

REPORT TO SALT SPRING ISLAND LOCAL COMMUNITY COMMISSION MEETING OF THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 2026

SUBJECT Ganges Fire Hall Repurposing Evaluation

ISSUE SUMMARY

To review the Ganges Firehall Repurposing Evaluation Report and determine next steps regarding the future use of the former Ganges Firehall site.

BACKGROUND

The former Ganges Firehall, located at 105 Lower Ganges Road on Salt Spring Island (SSI) will be vacated in quarter four of 2026 following the completion of the new SSI Firehall. Once the building and land has been vacated the Capital Regional District (CRD) (under the SSI Parks and Recreation Service delegated to the SSI Local Community Commission (LCC)) will be responsible for ongoing operations and maintenance.

As part of the planning process the LCC directed staff to retain a registered professional to evaluate the building for compliance with the BC Building Code and identify costs and regulatory implications associated with a potential change in occupancy. This assessment (Appendix A) includes a comparison of the estimated costs to repurpose the structure for assembly uses such as a community hall or farmers market, against the costs associated with demolishing the building to enable future development of the site.

Based on existing condition reports and BC Building Code requirements, the report determines that the existing fire hall building cannot support assembly occupancy without substantial upgrades including modernization of building systems, new fire and life safety protection, accessibility compliance, interior reconfiguration and building envelope replacement.

The former Ganges Firehall site is centrally located with future uses for the site sparking community interest and prompting online discussions. When considering future uses of the site a needs assessment should be completed to determine any deficits in community spaces and to ensure that future investments align with community needs and available resources. As the property is located in an area of high interest to First Nations and of high archaeological significance, First Nations engagement to identify interests and options early in the process may support with obtaining regulatory authorizations required for property upgrades. Community consultation to present options for future uses could follow to gather additional information and determine if there is rate payer support for higher cost options to repurpose the site.

ALTERNATIVES

Alternative 1

That the Salt Spring Island Local Community Commission requests that staff retain a consultant to complete a Needs Assessment, community consultation and First Nations engagement to gather additional information to determine the future uses of the former Ganges Firehall site located at 105 Lower Ganges Road.

Alternative 2

That the Salt Spring Island Local Community Commission requests that the report be referred back to staff for additional information.

IMPLICATIONS

Financial Implications

\$30,000 of Community Works Funding was included in the 2025 SSI Parks and Recreation Capital plan to engage a registered professional to complete the repurposing evaluation. The contract for this work came in under budget at \$8,950 leaving \$21,050 in the project fund.

An additional \$40,000 of reserve funding has been allocated in 2026 to support the Firehall Repurpose project bringing the total project budget to \$61,050.

Class D cost estimates (+/- 30%) have been developed for the renovation of the existing space into a usable assembly occupancy and for the demolition of the existing building, including asbestos abatement and removal of foundations.

Renovation = \$2,838,032 (+/- 30%)

Demolition = \$408,663 (+/- 30%)

First Nations Implications

The former Ganges Firehall is located within an area regulated under the *Heritage Conservation Act* and is of high cultural significance. Prior to any ground alterations related to demolition, remediation and/or rebuild, that include excavation (e.g., slab and asphalt removal) permit(s), capping (paving) and/or decommissioning of services/utilities, a permit will be required from the Archaeology Branch (Ministry of Forests). Prior to issuing any permit(s), the province will consult with First Nations having territory that encompasses the property. Timelines may exceed one year. If issued, permit conditions may have financial implications.

In addition, First Nations with traditional territory in the area are likely to have specific interests and recommendations for how the property is used in future. Interests could include 'land back' and calls for art and signage to support First Nations visibility and public education. One First Nation has already suggested that the property be repurposed for use as a museum of Indigenous and settler history on the island.

CONCLUSION

The 2025 Ganges Firehall Repurposing Evaluation provides an overview of the building's condition and the significant upgrades required to support any future assembly use. The findings highlight the need for additional analysis to determine community priorities and assess the feasibility of potential redevelopment options. Given the site's central location and high public interest, a structured needs assessment and community consultation process would help clarify the most beneficial long-term use. These steps will support informed decision making and ensure that future investments align with community needs and available resources.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Salt Spring Island Local Community Commission requests that staff retain a consultant to complete a Needs Assessment, community consultation and First Nations engagement to gather additional information to determine the future uses of the former Ganges Firehall site located at 105 Lower Ganges Road.

Submitted by:	Dan Ovington, BA, Senior Manager, Salt Spring Island Administration
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ATTACHMENTS:

Appendix A: SSI Firehall Repurposing Code Evaluation – Dated Dec 12, 2025