrowing

The estimated annual debt payment for the full borrowing is \$50,083 over 30 years.

The residential tax increase to cover the loan payments is approximately \$29 per \$100,000 of assessed residential value. A residential property worth \$200,000 would pay \$58 more and a property worth \$400,000 would pay \$116 more. Commercial and Industrial class properties will pay 2.45 and 3.4 times these amounts, respectively.

A tax increase for the new hall is unavoidable as the Department cannot absorb this new cost at its present tax requisition. Unfortunately, fire protection costs in the Northside area are already relatively high, particularly for those residing on the numerous high valued waterfront properties in the service area, but this is not because Northside spends more money than other departments. Its 2010 tax requisition is \$122,362 compared to \$251,000 for Malaspina VFD (southern region) and \$105,000 for Savary Island VFD which has a considerably smaller service area and population. Looking farther afield, 2010 fire department requisitions for Hornby Island, Black Creek, Roberts Creek and Halfmoon Bay are all \$350,000 or more. The problem in Northside is that there are relatively few parcels in the service area and few Business and virtually no Industrial or Utilities class properties to offset the residential tax burden.

Voting

You can vote on the proposed bylaw if you are a Canadian citizen who is at least 18 years of age; you have been a resident of BC for 6 months; and you have been a resident or property owner in the Northside Fire Protection service area for 30 days (see below). The question being voted on is:

“Are you in favour of the Powell River Regional District adopting Bylaw No. 436 to borrow up to \$649,592 over an amortization period of up to 30 years to construct a new fire hall in the Northside Fire Protection service area?”

General Voting: Saturday, July 17th 8 am – 8 pm: Lund Community Hall or Sliammon Health Centre

Advance Voting: Wednesday, July 7th 8 am – 8 pm: RD Office, 5776 Marine Ave., Townsite

Mail Ballot Voting is available for qualified electors who are away on July 7 and 17.
Contact RD office for application information.

Northside Fire Protection Area Boundaries

The Northside Fire Protection Area incorporates private properties from just north of Lund (north boundary of DL s 4194, 1615, 4204) south to the Sliammon First Nation Reserve boundary and includes properties on the Malaspina Peninsula side of Okeover Inlet from Penrose Bay south. It does not include Sharpe’s Bay, Bliss Landing or Savary or Hernando Islands. A map of the service area is on the Regional District website and at the Lund Post Office and will be available at the Open House.

For More Information

- Attend the Open House at the Craig Road fire hall on June 28th from 5 – 8 pm
- See the RD website: www.powellriverrd.bc.ca or call the RD office at 604-483-3231
- Talk to a Northside volunteer firefighter