



What We Heard

Engagement Summary Report

Project: Nanaimo River Fire Protection Service Area Feasibility Study

Date: October 5, 2022

Overview of the Project/Process and Objective for Engagement

In 2005, the boundaries of the Extension Fire Protection Service Area in the Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN) were expanded to include 47 additional properties (now 72 properties) in the Nanaimo River community (including South Forks Road.) A new fire protection service area was also created for the purpose of raising capital funds to build a new fire hall that would better serve residents in the Nanaimo River community. At the same time as the expansion of the Extension Fire Protection Service Area and the creation of the Nanaimo River Fire Protection Service Area, a loan authorization bylaw was adopted by the RDN enabling \$280,000 in borrowing for the purpose of constructing a satellite firehall in the Nanaimo River community. Borrowing of the full amount did not take place, but a loan of \$20,761 was taken out in 2006 for capital start-up expenditures. In addition, a capital reserve was established to hold funds collected through tax allocations from the Nanaimo River properties. The capital reserve fund currently has \$216,554.

Recognizing the significance of this matter, the RDN committed to delivering a responsive, transparent public engagement program in 2022, that would gather input from Nanaimo River property owners/residents and other interested stakeholders.

The objectives of the public engagement program were to:

1. Raise awareness among the Nanaimo River community that the fire service in that area is being reviewed;
2. Engage on preliminary fire service options for the community;
3. Inform property owners/residents and other interested stakeholders of the opportunities and implications associated with fire service options;
4. Gather input on fire service options; and
5. Develop recommendations to be considered by the RDN Electoral Area Services Committee.

The Process

The community engagement process involved engaging with individuals and groups who were aware of and invested in the project and the topic, as well those who were less invested and perhaps not aware. Efforts were taken to make all residents/property owners and other interested parties aware of the engagement process and facilitate their involvement. The various methods of outreach and information used in this phase of the project touched on two public participation processes under the International Association of Public Participation's (IAP2) spectrum:

- 1) Inform – within this process the team provided balanced and objective information to assist stakeholders in understanding the matter at hand



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- 2) Consult – where interested parties had opportunities to provide input on options and discuss the matter with subject matter experts

The Dwelling Protection Grades (DPGs) assigned by Fire Underwriters Survey (FUS) was a significant component of the topic being examined in this project. The RDN was in regular contact with FUS prior to the Open House. Days prior to the scheduled Open House FUS became aware of a mapping error upon which they had continued to assign a DPG rating of 3B for the Nanaimo River area. A 3B rating indicates that fire protection services rely on water tenders (a truck equipped with a water tank), rather than fire hydrants to provide water for fire protection. This rating generally results in significant insurance savings. When this mapping error was discovered, FUS served notice to the RDN that the DPG would be changing from 3B to 5 effective November 1, 2022, resulting in no insurance industry-recognized fire protection for the area. This will lead to potential impacts on fire insurance premiums for affected property owners in the service area. The fact that this information came to light days prior to the Open House resulted in residents/property owners and other interested parties learning of the pending change at the Open House. It should be noted that respondents to the RDN survey may not have had full awareness of the pending change to the DPG and the potential that property insurance premiums could increase.

Awareness and Engagement Activities Undertaken

The public outreach phase of the feasibility study was launched on July 18, 2022, with the repopulation of a *Get Involved RDN* project page (getinvolved.rdn.ca/nanaimo-river-fire). To help promote the page and upcoming engagement opportunities a fact sheet (see Appendix A) and invitation (see Appendix B) were mailed directly to 75 Nanaimo River property owners/residents on July 20, 2022, via the Canada Post Precision Targeter tool. These materials provided information about the project and invited recipients to a public Open House that was scheduled to take place on August 13, 2022 at GoGo's Christmas Tree Farm. Included in these materials was a QR code directing people to the project page and a call to action for recipients to register for project updates on the *Get Involved RDN* online platform. The fact sheet and invitation were also posted to the *Get Involved RDN* project page.

In addition to the Canada Post mail out, the RDN sent an electronic newsletter (see Appendix C) with the same information to those registered on the *Get Involved RDN* project page. Ten registrants received the email; 100 per cent of those registrants opened the email.

