

Salem officials tour potential sites for police station



Saerom Yoo, Statesman Journal

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(Photo: MOLLY J. SMITH / Statesman Journ)

Salem city councilors, staff and interested residents toured the top four sites for a new public safety facility on Tuesday, and they saw in person the benefits and challenges of each location.

Led by consulting architect Jake Davis from DLR Group, they imagined structures, parking solutions, flood plains, neighboring businesses and residents, and surrounding traffic.

Mayor Anna Peterson said she appreciated the opportunity to tour the sites in context of their surroundings.

The properties being considered are a city-owned Commercial Street SE plot across the street from the Vern Miller Civic Center; 16 parcels on Commercial and Leslie streets SE; the former Honda of Salem dealership on

Division and Commercial; and the Downtown Storage site on Broadway and Liberty streets NE.

The group piled into two 12-passenger city vans to complete the tour in about two hours.

The two South Salem locations were smaller, but provide central location near the existing civic center. The other two are located north of downtown are larger but each partially in a flood plain.

Peterson said she was not a fan of building a big government building on Broadway, because it would not blend with the mixed-use vision and could involve uprooting existing residents and businesses.

Another factor to consider would be acquisition costs -- one of the properties is mostly city owned and one is owned by multiple entities.

The next step is a City Council work session on Jan. 21 to discuss preliminary costs and view initial site sketches. A public hearing is expected to be held in the near future to help decide the size and location of the new facility.



Mayor Anna Peterson surveys a potential site at Liberty and Broadway streets for the new police facility in Salem on Tuesday, Jan. 5, 2016. (Photo: MOLLY J. SMITH / Statesman Journ)

The current police station takes up about 28,000 square feet on the first floor of the civic center. It has had to run its crime lab and dispatch center off site due to the lack of space.

In 2013, the city's plans for a massive upgrade to the civic center, at a price tag of about \$80.5 million, was met with resistance from Salem taxpayers. In October 2014, Mayor Peterson appointed a blue-ribbon task force to explore other options. In May 2015, the task force recommended building the police station away from the Vern Miller Civic Center.

On Dec. 17, the task force's subcommittee, made up of the mayor and city councilors Warren Bednarz, Diana Dickey and Steve McCoid, met with representatives from DLR Group, a nationwide architectural firm that specializes in building police facilities.

The consultants recommended the new building be 148,000 square feet in order to house all of the police department's offices and dispatch center.

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Architect Jake Davis with DLR Group (center) discusses pros and cons of a potential site for the new police facility with councilors and city employees in Salem on Tuesday, Jan. 5, 2016. (Photo: MOLLY J. SMITH / Statesman Journ)

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