

DATE: June 30, 2011**FILE:** 7200-20**TO:** Chair and Members
Electoral Areas Services Committee**FROM:** Debra Oakman, CMA
Chief Administrative Officer**RE:** Hornby Island fire hall - select committee recommendations

Purpose

To present the communication plan for the Hornby Island fire hall renewal project as recommended by the select committee at their meeting of May 20, 2011 and to request the board endorse the recommendations of this committee.

Policy analysis

At its regular meeting of August 27, 2008 the board endorsed the establishment of a select committee to provide recommendations on items that require board resolution regarding the Hornby Island fire hall renewal project.

At its October 27, 2009 regular meeting the board adopted the following:

*THAT the board endorse the option of building a new fire hall on Hornby Island;
AND FURTHER THAT staff begin the application process of securing tenure for a new fire hall site;
AND FINALLY THAT staff develop a public consultation plan.*

Further, the board endorsed an amendment to the committee's terms of reference to include the committee as an integral part of the resulting public consultation process.

Staff recognizes that the planning and construction of a fire hall on Hornby Island is identified in the strategic plan and objectives of the regional district.

The recommendations of this report are consistent with these policies of the board.

Executive summary

At the direction of the board, staff began the application process of securing a sponsored Crown grant for the preferred one hectare site for a new fire hall on Hornby Island. A decision regarding the application is expected by the Ministry in August 2011.

Further to board direction, staff has developed a communication plan to provide the residents and property owners of Hornby Island with information regarding a new fire hall in advance of an electoral assent process.

The Hornby Island fire hall renewal project select committee reviewed the communications plan on May 20, 2011 and recommended revisions to the focus of the key messages. Based on this recommendation staff has revised the communications plan and the select committee is in concurrence and recommends proceeding with the plan as presented in this staff report.

Recommendation from the chief administrative officer:

THAT the communication plan for the Hornby Island fire hall project, dated June 16, 2011, be endorsed.

Respectfully:

D. Oakman

Debra Oakman, CMA
Chief Administrative Officer

History/background factors

At the direction of the board, staff began the application process of securing a sponsored Crown grant for the preferred one hectare site for a new fire hall on Hornby Island.

On December 20, 2010, staff received confirmation that the Ministry of Community, Sport and Cultural Development would sponsor the regional district's application for the Crown grant.

On February 1, 2011 staff received correspondence from the Ministry of Natural Resource Operations (MNRO) confirming that the Crown grant application will proceed to the referral stage of the application process. Further, MNRO indicated that a decision on the regional district's application may be expected in approximately 180 days from the date of correspondence.

In advance of the ministry decision regarding the sponsored Crown grant application, and at the direction of the board, community services and public affairs branch staff have developed a draft communications plan.

This draft communications plan was presented to the Hornby Island fire hall renewal select committee at its meeting of May 20, 2011. The committee recommended the draft plan be re-emphasized to focus the key messaging of the website and the community outreach phase on the importance of having a safe, functional and efficient workplace from which the fire fighters can provide fire protection and medical first responder services.

Based on the select committee's recommendations, staff has revised the communication plan and forwarded it to the committee members for review. The committee members have indicated concurrence that the communications plan, as revised and attached in appendix A, captures the wishes of the committee.

The communication plan proposes that the delivery of information to the residents and property owners of Hornby Island be provided in three interconnected phases, being the:

1. Introductory Connection:

This phase includes the use of Hornby Island-specific print media and direct postal mailings to introduce the project and the website to the residents and property owners of Hornby Island.

2. Website:

This phase includes dedicated pages to be located on the Comox Valley Regional District's website and would be the primary source of information for the residents and property owners. The website will include a cumulative Q and A page to post specific questions posed by the residents and property owners of Hornby Island.

3. Community Outreach:

This phase includes the delivery of information by way of open houses and community meeting presentations.

Options

Although the board may choose to amend the communication plan, the content of this staff report and the recommendations of the select committee are in support of proceeding with the plan as presented in this staff report.

Financial factors

The estimated cost of implementation of the communications plan is \$2,150 which includes postage, advertising, and meeting expenses. These costs will be borne by the Hornby Island fire protection service budget and are allocated in the 2011 budget for the service.

Legal factors

The communication plan recognizes that there is a legislated requirement for specific advertising prior to an electoral assent process. This communication plan does not include this specific advertising which will be developed and published separately and in the prescribed format and frequency required.

It is recognized that the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* of British Columbia regulates the disclosure of personal information. Accordingly, all personal information will be removed from questions submitted to the regional district prior to posting on the website.

Sustainability implications

The Comox Valley sustainability strategy, Objective 7.3.2 states: “Increase the number of residents participating in community processes”. This objective encourages public involvement in community planning and decision making processes.