The RDN also created a Facebook event on the RDN Facebook account (www.facebook.com/events/412146714206565). A total of 17 people indicated through this platform that they would attend the August 13 event.

The RDN also took out a quarter-page ad in Nanaimo News Bulletin (see Appendix D). This ad (a resized version of the rack card invitation) was published in the August 3, 2022, edition.

Lastly, the RDN posted the Open House on their *News & Highlights* events calendar, on the *Get Involved RDN* project page and placed Open House invitation posters at group mailboxes within the Nanaimo River community.



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On August 13, 2022, at 1 p.m. RDN staff and the consulting team conducted the Open House at GoGo's Christmas Tree Farm (2625 S Forks Road) in an outdoor gazebo. This event kicked off the project's formal public input period which was open from August 13 through August 26, 2022.

Upon arrival at the Open House attendees were asked to sign in at the registration desk (see Appendix E). There they were provided with a copy of the fact sheet, a frequently asked questions (see Appendix F) document and a four-page feedback form (see Appendix G). As they entered the gazebo they were asked to "pin" the location of their home/property on a large format community map (see Appendix H). Attendees were then encouraged to make their way at their own pace around a display of nine information panels (see Appendix I).

The information panels provided information on the following topics:

- Goals of the engagement and desire to create a safe space where thoughts and opinions could be expressed
- Fire Underwriter's DPG
- DPG classification criteria
- The current DPGs in the Nanaimo River community
- How DPG ratings affect insurance premiums
- Options for consideration
- Project timeline
- Decision-making road map
- Two maps - one showing the current (interim) DPGs and one showing projected DPGs after October 31, 2022

Subject matter experts Anita Sharma, RDN Fire Services Coordinator, Tim Pley, Principal, Gordon Anderson, Associate, and Alicia Puusepp, Associate with Tim Pley & Associates were on hand to answer questions and listen to concerns. Once attendees reviewed the information provided, they were encouraged to complete and submit their feedback using the form provided.

A total of 39 people attended the event (see Appendix J for event photos.)

To ensure the feedback form was accessible for all, the RDN converted the feedback form into an online survey accessible via the *Get Involved RDN* project page and uploaded a PDF version for print under the *Supporting Documents* section.

Feedback submissions were accepted at the event, via the *Get Involved RDN* project page, by mail, email or in-person drop-off at the RDN office.

On August 15, 2022, a "Thank You" email/newsletter (see Appendix K) was posted/sent to event attendees and *Get Involved RDN* project page registrants. The outreach piece thanked individuals for their participation, highlighted the upcoming input deadline and encouraged them to remind neighbours and friends in the



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Nanaimo River area to submit their input before the August 26, 2022, deadline. 81 per cent of recipients through the Get Involved RDN project page opened the newsletter.

On August 23, 2022, an “Input Deadline” reminder email/newsletter (see Appendix L) was posted/sent to the RDN’s stakeholder list and *Get Involved RDN* project page registrants. The *Get Involved RDN* newsletter had an open rate of 87.5 per cent.

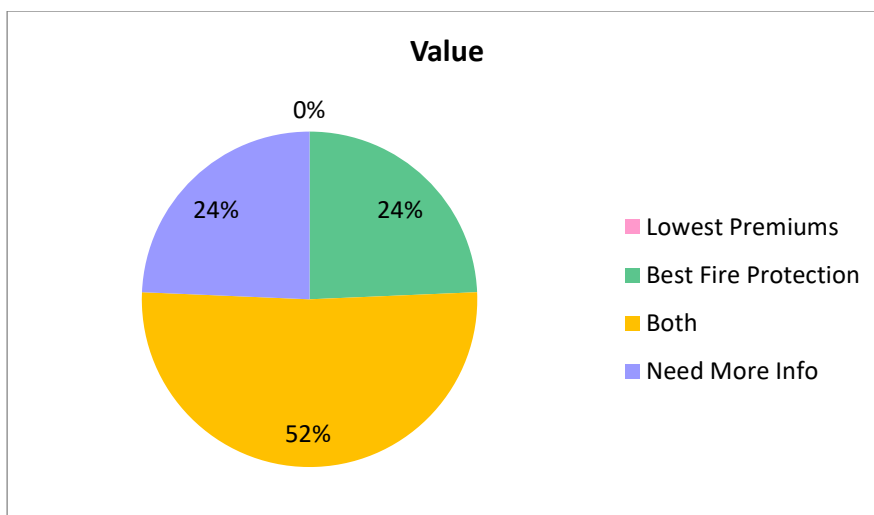
The input period closed at 4:30 p.m. on August 26, 2022.

