

NORTH OYSTER FIRE DEPARTMENT
BUILDING PROJECT
FIRE HALL NO.1 – YELLOW POINT ROAD
SATELLITE FIRE HALL NO. 2 – FEARN ROAD
FACTS and FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

The BC Building Code was amended in 2006 to require that emergency services buildings, if undergoing major repairs or being newly constructed, be built to a post-disaster standard. Even before the Regional District assumed responsibility for Fire Protection Services in North Oyster in 1996, upgrading or replacement of Fire Hall #1, located on Yellow Point Road, had been identified as being crucial to the continued provision of Fire Protection services in the North Oyster area.

Why are we proposing to replace Fire Hall #1 instead of upgrading?

- In a “Condition Assessment of North Oyster Fire Hall” Report dated April 28, 2010, Herold Engineering Limited concluded that “In our opinion, the existing building finishes and envelope components are beyond their life expectancy.”
- In a “North Oyster Fire Hall Project File Review” Report dated April, 2011, Fire Wise Consulting Ltd. concluded “that time is of the essence to replace the number (1) fire hall and should be done as soon as possible.”
- The needs of the community have significantly increased since the fire department was first formed in the 1950’s.
- Consultation through public and neighbourhood meetings indicates that the majority of the affected taxpayers support replacing Fire Hall #1.

What are the major weaknesses of the current building?

- Severe lack of apparatus bay space.
- Lack of training space.
- Structure unlikely to withstand even a minor earthquake.
- Lack of disabled access.
- Lack of adequate washroom facilities.
- Lack of shower facilities.
- Lack of general administration space.
- Deteriorating building envelope.
- Deteriorating interior finishes.

Why is the building being designed for only 3 Bays?

- To ensure that it fits on the existing property while meeting the current and short term needs of the Department.
- The building will be oriented on the property in such a way that a fourth bay may be added at a later date should the acquisition of adjacent land be successful.
- If the land acquisition completes ahead of construction, the building will be redesigned to include a fourth bay.

A significant earthquake will likely make it impossible for fire trucks to move around – so why worry about the building damage from an earthquake?

- The North Oyster Fire Department is trained to provide a high level of first aid. A post disaster standard building will protect the equipment & supplies that have been paid for by North Oyster Fire Protection Service Area taxpayers and maintain the ability of the Fire Department to offer assistance in such a disaster.

Why is a second new fire hall in the Coffin Point area being proposed?

- To address long standing service inequities in the Coffin Point Area.
- It would enable the Department to provide the same level of service that other taxpayers in the service area are receiving.
- The taxpayers in the Coffin Point area have been subsidizing the entire Fire Protection Service Area by paying for a level of service which they are not receiving.
- The April, 2011 Fire Wise Consulting report recommended “that a satellite fire hall be constructed in the Coffin Point area”.
- The need for a satellite hall in Coffin Point was identified by the Ad Hoc Community Committee and reinforced by the public during the public consultation process.
- Consultation through public and neighbourhood meetings indicated that the majority of the affected taxpayers supported building a satellite hall in the Coffin Point area.
- The design of the new building will ensure an efficient solution for the Coffin Point area and a cost effective solution for the affected taxpayers.

Why should we build a new hall in the Coffin Point Area when many residents in the area are older and recruitment of volunteers may be difficult?

- Recruitment for all volunteer Fire Departments is difficult, but not impossible.
- A new hall will attract younger volunteers as well as more mature volunteers.
- A number of mature residents have already shown an interest in training for fire suppression only.
- Recruitment and training to attract volunteers for the proposed Coffin Point hall will begin prior to construction of a new hall in that area.
- If there are not enough dedicated volunteers for the second hall, it will not be constructed and the building funds will not be borrowed.

Project Costs:

- It is anticipated that the \$3.03M overall cost of the project is sufficient to construct a 4 bay hall on Yellow Point Road (if adjacent land is acquired) and a 2 bay hall in Coffin Point.
- Should the 4 bay option not proceed it is anticipated that the 3 bay project cost will decrease resulting in a reduced borrowing amount and, by extension, a reduced annual cost to the tax payers.
- The proposed project cost includes a reasonable contingency for escalation in construction costs should the economy start to rebound before the project construction contract is secured.
- The proposed project budget includes a reasonable contingency for unknown conditions that may result in changes to the construction contract price.
- The Regional District will borrow only the funds necessary to complete the project. If the project comes in under budget and all of the \$3.03M requested in the referendum is not needed, the funds will not be borrowed.

Will Fortis BC be paying into this project?

- Fortis BC has spent a significant amount of money ensuring that they have adequate fire protection within their compound.
- It is not anticipated that Fortis BC will require fire suppression services from the North Oyster Fire Department at their facility.
- Fortis BC voluntarily provided a \$100,000 contribution towards the construction of a new fire hall.
- Fortis BC voluntarily requested that the facility be included in the Fire Protection Service.
- Fortis BC will pay the parcel tax and will continue to pay significantly toward Fire Department operating costs.

Will the Stz'uminus First Nation contribute to this project?

- The Stz'uminus First Nation are currently under contract with the Regional District for provision of fire protection services to their community.
- The current contract invoices the Band on the same basis as the taxpayers in the service area.
- It is anticipated that this will continue.

Why was a parcel tax chosen rather than taxing by assessment?

- After significant consultation through public and neighbourhood meetings, the majority supported a parcel tax.

With modern building codes & technology it is unlikely that I will ever have a house fire; why should I have to pay more for fire protection?

- The Fire Department does a lot more than just putting out fires. Some examples are:
 - Emergency medical aid
 - Motor vehicle incidents and traffic control
 - Emergency evacuations
 - Hydro pole & line fires
 - Burning complaints
 - Hazardous material
 - Brush fires
 - Rescue including farm animals and pets
 - Education and prevention
 - Mutual Aid
 - Fires – other than structure fires
 - Responding to security alarms
 - Assistance (ambulance service, police, public, other)
 - Community Service (parades, Santa, elementary school visits, Fire Fair)

The goal of the North Oyster Fire Department is, and has always been, to provide the best service possible at the lowest cost possible. The firefighters are trained to the highest standards that can reasonably be achieved. The equipment has been maintained and replaced as required by NFPA and WorkSafe BC standards. In spite of the Department's effort to maintain the aging hall on Yellow Point Road, it has deteriorated to the point that it must be replaced. Prior to the CVRD assuming responsibility for operations, the Department was operated by a non profit society. As part of their long range planning, in March of 1986, the Society identified the need for satellite stations in Cassidy and Coffin Point, and hoped to have those goals achieved by 1996. The Cassidy Station was constructed; the Coffin Point station still has to be addressed.

This project has received the support of the North Oyster Fire Department, the North Oyster Fire Protection Service Commission, and the Ad Hoc Citizens Committee supported initiating the referendum process. We trust that you can support it too.

PLEASE VOTE YES ON THIS REFERENDUM