

# Editorial: Build new police station but not at Salem's city hall

Statesman Journal Editorial Board

11:56 a.m. PDT May 24, 2015



(Photo: . / Stock art)

Here is a civics story problem: The Salem police force is roughly five times larger than Keizer's. How much larger is the Salem police headquarters building?

The answer: It isn't.


Keizer has a modern, secure police station. Salem has less room, less efficiency and less security.

Such comparisons might not matter to some people. But the truth is that Salem police operate from an exceedingly cramped, long outdated and structurally questionable (/story/news/crime/2014/08/12/salems-police-station-bursting-seams/13976665/)headquarters in the Vern Miller Civic Center.

The headquarters is so small that it can be difficult to keep suspects and victims separated. The interrogation rooms aren't soundproof. There are no cells for temporarily holding suspects. Space must be leased elsewhere for storage of evidence.

Some police vehicles are parked in the basement. If anything from a bomb scare to an earthquake interrupted business at the Civic Center, police officers wouldn't be able to reach those vehicles.

So it is good news that a city task force, led by T.J. Sullivan, seems to have overcome some of the past disagreements about building a new police headquarters.



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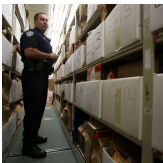
Salem's police station bursting at the seams

(<http://www.statesmanjournal.com/story/news/crime/2014/08/12/salems-police-station-bursting-seams/13976665/>)

A previous recommendation — to construct the larger headquarters on city-owned land at the Civic Center — drew a surprising amount of opposition. Salem Mayor Anna Peterson was smart to include some of those critics on the latest task force.

The Salem City Council will hear the task force's unanimous report on Tuesday, but a new police headquarters remains several years off. A bond measure likely would not go to Salem voters before November 2016.

The task force made important recommendations, including:



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Task force urges new Salem police station

(<http://www.statesmanjournal.com/story/news/2015/05/18/task-force-urges-new-salem-police-station/27548329/>)

- Don't build at the Civic Center. The public values the existing greenspace, and a headquarters there would require an expensive underground parking garage.
- Hire an architectural consultant to figure out what is needed in the headquarters and to help find an appropriate site.

Space is not the only issue. A modern police facility should be secure but not resemble a fortress. The public should feel welcome there.

- Don't fixate on a specific price, but instead look at what would fit the community's needs for the next 40 or 50 years.

- Ask voters to approve a police bond measure. Deal later with needed seismic improvements to the Civic Center and the library.

The task force did its homework. Its recommendations deserve the public's support.

### **Link**

[Click here \(http://cityofsalem.net/CouncilMeetingAgenda/Documents/326/5a.pdf\)](http://cityofsalem.net/CouncilMeetingAgenda/Documents/326/5a.pdf) to read the [recommendations of the police facility task force.](http://cityofsalem.net/CouncilMeetingAgenda/Documents/326/5a.pdf)  
[.\(http://cityofsalem.net/CouncilMeetingAgenda/Documents/326/5a.pdf\)](http://cityofsalem.net/CouncilMeetingAgenda/Documents/326/5a.pdf)

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