



TOWN OF QUALICUM BEACH
Incorporated 1942

Summary of Fire Hall Update

Presented by Town's Consultant: Kimberly Johnston, Architect AIBC, MRAIC, LEED AP, Principal, Johnston Davidson Architecture + Planning Inc. reporting on the proposed new Fire Hall

7:30pm, April 22, 2013 Qualicum Beach Civic Centre

Kim Johnston and John Botelho of Johnston Davidson Architecture + Planning Inc. gave a PowerPoint presentation on the proposed new Fire Hall, highlighting the schematic design, size, siting and how the site might be used. K. Johnston noted the boards on display at the back of the room repeated the words and drawings from the presentation.

K. Johnston's presentation highlighted:

- The location of the proposed new Fire Hall #1 at the south east corner of the intersection of Memorial Avenue and Rupert Road, adjacent to the water tower
- Why a new building is required:
 - to relocate from the location developed in 1947 in the village centre
 - to be seismically sound to allow post-disaster event operation
 - to accommodate large and longer fire vehicles that do not fit in the current bays
 - to provide decontamination space and training area
 - to provide a facility from which the Department can respond, noting that call volume has increased 10 times since 1973 and 50 times since 1958, to the current average of 500 calls for service per year
- Site analysis of the Memorial Avenue and Rupert Road location
 - Adjacent to other industrial buildings at the site
 - Good access, and it would allow firefighters to take alternative routes to the station that are less travelled by the public
 - Not in the village centre, so it will reduce congestion and allow for quick and safe exiting
 - Reviewed options studied about traffic flow/congestion, separate emergency exit, separate area for training, drive-through bays, and how to situate the bays, and highlighted the preferred Option 3

- Images identifying which portions of the buildings would be two storeys, location of parking and open space
- Sustainability, opportunities for grants, later development of green design features, water usage, renewable energy, longevity and durability
- Seeking input on siting
- Promote use of regional materials and/or have recycled content, FSC certified wood-based products, and use local labour
- Process – three main procurement processes from which to choose:
 - Design-bid-build process – traditional five-stage process; the Town is at stage one – (schematic design), with four stages to follow: design development, working drawings, tender and construction to follow more design development (detailed drawings cost estimate); working drawings (construction specifications/materials); tender (tender project through open or prequalified process) and, finally, building construction
 - Construction Management
 - Design-build process

Question and Answer Period

Q.1 If things go smoothly from now to finish, what time will it take and, regarding construction to post-disaster, and how this applies to the water tower?

K. Johnston noted the adjacent water tower is already built to post-disaster standard so there is no concern that it will fail and fill the new fire hall with water.

Q.2. A resident commented on the roundabout, the obstacle it presents to long wheel based vehicles; buses observed having trouble maneuvering at any speed, and what effect this would have on the long fire vehicles trying to get out in a hurry?

K. Johnston reported the review with staff indicated there would be no problem; the Fire Chief concurred.

Q.3. A resident expressed appreciation for the description of the process, noting it is similar to every development and asked if any PPPs (public private partnerships) have been used for this type of development?

K. Johnston noted that Chilliwack considered that option but did not use PPPs for their 50,000 sq. ft. fire hall, combined with a 911 call centre and the District offices and, of 45 fire halls her company has worked on, none has used PPPs for a project of this size.

Q.4 What is the expected useful life of the building?

K. Johnston reported it would be dependent on the final materials and design chosen, but it would be 50 years minimum.

Q.5. Would there be a change in response time with the new location? Many of the volunteers work downtown, now run over to the Fire Hall, and for the new location, they would need transportation.

K. Johnston stated it was considered and, when considering other new locations, the proposed location was preferred as they could get there faster, congestion would be reduced, etc. The Fire Chief noted that members live in all areas of the community; getting to the current site is challenging due to congestion and, after a Global Information System (GIS) survey and reviewing call locations, the new site gives a better response time.

Q.6 A resident commented on the reference to training facilities and questioned if it includes a tower, frequency of use, and if another facility in the region could be used instead?

