Hornby Island Fire Department

Fire Hall Planning Report

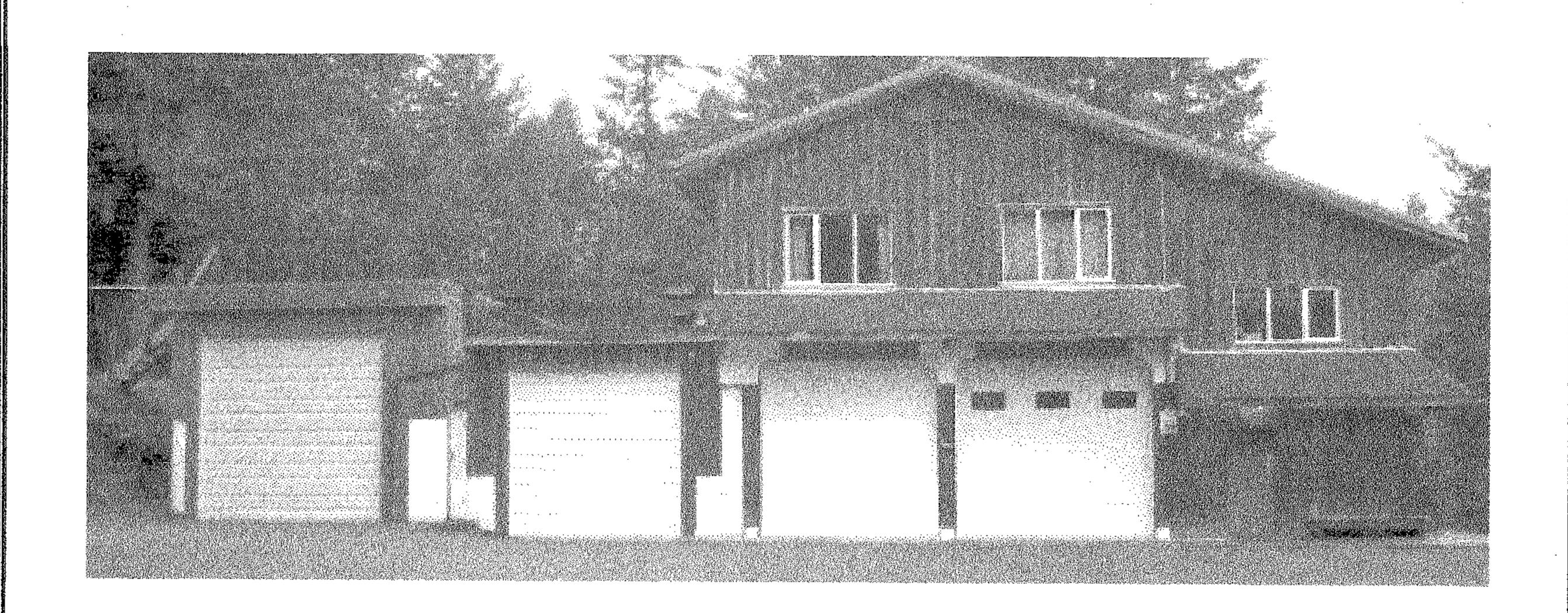


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K	Copy of Crown Land Grant for existing Fire Hall
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Fire Hall Planning Report

INTRODUCTION

This report presents a summary of the information gathered by the Fire Department in response to an initial request by the Hornby Island Residents' and Ratepayers' Association (HIRRA) at the Executive meeting on October 7, 1999 (Attachment 1). The subject of the structural integrity of the existing fire hall arose from a concern over the ability to safely house the new pumper truck, which had been approved for purchase.

The Regional District of Comox-Strathcona (RDCS) Building Inspector was invited to conduct a preliminary inspection of the fire hall and prepare a letter outlining his comments. The Inspector visited the hall on December 9, 1999, accompanied by the Fire Chief, Giff La Rose and HIRRA Vice-president, Andrew Carmichael. The Inspector's comments, attached as Attachment 2, identified potential structural concerns due to the building materials and methods used over the years of hall additions.

