



Ganges Fire Hall Update #3

We Are All In This Together

With health and safety top of mind amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, the Board and the Fire Rescue Advisory Committee now meet online to continue to work on the Fire Rescue Needs and Facilities Assessment Project. The Board and the Advisory Committee are deeply committed to creating safe, responsible solutions for fire protection and public safety, recognizing the impact of COVID-19 on our Salt Spring community.

Our goal is to continue the leg work, ensure all questions are answered and be ready when the time is right to move forward. We are developing online opportunities for you to learn more and to provide feedback on any proposed options for a new fire hall. Please stay tuned for more details.

In the meantime, be sure to check out our website for our updated Q and A, reports and project updates. Sign up to receive Project Updates via email at <https://saltspringfire.com/fire-rescue-advisory-committee/>

Reports Recommend New Home for Ganges Fire Hall

Two recent reports confirming the status of the Ganges Fire Hall were reviewed by both the Salt Spring Island Fire Protection District Board of Trustees and the Fire Rescue Advisory Committee of community volunteers.

The full reports, as well as the Board Report with the Advisory Committee recommendations can be found on the Salt Spring Fire Rescue website:

1. [2020 Fire Station Baseline Needs Assessment](#), prepared by FireWise Consulting
2. [2020 Update, Fire Fall No. 1 Structural Assessment Report](#), prepared by Herold Engineering
3. [April 27, 2020 Fire Protection District Board Report](#)

These reports provide evidence-based assessments of both the 60-year-old building and the site, information that is critical for making informed decisions about the future of the Fire Hall. The reports conclude that the condition of the building and size of the site cannot support a modern fire hall, and it would be cost-prohibitive to bring it into compliance with the current building code and other legislative and regulatory requirements for fire protection and public safety.

Recommendations include both short- and long-term options.

- **In the short-term:** there are several critical building issues that need to be addressed including repairs to the roof, ventilation and electrical system to meet WorkSafeBC, Occupational Health and Safety and the BC Building Code for the safety of Firefighters and others who work in or visit the building. On April 27, the Fire Protection District Board voted to proceed with getting quotes and options to address these issues. This information will be used to determine next steps to address these deficiencies.



- **In the long-term:** both reports clearly indicate that the current facility is neither suitable nor does it make financial sense to rebuild in this location. Key deficiencies include:
 - The site is not seismically sound – the building and the lack of a solid foundation make it unlikely to withstand a major disaster, reducing the capacity of emergency services to respond. The cost of a seismic retrofit, according to the high-level ball-park estimates provided in the Herold Engineering report is in the range of \$1.5 million to \$2 million. This does not include the additional costs to renovate the building.
 - The site is already too small for the existing fire protection equipment, let alone a site that will need to accommodate fire services 30-50 years from now. Currently fire trucks, staff and visitor vehicles need to use the adjacent public property for parking, including the storage container next to the building which is also on public property.

Given this recent and updated information, the Fire Protection District Board voted not to pursue rebuilding the Ganges Fire Hall and its foundations, and instead seek another location for a future fire hall such as the Brinkworthy site.

Options for a new fire hall will be shared with the public as part of the public engagement process, and Islanders will be able to consider the different options to ensure fire rescue services meet the public safety needs of the community. Plans are underway to enable online access to information and engagement opportunities.

Next Steps

Brinkworthy Site: Both the Board and the Advisory Committee recognize the importance of investigating the Brinkworthy site as a potential alternative. The Fire Protection District already owns this site and it meets response time criteria. Access to water at the site is being reviewed in conjunction with North Salt Spring Waterworks District.

Additional Report Recommendations: The Fire Rescue Advisory Committee and Board of Trustees will continue with online meetings to review the remaining recommendations in the Baseline Needs Assessment Report as well as any follow up on the potential of the Brinkworthy site. Project Updates will continue to provide the latest information as the project continues.

Communications Update

While initial communication plans called for extensive face-to-face outreach, such as attending the Farmers' Market, community group presentations, tours and open houses, COVID-19 and new physical distancing protocols has changed all that. Stay tuned for new online opportunities to learn more and provide feedback.

Stay in the Loop

Please sign up for our progress updates and details of upcoming engagement opportunities by email at: <https://saltspringfire.com/fire-rescue-advisory-committee/>

Thank you for your continued interest in creating community solutions for public health and safety. Take care – and stay well!