What We Heard

A total of 25 hard copy feedback forms were received (see Appendix M) and a total of 13 submissions came by way of the *Get Involved RDN* project page survey (see Appendix N). In total, 38 individuals submitted their input to the RDN during the public input period (August 13 – 26, 2022).

Of the 38 submissions, 33 individuals identified as living in the Nanaimo River community with the remaining five identifying they were from Extension or other areas. A total of 29 of the 33 Nanaimo River respondents own their properties. The remainder either rent or did not respond to the question. Just over 50 per cent of respondents living in the Nanaimo River community reported that they have resided at their property for over 20 years.

When asked what community members value most, no (zero per cent) respondents selected “Lowest Premiums,” nine (24 per cent) selected “Best Fire Protection,” 19 (52 Per cent) selected “Both” indicating that low premiums and best fire protection was of most value (as opposed to only fire protection or low insurance premiums), and nine (24 per cents) desire additional information.

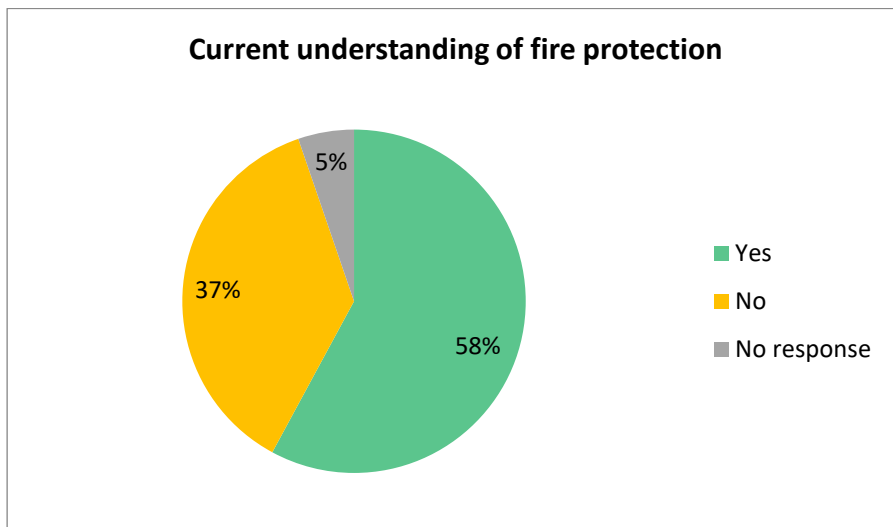




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When asked if they were comfortable with their current understanding of fire protection services for the Nanaimo River community 22 (58 per cent) indicated they had a comfortable understanding, 14 (37 per cent) indicated they did not and two (five per cent) did not answer the question.



When asked what other information would be helpful to better understand the current fire protection service respondents provided the following comments:

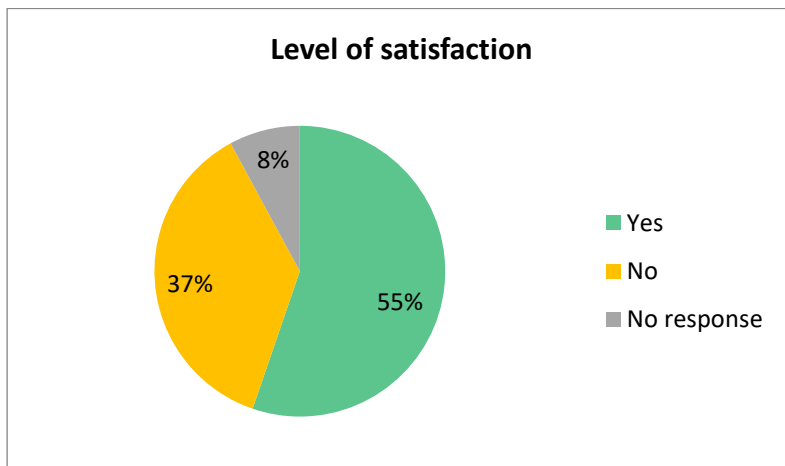
- “A justification of misrepresented information from both the RDN and the Fire Underwriters of Canada no understanding of the falsified information explain.”
- “I feel we are being bullied into this fire hall by the RDN lying to us.”
- “Know that having protection for the last 17yrs. isn't stripped from us on a whim. Justification of misrepresented information from the RDN & fire underwriters. No understanding of false information.”
- “We must have the level of fire protection in detail. To find out at the Open House - oh by the way: underwriters has made a mistake - please provide the Community Association with the correspondence resulting in this change.”
- “My understanding may not be what government intensions are! My understanding monies were for FIREHALLNOT STUDIES, etc.”



