

Minutes of the Town Hall Meeting of the Salt Spring Island Fire Protection District

Date: September 8, 2025

Location: Training Room, Ganges Fire Hall
105 Lower Ganges Road, Salt Spring Island and Electronic Meeting (Microsoft TEAMS)

Members Present: Rollie Cook Cook, Chair
David Courtney, Trustee
Mary Lynn Hetherington, Trustee (TEAMS)
Dennis Lucarelli, Trustee
Rob Oliver, Trustee
Robin Williams, Trustee

Staff Members Present: Rodney Dieleman, Corporate Administrator and Financial Officer
Jamie Holmes, Fire Chief
Hans Hazenboom, New Fire Hall Project Owners Representative
Sarah Shugar, Recorder

Others Present: Approximately 11 members of the public (10 in person, 1 on TEAMS)
Gulf Islands Driftwood Reporter (TEAMS)

These minutes follow the order of the agenda although the sequence may have varied.

1. CALL TO ORDER & WELCOME

Chair Cook called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. and acknowledged that the meeting is being held in the unceded territories of the Coast Salish Peoples. Chair Cook reported the Town Hall meeting is an important meeting to present updates and receive public feedback on the draft 2026 budget.

2. DRAFT 2026 BUDGET

Finance and Audit Committee Chair Robin Williams presented a few highlights of the draft 2026 budget and thanked CAO Dieleman and the Finance and Audit Committee for their work in preparing the draft budget.

A member of the public thanked staff for the draft budget report and commented that the if tax increases were to continue at the same rate, the impacts would become unsustainable in the future. The member of the public asked for more information regarding how the budget projections are calculated. CAO Dieleman reported the administration budget is projected at approximately 2% increase.

Operation budgets are projected at inflation plus due to fuel, parts and supplies etc. that are subject to variables. The member of the public asked if the capital costs include the funds needed for the new fire hall 1, the proposed satellite hall in the north end and a new fire hall in the south end. CAO Dieleman reported there are reserve funds set aside for apparatus, buildings and small capital purchases such as equipment. It was noted the capital reserve accounts are detailed on page 9 of the agenda package.

A member of the public asked for information regarding the continuing balance of around \$500,000. CAO Dieleman reported \$526,000 is held in a reserve fund for the new fire hall and it will be spent on the new fire hall project in 2025. The member of the public asked for more information regarding the payroll liability non-capital reserve fund. Chief Holmes reported the fund was originally started when the District received a return from the pension corporation due to an error in allocating the funds and now it is an un-funded liabilities account for sick-time and vacation benefits. CAO Dieleman reported the current liability is approximately \$465,000 and the District is allocating \$100,000 per year to the liability.

Chair Cook reported the Finance and Audit Committee will meeting on September 9, 2025 to receive the feedback received at this town hall meeting and the Board of Trustees will consider second reading of the 2026 Fire Protection Taxation Bylaw at the September 15, 2025 meeting.

3. 5-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN RE NEW SATELLITE FIRE HALL

CAO Dieleman presented a Proposed Satellite Fire Hall Timeline and Implementation Plan regarding to construct and commission a new satellite fire hall in northern end of the island by 2030.

A member of the public referred to the 2010 and 2015 FUS reports and asked if there is a more recent FUS report. Chief Holmes reported he requested a full FUS report and was advised that FUS is not providing full reports. The member of the public stated the 2010 and 2015 FUS reports spoke to a new housing development in Channel Ridge and that land was supposed to be provided to the District for a fire hall in Channel Ridge. Chair Cook advised the Channel Ridge development went through bankruptcy process. The member of the public asked whether the District abandoned the plan for a fire hall in Channel Ridge development. Chief Holmes reported there is no requirement for developers to donate land for a fire hall on Salt Spring Island. The District is planning to relocate the Central fire hall (hall 3) further north to provide more fire protection coverage to the north end of the island. The new Fire Hall is located approximately two kilometers north of the current Fire Hall in Ganges. The member of the public asked whether the District has asked the current developer of Channel Ridge if they would provide land for a fire hall. Chair Cook reported the District advertised in the Driftwood and the SS Exchange seeking potential land. Staff are in discussions with one property owner regarding land that may be suitable for a new satellite fire hall. CAO Dieleman reported staff have contacted the Channel Ridge developer.

A member of the public asked for more information regarding a new satellite fire hall. Chief Holmes reported Hall 3 was built in 1994 and the building does not meet current needs. A new satellite hall would be designed to be added on to meet future needs as required. There is no room to add on at Hall 3 due to the placement of the building on the lot. Hall 3 does not have SCBA (self-contained breathing apparatus) fill station, and the medic unit is currently located outside of the building.

A member of the public asked whether a new satellite hall would be similar in size and use as the Fulford fire hall. Chief Holmes noted Hall 2 has 3 truck bays; the firefighter gear is stored in the truck bays and there is no classroom.