BACKGROUND

The Fire Hall building was constructed in four phases using the volunteer labour of the Fire Department members, donated materials (for the early phases), community purchased materials and some paid labour:

- The initial building, constructed around 1968-69, consisted of the ground floor radio/meeting room of 265 ft² and 988 ft² for vehicle bays 1 and 2. Total floor area was 1,253 ft²
- The second phase, around 1984, added the second floor office, meeting room, kitchen and shower, providing a total floor area of 2,506 ft²
- Phase three in 1990, added 615 ft² with bay number 3, increasing the total floor are to 3,121ft²
- Phase four in 1997 added 763 ft² with bay number 4, for a total area of 3,884 ft²

A partial seismic upgrading of bays 1 and 2 was undertaken in 1992, using funds obtained through a grant from the lottery foundation.

The Fire Hall is a true community building, with countless volunteer hours having gone into the construction and maintenance over the years. Many Island residents have at one time been a member of the Department and taken part in the growth of the Hall to the present configuration.

> 1997 Fire Hall Planning

A Planning Committee of interested Fire Fighters was formed in April of 1997 to investigate future development of the fire hall building and identify immediate needs. Their initial

brainstorming sessions explored ideas for possible 5 and 10 year projections for the Department and identified priorities for immediate action. (see Attachment 3)

The local design firm of Blue Sky Design was retained to work with the Committee in developing conceptual plans based on a 'wish list' formed in discussions with the Fire Fighters. (see Attachment 4).

Blue Sky Design produced a set of plans, complete with scale model, showing a series of construction and renovation works spaced over four stages. The completed project provided for an attractive building, satisfying the 'wish list' developed by the Committee. The plans included a construction cost estimate for the work, which totaled \$220,903. (see Attachment 5). The plans were filed for future reference.

The plans, while impressive in conceptual design and functionality, unfortunately neglected the existing building construction faults and seismic considerations.

PROCESS

The Executive of HIRRA discussed the recommendations of the Building Inspector at their January 2000 meeting, and directed the Fire Chief to undertake further investigation of the building structure (see Attachment 6)

The Chief retained Ron McMurtrie, P.Eng. to conduct a preliminary investigation and analysis of the fire hall structure based on the 1998 Building Code for post disaster facilities. Mr. McMurtrie confirmed the Terms of Reference for the review in his letter of September 24, 2000 (see Attachment 7)

The report prepared by Ron McMurtrie & Associates, titled "Preliminary Seismic Review Existing Firehall Building", dated November 7, 2000, is attached as Attachment 8. The report identified numerous areas of concern in the building and concluded that the structure was unlikely to survive any moderate earthquake without severe structural damage.

The Executive of HIRRA, the Fire Committee and the Fire Chief met with Mr. McMurtrie in November 2000, to discuss the report and agreed to proceed with a more thorough evaluation and repair cost estimate. A proposal with the agreed Terms of Reference was received from Mr. McMurtrie on November 27 (see Attachment 9). Mr. McMurtrie was retained to undertake the investigation and prepare the repair cost estimate.

A report, titled "Cost Analysis and Estimated Performance of Seismic Upgrading – Hornby Island Firehall Building", dated May 2, 2001 was presented by Mr. McMurtrie and is attached as Attachment 10.

Copies of both reports prepared by Mr. McMurtrie were forwarded to the Regional District on May 16, 2001. (see Attachment 11)

The Executive of HIRRA, the Fire Committee, Fire Department officers and the Fire Chief met with Mr. McMurtrie on May 21, 2001 to discuss the contents of the Cost Analysis report. Various options were discussed and it was agreed that the Regional District should be consulted with respect to questions that arose in the meeting. (see Attachment 11)

The Fire Chief and Fire Department Officers met with the Executive of HIRRA, the Fire Committee, The RDCS Director and RDCS staff on June 28, 2001 (see Attachment 12) to discuss the results of the various reports and identify future actions. The meeting concluded that:

- There were three options open for future actions:
 - 1) Do nothing
 - 2) Repair the existing Fire Hall as per the McMurtrie report of May 2, 2001
 - 3) Build a new Fire Hall

Any decision on a course of action would follow broad community consultation.