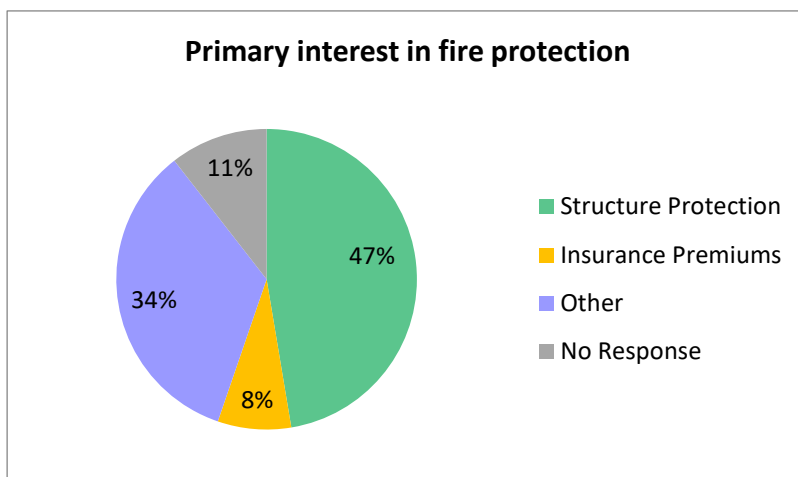
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When asked if their satisfaction level would change if fire insurance premiums were to increase, 21 respondents (55 per cent) indicated it would, 14 (37 per cent) indicated it would not and three respondents (eight per cent) did not answer the question.



When asked about their primary interest in fire protection, 18 respondents (47 per cent) indicated structure protection was their primary interest, three respondents (eight per cent) indicated insurance premiums and 13 (34 per cent) stated they have “Other” interests. When asked to expand on what “Other” means, respondents provided an array of answers many of which centered on the protection of life (see Appendix O - Question 6, for detailed responses). A total of four respondents (11 per cent) chose not to answer the question.