A member of the public expressed support for including planning for new satellite halls in the strategic plan and asked if the trustee that was making statements regarding a new satellite hall brought his proposal for a fire hall in the north end to the Board. Chair Cook stated that Trustee Courtney has not brought his proposal to the Board and noted that fire halls are required to be built to a post-disaster standard and building a new satellite hall would require an architect, a geo-tech engineer as required by the Province.

Trustee Courtney reported he contacted the BC Architecture Society, and the building would not require to be designed by an architect and stated that staff's projected cost of \$1000 per square foot for a new satellite fire hall is not accurate.

A member of the public expressed support for the governance process and asked if the plan for the new satellite hall has been vetted. Chief Holmes reported the plan is preliminary at this time, and the budget is a placeholder for the project with the design phase in the future. Staff will continue to be responsible with taxpayer funds. Chair Cook reported the District has been putting funds aside and this is a preliminary plan.

A member of the public advised that the BC Architecture Society allows small buildings to be built by an engineer without an architect although it is unlikely that an engineer would do a fire hall project without an architect. The member of the public asked whether there is financial justification to build a new hall in the north end of the island. Chief Holmes reported the new Fire Hall 1 will be 2 kilometers north of the current Fire Hall 1 and the more we have fire halls distributed across the island, the more fire protection we can provide.

A member of the public asked how the Board would address the public discord regarding the plan for a satellite fire hall in the north end of the island. Chair Cook advised that the Board of Trustees is legislated by the Local Government Act and follows a democratic process.

A member of the public stated he asked for reconciliation between Trustee Courtney's proposal and the Board's proposal at the Annual General Meeting and stated that as a ratepayer, it is disappointing that the differences have not been resolved.

Chair Cook reported there will be a Trustee election in the Spring 2026.

Trustee Courtney stated he has tried to bring proposals to CAO Dieleman. Trustee Oliver noted any proposal should be brought to the Board of Trustees.

A member of the public stated social media is not the place to do Board of Trustees business, asked Trustee Courtney to stop doing District business on social media and recommended that Trustee Courtney present his plan for a satellite fire hall to the Board.

4. NEW FIRE HALL PROJECT UPDATE

Chair Cook reported the new fire hall is being built on time and on budget and expressed appreciation to Owners Representative Hazenboom.

Owners Representative Hans Hazenboom presented a new fire hall project update and presented the following highlights:

- Held a site tour for Trustees, Committee members and elected officials on September 3, 2025.
- The plumbing is being installed.
- Waterproofing has begun and vapor barriers will begin next week.
- The sewer is connected to the CRD main sewer system.
- Water supply includes one 6-inch and one 3-inch water connection to North Salt Spring Waterworks District in addition to a well on the property and water storage tanks.

Chief Holmes presented a virtual 3-D model of the new fire hall and presented the following highlights:

- The design includes a third truck bay outside that can be framed in, in the future as needed.
- The Paid-on Call (POC) Firefighter's Association is fundraising for a museum, and the prep work has been done to save costs in the future.
- Office spaces have been scaled down and meetings will happen in the meeting room spaces.
- There is a dedicated SCBA (self-contained breathing apparatus) room, SCBA compressor room and gear lockers. Currently, the firefighter turnout gear is in the truck bays, and it absorbs the truck exhaust. There will be a designated gear room in the new fire hall.
- The new fire hall is designed to support operations including systems designed to get firefighting equipment to be back in service and ready for the next call.
- The CRD Emergency Operations Centre will be in the new fire hall, and the building will serve as a command center for a large-scale emergency event.

CAO Dieleman reported the training room has been designed so it can be rented out to community groups for meeting space.

A member of the public asked if there is sufficient capacity for an addition to the new fire hall in the future. Chief Holmes reported the new fire hall is designed to be future

proofed including that there is sufficient capacity in the solar panels and electrical supply for additions in the future as needed.

A member of the public asked if the emergency services will have a space in the new fire hall. Chief Holmes reported the CRD Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) including radio operations will be in the new fire hall.

Chair Cook asked what the target date is for occupancy permit. Owner's Representative Hazenboom reported the target is to have the occupancy permit by the end of 2025.

A member of the public asked if any issues are expected. Owner's Representative Hazenboom reported staff have been proactive in ordering equipment ahead of US tariffs.

A member of the public asked whether it is anticipated to use the \$500,000 in the capital reserve fund. CAO Dieleman reported yes, it is anticipated the funds will be spent on the new fire hall project in 2025.

A member of the public stated there are supply issues with transformers and asked whether the project requires a transformer. Owner's Representative Hazenboom reported will be supplied by BC Hydro has the transformer stored for when it is needed.

Chair Cook thanked Hans Hazenboom, Chief Holmes and CAO Dieleman for their work with the project team.

5. COMMENTS & QUESTIONS

Chair Cook thanked everyone for attending the town hall and spoke to the Board of Trustee's responsibility to deliver a budget that meets the needs of the department and the taxpayers.

6. ADJOURNMENT

By general consent, the meeting was adjourned at 8:00 p.m.



Rollie Cook
Chair, Board of Trustees



Rodney Dieleman
Corporate Administrator