Following this meeting, two separate Committees were set up to investigate Option 3; the construction of a new Fire Hall. The committees were established as:

Building Committee: Al Cannon, Bob Jeglum, Giff La Rose, and Rob Zielinski Land Committee: Giff La Rose, Lynn Nunley, Iain Palmer

The Terms of Reference for each committee were drafted and are attached as Appendix A and B, respectively.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

> Building Committee

The Committee started their process by reviewing the size of the existing fire hall and functions of each of the areas. The size and function categories were evaluated based on present conditions and future planning, with the building life expectancy estimated at an industry standard of 50 years.

The following areas were identified for inclusion in the design of a new hall:

0	Truck bays 4 a	t 750sq.ft. each	0	Offices	165sq. ft.
0	Radio room	70sq. ft.	0	Training/records	-
0	SCBA room	56sq. ft.		Kitchen	200sq. ft.
0	Compressor rm.	56sq. ft.	O .	Janitor	40sq. ft.
0	Maintenance rm.	200sq. ft.	0	General room	1,300sq. ft.
0	Gear room	250sq. ft.	0	Upstairs toilets	63sq. ft.
0	Foyer	150sq. ft.		Men's toilets	166sq. ft.
0	Storage	150sq. ft.		Women's toilet	136sq.ft.
0	Utility room	30sq. ft.	0	Exercise room	220sq. ft.
					-R.

The Committee undertook an informal study of typical fire hall designs and obtained copies of plans prepared for some other fire halls in British Columbia: Langford, Quadra Island and Lillooette. From these designs and the estimated floor areas, the Committee developed a preliminary concept of the building layout and size.

The next step in turning the preliminary concept into a visual representation was to retain the services of a designer or architect to bring all the pieces together. Bill Cannon was hired to prepare preliminary concept plans of the building, based on information provided by the Committee: sketches, briefing notes and floor areas.

Conceptual plans were developed for a building that would replace the current fire hall and allow for future modest expansion of the department. The Committee considered the question of constructing for to-days' use and allowing for future expansion. The general view was:

- o the number and size of truck bays would house existing equipment for the foreseeable future and that should expansion be necessary, an additional bay area could easily be added.
- The office space and other designated use areas be designed for an anticipated maximum of 25 members which represented a comfortable department size for the Island over the next 25 years. Any major increases in population and land uses would require additional planning to review the delivery of emergency services.
- O The general room in the upstairs portion was made sufficiently large to accommodate simultaneous training/use sessions.

The final conceptual design plans are attached as Appendix C.

The Committee worked with Allan Fletcher, who volunteered his time and expertise to assist in preparing a preliminary budget estimate for the building construction costs. Allan provided a cost estimate, attached as Appendix D, based on unit rates used for the new Courtenay Fire Hall.

The Building Committee canvassed other Fire Departments to obtain a range of building costs based on design differences, location and building type. Two other examples were found:

O Quadra Island Fire Department
The basic building design for this new fire hall was used in the conceptual design for the proposed Hornby Island Fire Hall. The Quadra hall has a total floor area of 7,000 square feet and is of wood frame construction with vinyl siding. The building has been built to post disaster standards. The final cost for the site development and building is estimated at approximately \$650,000. The Fire Chief, who is also a structural engineer, designed the building and acted as project manager. This and some volunteer labour kept the costs below what would normally have been expected.

- Oyster River Fire Department
 They are still in the planning stage, however they have been doing a lot of research into design and building costs. They started their process with a set budget of \$1.1 million and retained a project management company to prepare conceptual designs and cost estimates within the targeted budget. After receiving conceptual plans which were not within their required budget, the Oyster River Committee has opted to continue with it's own research and has found a design which would satisfy their requirements and could be constructed within their budget. Their proposed building would be approximately 8,300 square feet in size.
- → The Building Committee investigated the cost benefit of selling the existing building to help with the cost of a proposed Fire Hall. A local realtor assisted by preparing an appraisal of the building and land. (see Appendix E)

The greatest value in the land and building might not be in recovering X amount of dollars, but in the value to the community as a multi-use community building. Many people in the community have volunteered countless hours in the building and maintenance of the Fire Hall and would appreciate if the property remained part of the community.

