

## Survey: 58% of Salem supports police facility measure

About 58 percent of Salem residents would support an \$81 million bond measure to build a new police facility, according to a recent telephone survey.

From March 10-13, [DHM Research conducted a scientific poll](#) on the topic, asking about 500 Salem residents their opinion on the police facility and other city issues.

[City councilors chose the site of the former O'Brien auto dealerships for the proposed facility](#), at the intersection of Division and Commercial streets NE. The estimated cost to build the recommended [150,000-square-foot facility is \\$81.4 million](#).

The Salem City Council will meet for a work session April 4 to discuss the results of the poll.

"The polling figures are encouraging to the city's efforts to build a police facility that will better serve the community," City Manager Steve Powers said via email.

When survey respondents were initially asked whether they would support a November 2016 bond measure to fund construction for a new facility, 52 percent said they would support the measure.

Researchers then summarized a list of features of the new facility, including modern seismic standards to withstand a major earthquake and a centralized location to ensure a fast public safety response time. After hearing these features, respondents were re-polled on whether they would support a measure.

The percentage of people who said they supported a measure increased to 58 percent.

Geoffrey James, local architect and member of Salem Community Vision, said the facility's steep price tag make it unlikely to garner enough votes.

"It's so expensive, the bond measure probably would not pass," he said. "That's sad because I'm a strong supporter of new police facility. I hope that they'll see the light and reduce the size and cost further to help it pass."

He said he'd like to see polls reach at least 60 percent. To achieve that, the city needs to reduce cost and ensure that seismic strengthening for Salem Civic Center is included in the bond, he suggested.

"It would save lives," James said.

About half of the respondents said they would be more likely to support the measure if any cost savings were passed on and used to make safety upgrades to the Salem Civic Center and Salem Public Library. The poll had a margin of error of 4.4 percent.

Mayoral candidate and council member Chuck Bennett said the city needs to approach the plan with a full analysis, a critical eye and a sense of responsibility to bring the best possible facility to the community. He stressed the price tag and size of the proposed facility were not set in stone and still preliminary. The measure people were polled on needs work before it goes to voters.

"I don't think it's even close to being ready," Bennett said.

He added the feedback from the community was valuable and would be incorporated into the planning process.

"It was really good information," he said. "It's going to be very helpful."

An online community survey, which was available from March 14 to 28, found more opposition. Of the 634 people answering that survey, 52 percent opposed the measure and 47 percent were in favor.

As in the DHM poll, participants in the survey were first asked if they supported the proposal. Opposition was 50 percent and support was 46 percent. After answering the same detailed questions about features for the proposed facility, opposition rose to 52 percent and support rose to 47 percent.

In addition to the questions about the bond measure, the poll found about 82 percent of Salem voters are satisfied with how things are going in the city, and 90 percent of residents are satisfied with Salem's public safety.

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