

Salem City Council votes to adopt police facility resolution



Whitney M. Woodworth, Statesman Journal

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(Photo: Statesman Journal, file)

Salem City Council members present Monday voted unanimously to adopt a drafted resolution for a bond funding the \$82 million police facility.

The resolution calls for the bond to be voted on by residents in the upcoming Nov. 8 election.

On June 8, city council passed a motion (</story/news/2016/06/08/next-step-new-police-facility-passes-city-council/85630452/>) 8-0 to direct city staff to create a resolution for the proposed \$82 million police facility following a public hearing.

Almost 190 sworn officers use the current police headquarters on the first floor of the Vern Miller Civic Center. Crowding, safety, security and victim privacy are prominent problems, said Salem Police Deputy Chief Steve Bellshaw.

Victims pass perpetrators in the halls and large-scale earthquake would render the facility inaccessible. The crime lab and 9-1-1 dispatch center are housed off-site in a leased space. But even if the police facility were relocated to a seismically-sound site, the city hall and library would remain at risk during a large-scale earthquake.



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(<http://www.statesmanjournal.com/story/news/crime/2016/03/26/salem-police-facility-how-did-we-get-here/81943426/>)

During the June 8 session, Mayor Anna Peterson requested a study of the seismic safety of the civic center and library to be undertaken and completed by the end of 2016 to ensure the safety and security of city staff and visitors. The motion also passed unanimously.

Salem City Council selected the 3.49-acre O'Brien site (</story/news/2016/03/01/city-council-unanimously-chooses-police-facility-site/81141048/>), a piece of property located at corner of Commercial and Division streets NE, as the location for the new police facility earlier this year.

About 58 percent of Salem residents would support the million bond measure to build a new police facility, according to a DHM Research poll conducted in March.

An online community survey conducted the same month found more opposition. Of the 634 people answering that survey, 52 percent opposed the measure and 47 percent were in favor.

If the full 148,000-square-foot facility is chosen, the proposed tax would result in a rate of 36 cents per \$1,000 of assessed property value, according to city officials. The estimated property tax for the bond for a \$200,000 home would be about \$72 per year.

One member of the public spoke against the facility during Monday's meeting.

Community activist and Salem Community Vision member Brian Hines cited the lack of funding for civic center retrofitting as one of the reasons for voting "no" on the proposed bond. Other reasons included the high price, excessive size and lack of public involvement in the planning process. He added that there's other, more deserving uses for the city's money.

"Salem can do better," he said.

The motion passed unanimously. Councilors Diana Dickey and Chuck Bennett were not in attendance.

The bond resolution will need to be sent to the county clerk no later than August 8 in order to be on the November ballot.