Fire Hall Land Committee Report

The Committee reviewed the original Terms of Reference and added some additional parcels for consideration. It was agreed that the search for a possible new building site be limited to an area within one half a kilometer of the present building to meet the insurance requirement that the service area be within 8 kilometers (5 miles) of the Fire Hall. (see Appendix F)

The following Crown Land areas were identified for investigation in the search for a suitable site for a new Fire Hall:

- 1. Highway gravel pit area (across from the Recycling Depot)
- 2. 10 acre lease area on Solans Road which is currently leased by HIRRA
- 3. the area immediately east of the Cemetery
- 4. the area on the west side of the Recycling Depot road at Central Road
- 5. Lot 1, Plan 31933 (10 acre Crown Land parcel at Barney French Road)
- 6. unsurveyed parcel between JoeKing Ball park and the Community Hall)
- 7. the existing Fire Hall property
- 8. Light Industrial Area (parcel west of existing Fire Hall)

The Committee considered the size of the proposed building, training area and buffer requirements and determined that the new location would need approximately 2 to 2.5 acres, or 0.81 to 1 hectare. The Ministry of Health would normally require a minimum subdivided property to be 1 hectare.

A parcel ranking matrix was developed, based on suitability criteria, which allowed for comparison of the various parcels:

Criteria	Site #1	Site #2	Site #3	Site #4	Site #5	Site #6	Site #7	Site #8
Availability	0	4	3	3	3	3	3	3
Septic field suitability	4	4	3	1	1	4	0	3
Ease of access	4	2	4	2	0	4	3	2
Power service	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
Drainage	4	4	3	3	3	3	4	3
Property gradient	4	4	3	1	1	4	1	2
Disturbance of/by neighbours	4	2	3	4	4	2	3	4
Merchantable timber	2	2	3	1	1	2	0	
Public visibility/access	1	1	4	3	2	4	4	1
Water source	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Parcel area (1 hectare or more)	4	4	4	4	4	4	1	4
TOTALS	34	34	37	29	26	37	26	30

Ranking criteria based on: 0 - nil; 1 - poor; 2 - fair; 3 - good; 4 - excellent

General Site comments

Site #1: Highway gravel pit area

The Ministry of Transportation and Highways currently leases the parcel for their use and it may be difficult to remove a portion from this lease. It was generally felt that an area would not be available for use as a new fire hall site.

One other consideration was the potentially poor public visibility due to the downhill slope away from Central Road.

Site #2: 10 acre lease area on Solans Road

The most readily available site among the identified parcels, however the location was the least desirable. It was felt that the emergency access to Central Road, as the primary route for access to the majority of the Island, was seriously faulted due to the poor visibility at the intersection of Solans Road and Central Road.

Site #3: parcel immediately east of Cemetery

The front section appears wet due to poor drainage. This could be corrected and otherwise the parcel would provide a good site for a new Fire Hall. The site slopes gently toward Central Road. This site was considered an acceptable alternative to Site #6 as a preferred site.

There may be some concern from the neighbour to the east, at 4330 Central Road, however the separation distance would be a sufficient buffer for sight and sound.

The access to Central would be on the outside of the slight curve in the Road and still provides for safe sight distances.

Site #4: area to west side of Recycling Depot entrance

The ground slope is generally too steep to accommodate a Fire Hall and associated parking without blasting and excavating. It was also felt that it might prove difficult to locate a septic field in the area due to the shallow soil depths, although no actual test holes were excavated. The information from Site 8 was used as representative for the area.

Site #5: Crown Land parcel at Barney French Road

The slope of the property appeared to be too steep to easily accommodate the Fire Hall and the access, adjacent to Carmichael Road and the top of the blind hill, raised concerns with visibility and safety.

