

Mayne Island Residents and Ratepayers Association

August 2009 Newsletter

We are facing an important issue over the next few weeks with regards to the proposed Emergency Services Complex. The Improvement District has proposed a 4.216 million dollar facility. Naturally this impacts every property owner on the island as this will result in a significant tax increases over the next 20 years to pay for this.

We would like to first state that the MIRRA Board emphatically supports the Mayne Island Fire Department, Firefighters and the need for a replacement hall.

However, we have serious issues with the process and the resulting outcome of a very expensive proposal from a very small tax base. There is a great deal of information and speculation in the community with much to be examined and digested.

Each individual Mayne Island property owner who is a Canadian citizen and a BC resident is afforded the power of a vote in the referendum. We ask that you consider the following when you vote:

- **The proposed tax model is subject to annual review and change. The current blended tax model could change without notice to an assessment based model, resulting in extraordinary tax increases for some property owners.**
- **The Improvement District has based taxation upon a repayment of a 4.21 million dollar loan over 20 years at an interest rate of 6.5%. The annual repayment figure is quoted as being \$275,000.00. Our calculations show this repayment figure actually will be \$375,000.00, plus an additional 5% provincial tax collectors fee (\$18,750.00) – making the total annual additional taxation burden as being \$393,750.00. This is over 40% above the taxation rate quoted by the Improvement District.**
- **No information has been presented to indicate the Improvement District has seriously considered any alternative to the current proposal of demolishing the existing fire hall and its associated infrastructure (Hose tower, water tower, sewage disposal system, etc). This ‘scorched earth’ redevelopment is potentially much more expensive than building on a new site or adjoining property.**

- **Additionally, the Improvement District has not put forward any plans or budget for how the Fire Department will operate for the estimated six months of demolition, site preparation and construction. Where will the equipment and gear be stored and maintained during this period?**
- **The Improvement District is committed to the construction of an EOC (Emergency Operations Centre) to serve the community in the event of a disaster. As far as we can determine, this is not mandated by the Province or any other senior government. Currently proposed as being located in the relocated second story of the existing fire hall, with a budget of \$460,000.00. We ask why, in the event of a disaster, the School, Community Centre or AG Hall could not be utilized for this purpose? Through the CRD, taxpayers on the Southern Gulf Islands have already contributed over \$1.5 million to make arrangements to utilize existing facilities in the community to be used in an emergency – some of these funds purchased the generator for the Community Centre for use as an EOC.**
- **In the August Mayneliner, the Chair of the Improvement District states that the ‘base cost’ of the new construction will be \$235.00 sq/ft. We are unsure how this is calculated. The Improvement District is proposing a fire hall of 922 square metres with an EOC of 311 square metres which equals a total of 1233 square metres. 1233 square metres = 13271.9 square feet. The total referendum amount is \$4,216,000. This equals \$317.66 per square foot. The current budget for the Saturna Island fire hall is \$194.00 per square foot. The fire hall being constructed at Port Renfrew is \$186.00 per square foot.**
- **Superior Shuttle. Much emphasis is being put on the potential reduced insurance rates when we obtain the ‘Superior Shuttle’ rating. The inference is that the new fire hall is the last piece of the puzzle to obtain this certification. What has not been disclosed is the requirement and costs for additional storage tanks around the island, additional equipment, training and full real time certification testing. This is not an easy undertaking and the construction of a new hall does not insure we can or will obtain this certification.**
- **WorkSafe BC. It has been stated that, in the event of a ‘no’ vote, the WorkSafe BC (WCB) would undertake an inspection with the inference the fire hall would be closed down due to safety violations. In our research we can find no instance in British Columbia (or Canada) where a fire hall has been closed under these circumstances.**
- **The Improvement District states that they will not begin applying for Government grants until after the referendum. The aggressive building schedule has the building going to Tender in January 2010, with construction beginning in April 2010. This effectively gives no time for the grant process, to which typically we would not be eligible for after construction starts. From what we can determine, no research has**

been undertaken as to what grants would be available or when applications would need to be submitted. In addition, to date all Federal / Provincial infrastructure programmes specifically exclude Improvement Districts. In view of the 2/3 cost recovery it would seem imperative that at least an examination of alternative governance forms which would allow this community to qualify for these grants. The potential savings to the taxpayers on this project alone would be \$2.8 million. Suggestions that this possibility be followed up have been rejected by the Improvement District.

- The Improvement District has elected to go to an off island consultant and architect for this project. Our community holds a wealth of knowledge and expertise in the form of architects, engineers, financial experts, managers and construction experts that have not been effectively tapped into. There are \$640,000.00 in design and management fees on this proposed project.

We feel that proper baseline planning has not taken place with regards to the proposed project. Alternate sites, more basic building design and utilization of local expertise have not been properly considered. As a community, we are being presented with one option. This proposal is expensive and we have no assurances as to how each taxpayer will be impacted over the 20 year term as the tax model can change each and every year.

Should a 'no' vote occur, we suggest that the Improvement District immediately structure a new building committee, composed of knowledgeable local residents. This committee would be given terms of reference to properly study and report the alternatives within a 6 month period. Part of this process would be the rationalization of the need for the EOC building as opposed to just constructing a standalone fire hall. This action would allow an 'on island' solution to an island issue.

**Reminder of Annual General Meeting
Sunday, August 16 at the Agricultural Hall 1:30PM**