K. Johnston noted that it includes a hose tower, a first stage decontamination shower, and removable panels for confined space training; the exterior has a variety of openings so that teams can practice ladder access, rappelling exercises, so that the entire tower is used. K. Johnston reported from her experience in a variety of communities; the hose tower, as it is multi-functional, is used all the time, every practice, at least once per week, equipment is then on site and, if there is an emergency, there is no distance issue and it is an advantage.

Q.7. A resident asked whether sidewalks will be added to Berwick Road as part of the Fire Hall project, as it is narrow?

Town Engineer, B. Weir, noted there is a plan to improve and extend Berwick Road, including the crossing of the railway track, and there is an application for grant funding for improvements up to Rupert Road. He stated that locating the Fire Hall at the top of Berwick Road is an excellent long-term location, as Berwick Road will provide an alternative to the busy Memorial Avenue.

Q.8. A resident noted that if the site is optimal for fire service, wouldn't it also be optimal for ambulance service and questioned if the site planning includes any requirement or capability to incorporate ambulance services, and how many of the 45 fire halls K. Johnston worked had ambulances?

K. Johnston stated some fire hall projects considered the idea and that they have worked on combined protective services buildings with police, search and rescue, and emergency preparedness groups, but none so far with ambulance. She noted this was due to political reasons, very stringent ambulance building requirements, and the value of combining services has not been there on the construction side, e.g. separate electrical, sanitary sewer, etc. required due to the political outline. The ability to expand the new Fire Hall site in the future was noted, in anticipation of accommodating future RCMP traffic section needs.

Q.9. What will happen to the current Fire Hall site?

It was noted that Council will discuss the issue with staff; tonight the focus is on the new site, and one of the considerations for the future of the former site is the plan to continue Primrose Street through to First Avenue.

Q.10 Will there be collateral costs that might be attributed to the cost of this building? The year after Parksville received a new building, there was a request for a \$500,000 truck.

Council noted that the Town has a program to replace vehicles on a 5-year cycle built into the system – the new fire hall would not affect that.

Q. 11 A resident expressed appreciation to the Fire Department, complimented the group of volunteers in attendance and noted she was finding it hard to get enthused about a new fire hall, with all the friction reported to be going on within the Fire Department.

The Mayor noted that the Town is working together with the Fire Department to resolve issues, rebuild trust and address issues identified in the Fire Service Administrative Review report.

Q.12. A resident questioned if there were any grants being pursued and whether the Town would have all the funds to build the hall before construction starts?

Members of Council had the following responses:

- background work has been done for a number of years including setting aside a portion of the funds to construct a new fire hall
- interest rates are very low to borrow funds
- life expectancy of the new Fire Hall building is at least 50 years
- to borrow the funds and spread the benefit out to residents over the term of the loan
- the Town has borrowed for a number of major infrastructure projects in the past
- a new fire hall has been discussed for the past 15 years

- there are certain thresholds by which municipalities can borrow without going to referendum
- any borrowing of this nature should require that voters give their approval
- 100% confident that the voters will support a new Fire Hall
- the Town has found an excuse in the past to not replace the Fire Hall
- building needs to be replaced for the residents and for the fire fighters who put their lives at risk every day
- a Fire Hall replacement has been in the financial plan for the past five years
- recommend making the intersection at Village Way and Highway 19A a Council priority
- the Town will apply for grants and ask Federation of Canadian Municipalities if fire hall grants will be available in the future.

Q.13 A resident commented that plans for the replacement Fire Hall is a wonderful opportunity, and noted it was a good time to maximize obtaining a good competitive price with the interest rates being low.

Next Step:

Council, at their May 6 Regular Council meeting, directed staff to invite Johnston-Davidson Architects to prepare a proposal for the design and construction of a new fire hall utilizing a design-bid-build project delivery process.

For further information, please contact: Bob Weir, P.Eng. Director of Engineering, Utilities and Airport, at 250.752,6921. Ext. 317

Public Information Boards on the Fire Hall Update presented to the community on April 22, 2013 are available for viewing at www.qualicumbeach.com