Site #6: parcel between Joe King Parka and the Community Hall

A site favoured by the Committee for its location, access and good level ground. It does have some issues with site drainage, which could be resolved with a bit of extra work. The location, adjacent to the Ball Park could pose a problem with respect to noise and smoke during training exercises conflicting with Ball Park activities.

Site #7: existing Fire Hall property

The Committee considered the use of the site in the event it was decided to construct a new Fire Hall on the property.

The slope on the property has been overcome to a degree, by blasting and excavating. It would be difficult to accommodate a larger building on the site due to the ground slope constraints and building setback requirements. The current setback does not meet the bylaw requirements.

The parcel is approximately half of the area required to adequately accommodate the building, parking and training facilities. The existing septic field is located at the Ball Park and the well water is supplied from the Highways yard.

Site #8: Light Industrial area adjacent to the existing Fire Hall

The steep slope up from Central Road would necessitate the building being constructed well back from the road, where the ground levels out. Access to Central would be awkward due to this slope. The one area approved for a septic field is located adjacent to the rear access to the existing Fire Hall.

o Liaison with Land and Water BC Inc.

The Committee sought the assistance of Don Marchand from the Regional District, to approach Land and Water BC (LWBC) regarding initial comments on the parcels mentioned in the Terms of Reference. The agent from LWBC responded January 8, 2002 (see Appendix G).

A letter and site sketch was sent to LWBC on May 31, 2002, soliciting additional comments with respect to Site #6 (Appendix H). The new agent for Hornby Island, Doug Berry responded on June 12, 2002 with many questions (Appendix I).

A meeting was held between Tony Law, Island Trustee and the Fire Chief, to discuss the issues raised in the response from LWBC. The Islands Trust then, in a letter to Mr. Berry on February 26, 2003 (see Appendix J), confirmed their intent to assist in the planning and community consultation process with the parties involved in the Fire Hall project.

A meeting was held in the Nanaimo office of LWBC with Bob Vanderzwaag (RDCS Administration Officer) and Gordon Smaill (LWBC Officer).

The discussions included:

- 1. disposition of the existing Fire Hall parcel
- 2. possible new Crown Land parcel

The general results of the meeting were:

1. The existing Fire Hall property is a grant to the RDCS with the proviso the land use continues for Fire Hall purposes. (Appendix K) The Title would revert to Crown should the use change and the building would have to be removed, or the property could be bought from LWBC at market price.

Mr. Smaill indicated the willingness on the part of LWBC to consider changing the terms of the Grant, still to be held by the RDCS, if the building were to be used for community activities.

2. Mr. Smaill reviewed the findings of the Committee and offered comments on the various parcels. Mr. Smaill agreed that the two parcels identified as preferred (Site #3 and #6) were potentially acceptable, however both had considerations affecting their use. In the case of Site #3, the area is in the Groundwater Recharge Area noted by Water, Air and Land Protection. Site #6 has possible issues with proximity to the Ball Park. Mr. Smaill suggested consideration be given to Site #1 and offered to assist Bob Vanderzwaag in contacting the Ministry of Transportation official responsible for the site. It was agreed that the Fire Department Land Committee re-examine the site and identify a potential area for discussion with the Ministry.

The Land Committee met on March 16, 2004 and walked the Central Road frontage of Parcel #1 to look for a potential location. A promising site was located on the immediate west side of the existing entrance into the gravel pit. This area provided the minimum slope down from Central Road and relatively gentle slope in the building area.

Site Layout

A site plan was prepared for Site #1 (see Appendix L)

The layout included the building, oriented with truck bays parallel to the road, asphalt driveways, concrete aprons, gravel training area and possible septic field area.

Site Development Costs

Preliminary costs were estimated for the basic services associated with the site. It is understood that the costs could vary for different sites and these represent general costs for Site #1.

	Paved driveways and aprons	(using local pit run)	\$80,000
	Drainage		\$ 8,000
	400 Amp Hydro service		\$ 750
	Telephone		n/c
	Well and water system		\$ 7,000
	Gravel training area		\$ 6,000
(b)	Septic system		\$25,000
	Clearing		\$ 5,000
	TOTAL		\$131,750

NEW FACILITY COSTS

The construction costs for a new building as shown on the attached conceptual plans, including site development and servicing would be capped at a maximum of \$1 million.