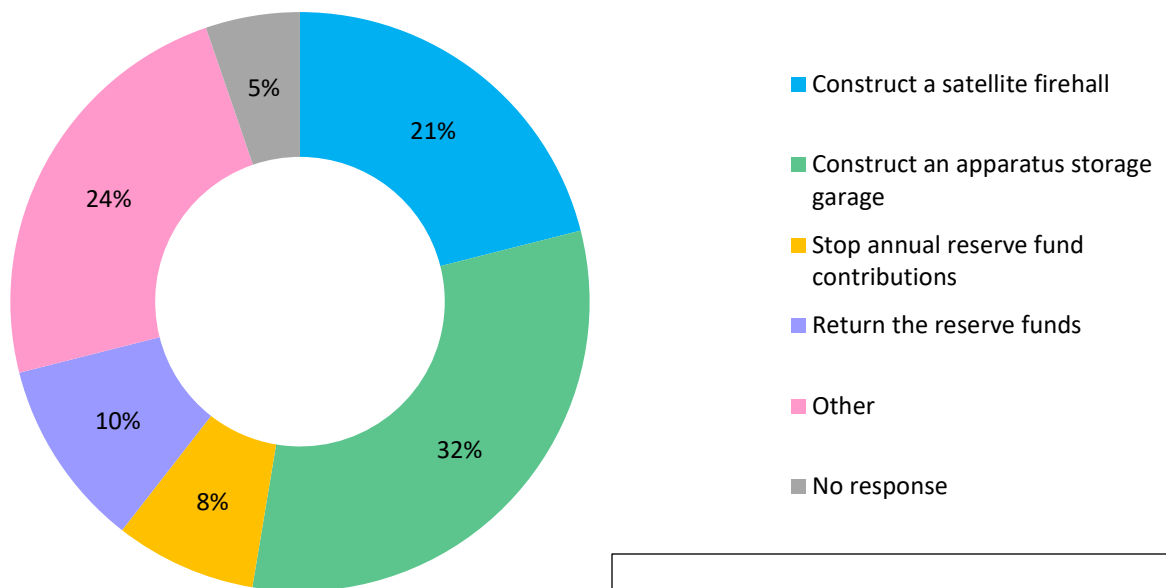
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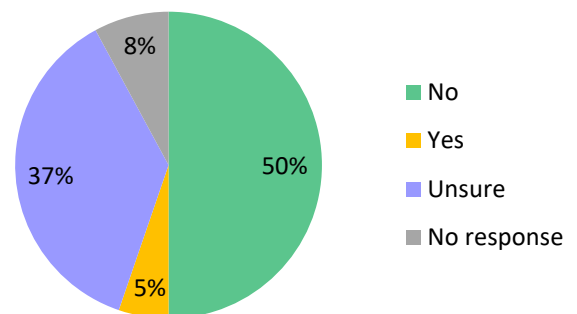
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At the centre of this engagement program is the question on how the RDN should proceed with the funds that have been collected. Five options were presented to respondents and they were asked to select one option. The below chart is a breakdown of how respondents would like to see the RDN proceed with the funds. Eight respondents (21 per cent) are in favour of building a satellite firehall, 12 (32 per cent) are in favour of constructing a storage garage, three (8 per cent) wish to stop annual reserve fund contributions, four (10 per cent) want the reserve funds returned and nine (24 per cent) want to see other alternatives considered. For more detail on what was provided under the “Other” category, please refer to Appendix O, Question 7.

Options for consideration



When asked if their answer to the above would change if the Dwelling Protection Grade for their property changed, resulting in an increase to their fire insurance premiums, 19 (50 per cent) indicated it would not, 2 (five per cent) said it would, 14 (37 per cent) were unsure and three (8 per cent) did not answer the question.



