

Proposed Salem police facility too large, too expensive

The [Salem City Council has voted to refer](#) a bloated \$82 million bond measure to Salem voters in November.

As a member of the Salem Community Vision Steering Committee, I have testified many times in favor of a more fiscally responsible bond measure to build the new police facility we so desperately need and to retrofit City Hall and the library.

[The bloated bond measure the council approved on June 8](#) is almost sure to fail. Why? It would fund a [police facility that is simply too big and too expensive](#) and it ignores the urgent need to prevent the collapse of city hall and the library in the Cascadia megaquake that could happen at any time.

In my last testimony before the council on June 8, I presented a better plan that Salem Community Vision thought would pass in November. It was not our plan. It was a plan that was presented to the council by city staff and consultants on June 3, 2013. It called for a 75,000-square-foot police facility that would fit nicely on the O'Brien site ([that has since been selected](#)) without the need for an expensive parking structure.

It could be built for around \$30 million, so additional money could be added to the bond measure to complete the urgently-needed seismic upgrades to city hall and the library to prevent catastrophic loss of life. The total cost would be well under \$60 million, an amount we think Salem taxpayers could support.

[The 148,000-square-foot facility that the council approved on June 27](#) is too big. It includes a regional 911 call center that serves emergency response agencies in three counties. Why should Salem taxpayers have to foot the bill for that?

It includes space for 83 officers and support staff that are projected to be hired in the next 30 years. But who knows if that will really happen? It includes a huge parking garage that is not needed if we use surface parking on the O'Brien site and the underutilized Marion Parkade just a block away.

The 148,000-square-foot facility that the council approved on June 27 is also too expensive. It pencils out to be \$562 a square foot. Eugene's new police facility only cost \$230 per square foot and the Oregon State Police just moved into [a new headquarters building](#) that cost \$250 per square foot.

It is now too late for the Salem City Council to change course. The November bond

measure for what one councilor has called “the full meal deal” will surely fail, as it should. In the meantime, our Salem Police Department will continue to work in [woefully inadequate facilities](#) and city staff and library patrons will continue to be at risk of getting crushed in unsafe buildings.

We can only hope that our new City Council that will be sworn in in January will immediately get to work to craft a responsible measure that can pass in 2017.

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