The final design plans, with finishing details, would be adjusted to fit within or below the budget cap. This adjustment may involve some volunteer work for specific portions of the construction and management of the project.

The Regional District would borrow the funds for the cost of the new fire hall through the Municipal Finance Authority. The likely amortization period of 20 years would result in an annual cost of approximately \$85,743 being added to the Fire Department annual budget. (Appendix M). The Equivalent Residential Rate would increase by \$0.4059/\$1,000 of assessed value. (\$40.59 per \$100,000 of assessed value)

Bylaw No. 2011, being the Hornby Island Fire Protection Local Service Establishment bylaw, currently fixes the maximum requisition as the greater of \$168,935.00 per year or \$1.00 per \$1,000 of assessment (Appendix N).

The proposed 2005 Fire Department budget is:

- \$134,333 for Operations
- \$0 for Capital
- \$69,160 for RDCS functions and Vehicle Capital
- \$203,493 Total Budget

(see Appendix O)

The 2005 Budget represents a Levy of \$1.00/\$1,000 based on the current Authenticated Net Taxable Value.

The suggested Levy of \$1.50 required to accommodate the cost of a new Fire Hall and maintenance of the current budget program, would necessitate a referendum question being approved by the community.

SUMMARY

The intent of this report has been to present information to the community regarding the status of the existing fire hall building and options for it's repair or replacement.

Recalling the initial three possible options:

- 1. do nothing maintain status quo
- 2. upgrade the current Fire Hall to Building Code standards
- 3. construct a new Fire Hall

Added after review of the initial three options was:

4. keep existing Fire Hall but construct new truck bays as a separate building

Option 1: do nothing

If nothing is done to the existing building, the following points should be considered:

- i. the building remains susceptible to major damage or failure due to seismic activity;
 - > potentially crippling emergency response
 - current vehicle and equipment value is ±\$800,000
- ii. the building will require additional renovation and addition of space to meet existing and future needs;
 - > estimated at \$220,000 in 1997 (built onto existing weak structure –not allowed by Building Code)
- iii. training facilities will be constructed uphill from the fire hall, requiring additional land area and tree removal:
 - \geq estimated at \pm \$15,000
- iv. the gravel yard and aprons will require paving in the future
 - > estimated at +\$80,000

Option 2: upgrade the current Fire Hall to Building Code standards

The report completed by Ron McMurtrie & Associates (Attachment 10) reports on the probable work required to upgrade the existing building to near Building Code compliance. The cost estimate provided by Mr. McMurtrie, is an approximation of the cost anticipated for the probable work. Truck bays 3 and 4 would be demolished and a new building built separately from the rest of the structure.

Renovation of the existing building would require major disruption to the normal functioning of the Fire Department, for the duration of the work, requiring temporary relocation of vehicles, equipment and radio communications.

The future expansion of the fire hall, to meet the needs originally identified by the 1997 Planning Committee and by the more recent Building Committee, would still have to be addressed. The costs associated with the addition of building space, improved facilities and driveway/yard paving, would have to be added to the estimated upgrade costs.

The Structural Consultant, in his report (Attachment 10) asked: "Will the upgrading of the existing building and reconstruction of Bays #3 and #4 result in a facility that meets the needs of the Island and its residents well into the future?"

Option 3: construct a new Fire Hall

The Building and Land Committees have presented the results of their investigations into the desirable building size and possible location, to suit the requirements for the foreseeable future.

The construction of a new building at a new location would:

- i. have a fixed maximum budget of \$1 million;
- ii. result in a tax increase of \$0.40/\$1,000 assessed value;
- iii. provide adequate building space for the foreseeable future;
- iv. provide improved training facilities for the foreseeable future;
- v. make the old fire hall available for community use.

Option 4: construct new building for the trucks and keep the existing Fire Hall

This option was added after review of the preliminary report as a possibility that should be considered.