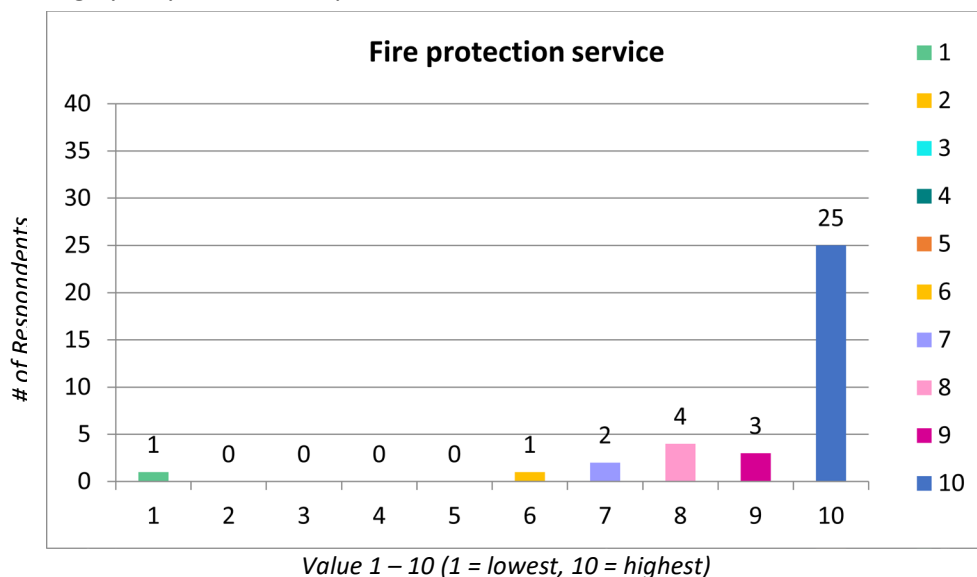


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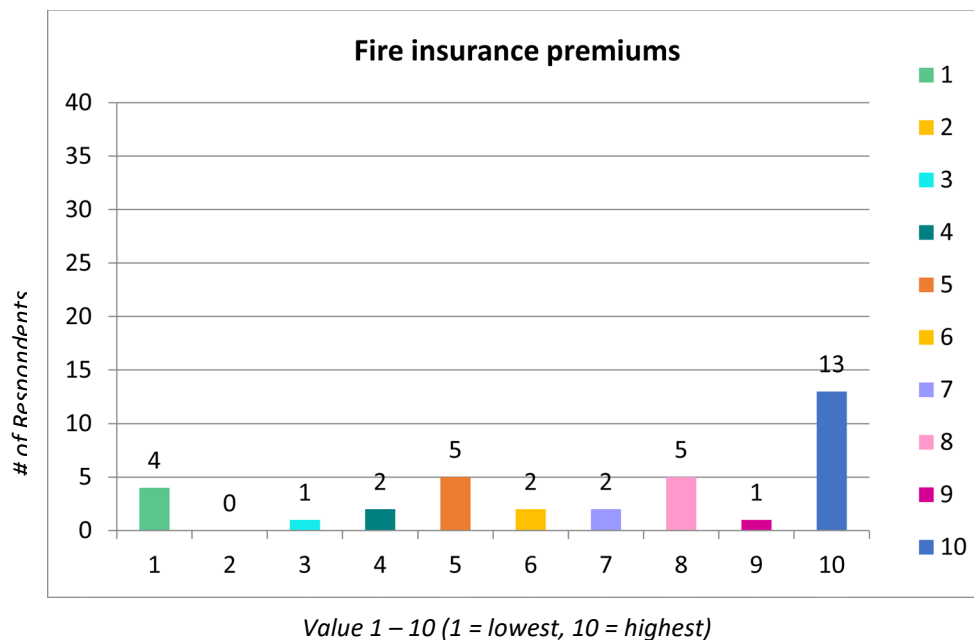
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Respondents were then asked to rate their value on a scale of 1 to 10 (with one being the lowest and ten being the highest). Please note that two respondents elected not to answer this part of the feedback form/survey and several others only answered select questions. The following was asked:

How highly do you value fire protection services in the Nanaimo River Fire Service Area?



How highly do you value reduced fire insurance premiums?