The communications plan for the Hornby Island fire hall project supports this objective by facilitating public discussion and providing information required by the residents to make an informed choice on whether to proceed with the fire hall project.

Intergovernmental factors

The regional district’s application for a sponsored Crown grant is currently in the referral stage of its process.

Confirmation of a successful sponsored Crown grant application is expected by the MNRO in July or August of 2011. The communications plan was developed in advance of this notification.

Interdepartmental involvement

The communications plan was developed by community services staff with the guidance of public affairs and information services (PAIS) staff.

Implementation of the plan will be a cooperative effort with community services staff developing the website content and PAIS staff formatting and posting that content to the website. PAIS staff will monitor the social media sites and post appropriate responses based on information provided by community services staff.

Citizen/public relations

The goal of the communication plan is to utilize the most efficient and effective means of communicating and providing the information to the residents and property owners of Hornby Island so that they may make an informed choice on whether to proceed with the fire hall project.

Prepared by:

Concurrence:

J. Bast

T. Ian Smith

James Bast
Manager of Fire Services

T. Ian Smith, MCE
General Manager of Community Services

Attachments: Appendix A – “Communications Plan, Hornby Island Fire Hall”

Communications Plan Hornby Island Fire Hall

Purpose:

The development of a new fire hall on Hornby Island requires electoral assent which may be obtained by either “alternate approval process” or by “referendum”. Prior to this assent, the Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD) will need to communicate with residents to provide them with all of the information required for them to make an informed choice on whether to proceed with the fire hall project. The purpose of this communication plan is to identify the audience, the key messages, the methods of delivery of the relevant information and the roles and responsibilities of staff and the select committee.

Goal:

The goal of this plan is to utilize the most efficient and effective means of communicating the information to the residents and property owners of Hornby Island.

Proposed communication process:

It is proposed that the delivery of information to the residents and property owners of Hornby Island be provided in three interconnected phases, being the:

- Introductory Connection:
This phase includes the use of Hornby Island-specific print media and direct postal mailings to introduce the project and the website to the residents and property owners of Hornby Island.
- Website:
This phase includes dedicated pages to be located on the CVRD’s website and would be the primary source of information for the residents and property owners. The website will include a cumulative Q and A page to post specific questions posed by the residents and property owners of Hornby Island.
- Community Outreach:
This phase includes the delivery of information by way of open houses and community meeting presentations.

Audience:

Tax roll data confirms there are 1340 properties on Hornby Island with approximately 840 (63 percent) owners living off-island and 500 (37 percent) with owners living on-island. Further, it is recognized that of the on-island residents there are a number of rental tenants currently residing on Hornby Island. Based on the 2006 Canadian census profile of Hornby Island the number of rental properties is approximately 100 units.

In discussions with key persons on Hornby Island, staff estimates that approximately 80 to 90 percent of Hornby Island residents are connected to the Internet. It is assumed that a similar percentage of off-island property owners are connected to the Internet. Further, it is estimated that nearly 100 percent of on-island residents have access to, and read the Hornby Island-specific print media.

It is recognized that a challenge will be communication with on-island property owners, on-island renters and off-island property owners as these groups may access different media sources.

This communication plan seeks to provide equal access to information for these groups.

Introductory Connection:

It is proposed that the introductory communication would consist of a direct mail-out to off-island property owners as well as the use of paid advertising inserts in the Hornby Island-specific print media to access the on-island property owners and rental residents. It is proposed that the use of both the mail out and the advertisements will facilitate the highest rate of initial contact with the residents and property owners of Hornby Island.

The messaging for the mail-out would be to provide high level information regarding the project as well as to introduce the website as the primary source of information. It is felt that the introductory connection would introduce the members of the select committee, provide a brief synopsis of the current state of the fire hall including: safety issues and structural deficiencies, functional and spatial challenges, as well as water and sewerage constraints. The key message would be that the primary source of information and communication with the regional district is available by way of the website.

Timing

The regional district is expecting confirmation of the Crown grant of land for the fire hall in July or August of 2011, and it is proposed that the initial communication be distributed in May or June 2011.

It is recognized that the completion and publishing of the initial website pages is required prior to the introductory contact.

Costs

The costs of the introductory connection will include approximately \$550 for direct mailing to off- island property owners and \$300 for full page advertisements in the Grapevine and First Edition newspapers.

Accountability

Community services staff, with assistance of public affairs staff, will prepare the direct mailings for delivery to the post office. Further, public affairs staff will assist in the development of full page advertisements for the newspapers.

Select Committee

In this early phase of the communication plan the role of the select committee would be as ambassadors of the fire hall project with the task of directing specific inquiries to the website as the primary source of information.

Website:

This communication plan includes the use of web pages on the CVRD website. The vision is that this website will be the primary source of information as well as provide an opportunity to post specific questions from the residents and property owners of Hornby Island and provide measured answers.