There are two primary positive points:

- i. the cost is less than a new fire hall
- ii. the trucks would be safe

Also to be considered are:

- i. radio communications centre in the existing building is not protected
- ii. this would require land acquisition for the truck building
- iii. provides for very awkward operating procedures (personal and equipment)
- iv. not great for member morale and recruitment
- v. additional training area would still be required
- vi. does not provide for any possibility of having a manned hall in the future
- vii. the old building requires more maintenance

FIRE FIGHTER RECOMMENDATION

The members of the Fire Department reviewed the preliminary report and discussed the various aspects of the different options. The preferred option was the construction of a new Fire Hall. It was felt that the facility would better serve the Island over the next 25 to 50 years than any of the other options.

The least favoured option was Option 4

The following sheet provides a comparison of the four options.

Option	Positive Points						
	• Lowest cost						
Do nothing Maintain status quo							
2 Upgrade existing Fire Hall	 Less expensive than building a new Hall The wiring and plumbing would be brought up to code 						
3 Build a new Fire Hall	 The Hall would meet the needs of the Department for the foreseeable future Improved training facilities Improve recruitment Reduce current maintenance spending Improve Department efficiency/training The Fire Fighters are safe! Provide the Community with the old Fire Hall for use as a multi-function building or if the building is sold, reduce the total cost by approximately \$150,000 Post disaster facility with emergency power providing the Community with communications for the Island and to the outside world as well as an emergency reception centre and shelter with kitchen facilities. 						
	 Less expensive than building a new Hall The trucks would be safe in an earthquake 						
Keep existing Hall And build new truck bays as a separate building							

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Negative	Estimated Costs	
 Building is not protected against earthquake Emergency equipment is not protected and may be destroyed or damaged during an earthquake Radio communications centre would be destroyed during an earthquake Additional building expansion for current and future needs would be built on substandard building (not allowed by Building Code) Existing building does not meet electrical, building or fire code requirements 	 Additional training area would require acquisition of Crown land The Fire Fighters are not safe No option for future manned Fire Hall Cost estimate does not include continuing maintenance 	On-going maintenance of the building. Cost of new construction and renovation as per Blue Sky estimate in 1997 \$220,903 Estimate for paving yards: \$80,000 Training area work: \$15,000 ESTIMATE: \$315,903 Estimated Yearly Cost per \$1,000 assessed value: ±\$0.13
Major disruption to the Fire Department during the renovations. Alternate space would have to be found for the equipment, vehicles, and operations including communications base The building would be close to code but not meet code Renovations are notorious for hidden costs and the estimate may be overly optimistic. The required work would see the demolition of 2 truck bays and gutting of the entire building. The most expensive of the options	 Truck bays 3 and 4 would have to be demolished and new bays constructed as a separate building. Any 2nd storey addition would also have to be as a separate building. The cost estimate was approximate and was done in 2001 Additional training area would require acquisition of Crown land 	2001 estimate of seismic upgrading as prepared by McMurtrie: \$184,000 Cost of new construction and renovation as per Blue Sky estimate in 1997: \$220,903 Estimate for paving yards: \$80,000 Training area work: \$15,000 ESTIMATE: \$500,000 Estimated Yearly Cost per \$1,000 assessed value: ±\$0.20 Maximum budget of \$1,000,000 Estimated Yearly Cost per \$1,000 assessed value: ±\$0.40 (\$40 per \$100,000 assessed
The option rejected by the Fire Fighters Radio communications centre would be destroyed during an earthquake as would some of the firefighter gear Very poor for Department recruitment and morale The new building would require land acquisition; likely the closure of the road between the Fire Hall and the Highways yard Additional training area would require acquisition of Crown land Makes for awkward operations having gear and equipment in such different areas.	(O)m4fmm /1	Estimate for a 3,000 sq.ft. building at \$100/sq.ft.: \$300,000 Estimate for paving yard: \$80,000 Training area work: \$10,000 Renovations to existing building downstairs: 2,340 sq.ft. at \$30/sq.ft. = \$70,080 On-going maintenance ESTIMATE: \$460,080 Estimated Yearly Cost per \$1,000 assessed value: ±\$0.18