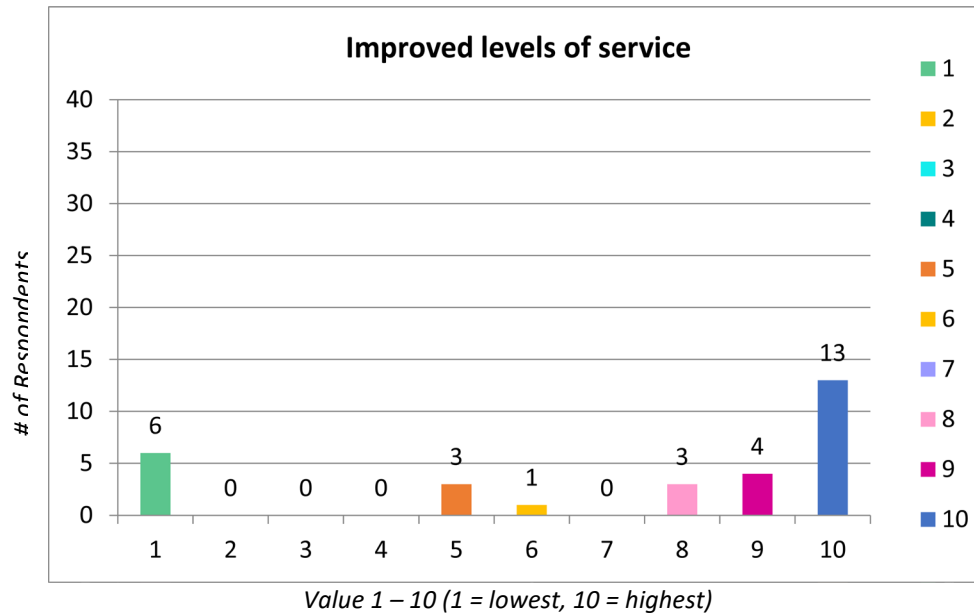


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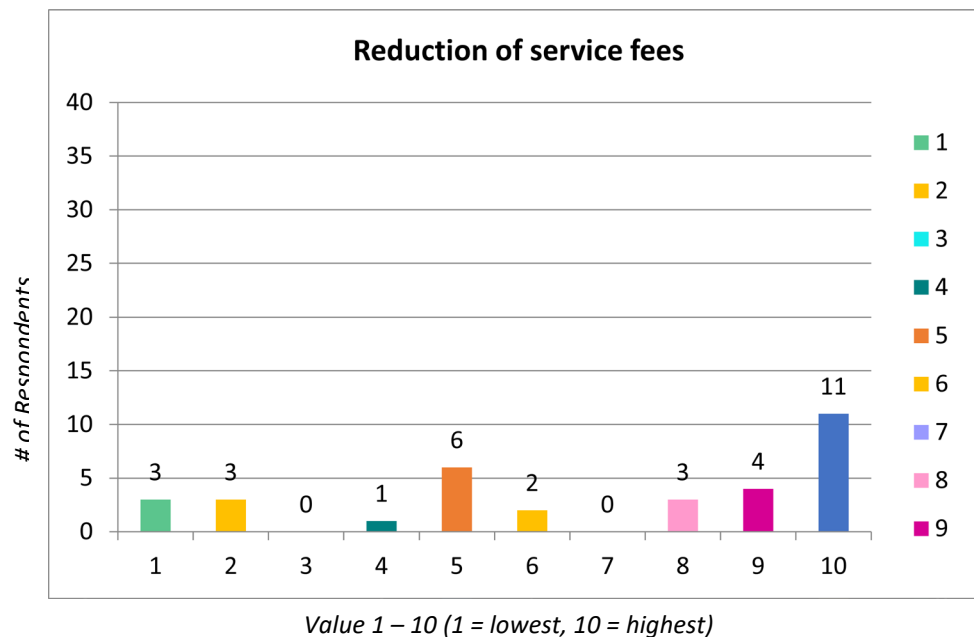
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How highly would you value improved levels of fire protection service provided in the Nanaimo River service area (as measured in part by reduced response times to emergencies)?



How highly would you value a reduction of service fees (taxes) as they relate to fire protection in the Nanaimo River area?