The advantage of delivering the information primarily by way of website is that both on and off islanders will have equal access to the information. Another advantage of the website will be that fire department members, select committee members and Hornby Island Residents and Ratepayers Association (HIRRA) members, who are asked specific questions directly, can direct those persons to the website as the primary and consistent, source of information.

It is planned that the website will include a contact e-mail to provide an opportunity for the regional district to gather specific questions from individuals, and then post the questions and answers for the greater audience of Hornby Island to view by way of a cumulative "Q and A" page.

The key message of the website will be the importance of having a safe, functional and efficient workplace from which the fire fighters can provide fire protection and medical first responder services on Hornby Island. Secondary messaging will include; the importance of a seismically sound fire hall and why building a new fire hall, on a larger piece of land is the most viable option available.

Foundation information

In the initial stages of the fire hall project, prior to design and costing, it is proposed that the website would provide the history and state of the current fire hall, along with the rationale for pursuing a new fire hall. This could be done by providing narrative as well as access to engineer's reports, staff reports and select committee minutes.

The current status of the sponsored Crown grant application may also be posted as that process unfolds.

Ongoing and updated information

As the fire hall project progresses through the design and costing phase, the website will be updated to reflect the new information. It is expected that each update will invite further written questions that can be posted on the Q and A page.

As the project proceeds towards electoral assent, the website can continue to provide citizens with updated project cost information and eventually become one of the advertising media for the community outreach phase.

Project construction information

As the fire hall project proceeds to construction and beyond, it is proposed that the website will remain "live" to provide the residents with updated information. It is recognized that during this phase, the website updates will consist of high level information only and not delve into technical data. It is proposed that many photos of the project may be posted to possibly inspire a sense of project ownership by the citizens.

Website updates and timing

The development of the website and the foundation information will be the initial communications task of the community services staff. Once this website is "live", the introductory contact phase can begin. It is expected that the website will be updated at least monthly during the early stages of the project, as new information is not available frequently. However, during the design and costing phase of the project, new information may be available more frequently and will be posted accordingly.

As an additional communication tool, this plan also proposes that the CVRD utilize Facebook and Twitter social media to direct the residents and property owners of Hornby Island to the website as the primary source of information.

Cost

The cost of maintaining the website will consist of regional district staff time.

Accountability

It is proposed that community services staff will gather the information and create the narrative for the website with public affairs staff formatting and posting the information to the website. Public affairs staff will monitor the social media pages and post appropriate responses based on information provided by community services staff.

Select Committee

During this phase of the communications plan it is proposed that the select committee would provide staff with input, photos and conceptual elements for the design and visual appearance of the website. It is

recognized that the website will need to follow the regional district style guide regarding formatting, but the select committee will contribute to bring the Hornby Island “look and feel” to the website. This input is of an operational nature and does not require board endorsement.

Community Outreach:

The community outreach phase of the communications plan includes the delivery of cost and taxation implication information in advance of an electoral assent process. Further this phase will provide an opportunity to introduce the design, form and character of the new fire hall, in a more tangible way. This may be accomplished by way of open houses and meeting presentations on Hornby Island.

It is proposed that community services staff will arrange for at least two public meetings on Hornby Island to facilitate an open discussion with the citizens regarding the project, the cost and taxation implications. These two public meetings will be advertised to the on-island property owners and rental residents by way of full page advertisements in the Grapevine and First Edition newspapers, and to the off-island property owners by way of the website.

It is recognized that during the community outreach phase some residents may wish to engage in discussions regarding foundation information including explored options and rationale for the development of a new fire hall. These discussions will be managed by staff recognizing that the key messaging for the community outreach phase is the importance of having a safe, functional and efficient workplace from which the fire fighters can provide fire protection and medical first responder services on Hornby Island. Secondary messaging will include; the importance of a seismically sound fire hall and why building a new fire hall, on a larger piece of land is the most viable option available.

Timing

The timing of this outreach will be developed once the design and costs are refined and taxation implications are confirmed.

Cost

The cost of the community outreach phase will include transportation and accommodation for at least two staff members, hall rental and printing costs for visual aids if required. The use of PowerPoint would lower these costs. The meeting costs are estimated at \$500 per meeting. Advertising costs for the public meetings are estimated at \$300 for full page advertisements in the Grapevine and First Edition newspapers.

Accountability

Community services and administration staff will develop the agenda and visual aids for the community outreach phase, with public affairs staff guidance.

Select Committee

During the community outreach phase of the communications plan it is proposed that the select committee would host the public meetings and provide a local connection between staff and the residents of Hornby Island.

Required Advertising:

It is recognized that there is a legislated requirement for specific advertising prior to an electoral assent process. This communication plan does not include this specific advertising which will be developed and published in the prescribed format and frequency required.