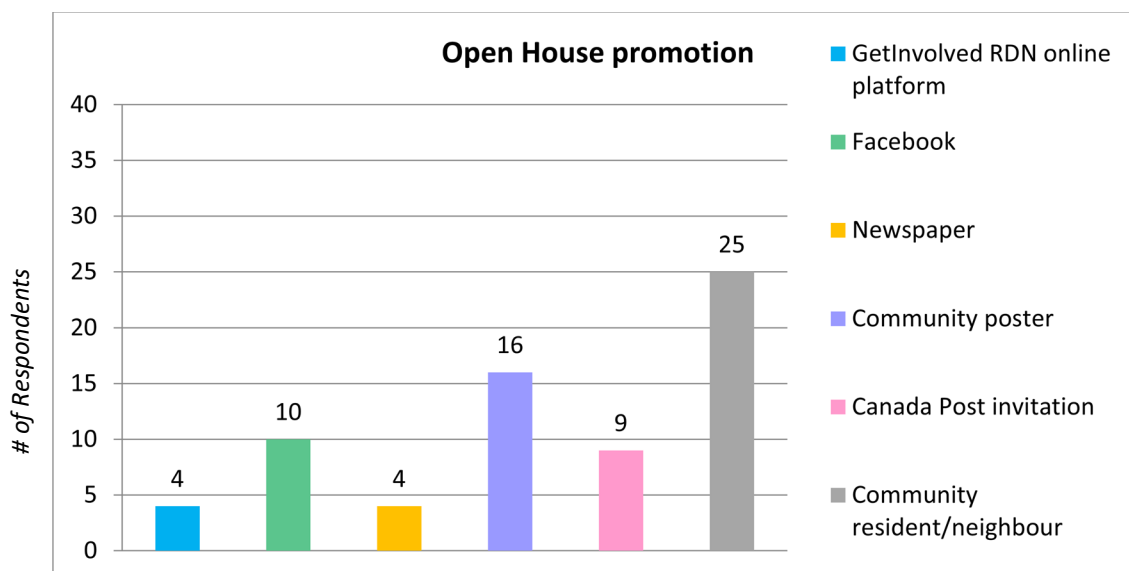
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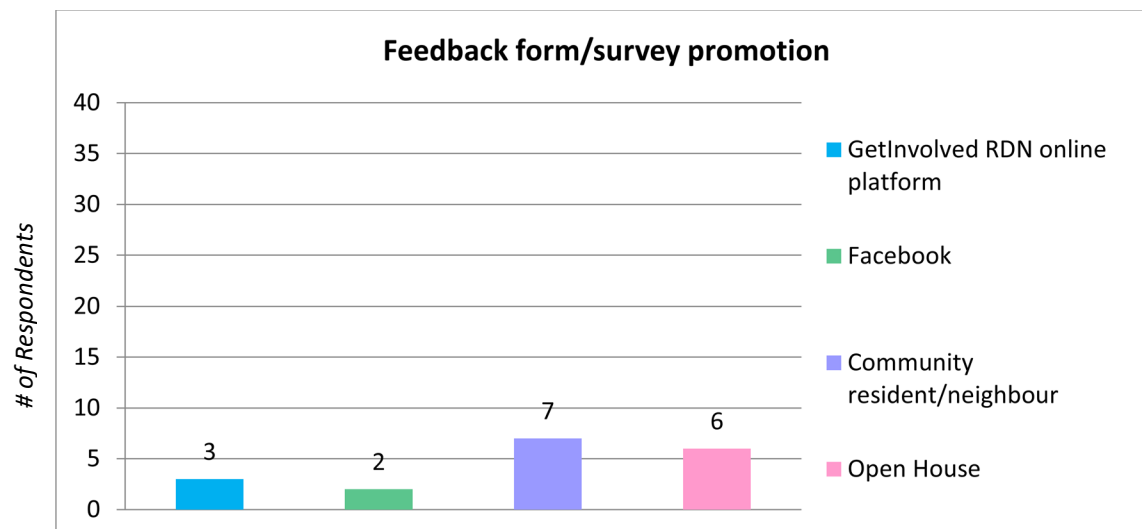
To close out the main portion of the feedback form/survey respondents were asked to share other information with the RDN to help inform future decision-making on the topic of Nanaimo River fire protection services. For a detailed summary of responses, please see Appendix O.

Measuring Effectiveness of Outreach

As a way to measure the effectiveness of the outreach efforts, respondents were asked to identify where they heard about the Nanaimo River Fire Protection Service Area Feasibility Study Open House. They were asked to select all of the ways in which they were informed of the event.



For those that took the survey online, they were asked how they heard about the feedback form/survey.





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Who We Heard From

The RDN engaged with the following groups and individuals as part of the public outreach process for the feasibility study:

- Nanaimo River community residents and property owners
- Nanaimo River South Forks Community Association Members
- Extension Fire Protection Service Area Residents - added, this group was not identified in the June 28 Draft Engagement Plan to the RDN Board
- RDN Electoral Area C Director
- Extension Volunteer Fire Department Fire Chief
- Extension Volunteer Fire Department Society Board Chair and several Directors
- Snuneymuxw First Nation

Next Steps

This report in its entirety will be attached to the *Feasibility Study for Options Development for the Nanaimo River Fire Protection Service Area in Electoral Area C Report* (the “Feasibility Report”) and will be submitted to the RDN Fire Services Coordinator and presented to the RDN Electoral Area Services Committee by Tim Pley & Associates. Key learnings from this report will be summarized in the feasibility report.

The feasibility report will be presented to the RDN Electoral Area Services Committee, at which time Directors will be able to consider options and recommendations taking into account the community input outlined in this report. The feasibility report will also be posted to the *Get Involved RDN* project page.