

Cash pouring in to support new Salem police facility

[Jonathan Bach](#) Updated 9:00 a.m. PT April 19, 2017



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Photo tour of current Salem Police Department facility

Capitol Auto Group President Scott Casebeer said every business in town should be supporting a new facility for Salem police.

"We are more than happy to support a long-overdue facility," said Casebeer, whose auto group has donated \$10,000 to the effort.

Capitol Auto Group is one in a bevy of businesses voting with their wallets on a new facility for the Salem Police Department, campaign finance records

show. Ballots for a renewed bond measure go out in the mail to all voters later this month.

As a May 16 election with a bond measure to fund the \$61.8 million facility approaches, one pro-facility political action committee has raised \$89,950, beating its cash contributions balance last year of \$86,044.

Supporters are trying to ensure Measure 24-420 doesn't fail like its predecessor last November — and donors are spending big.

More than half of the Friends of Salem Police PAC contributions came from a \$50,000 donation from developer Larry Tokarski, president of Mountain West Investment Corp. Tokarski couldn't be reached for comment.

The Salem Can Do Better PAC, which opposes the bond measure, raised \$1,200 this year, records show.

A cornerstone of the argument had to do with whether or not to include seismic upgrades for the Salem Public Library and City Hall in a ballot measure, though city councilors earlier this year pushed the library upgrades to a November 2017 vote.

The new bond measure slices roughly \$20 million off a proposed police facility measure which voters rejected last year.

John R. Hawkins, campaign manager for Friends of Salem Police, said there are plans for television commercials, online advertisements, mailers and street-side sign waving in high-traffic areas such as the Marion and Center Street bridges.

The city of Salem [has launched a website](#) with cost estimates for residents if the measure passes next month.

The new police facility would be constructed at the old O'Brien Auto Group property.

Hawkins said he wasn't involved in the campaign last year.

"The ground game will be more extensive than it was last time," he said.

The two sides have argued in the pages of the May election voter pamphlet, with opponents pointing to the lack of seismic upgrades as they urge a "no" vote.

"Once again, an overly expensive police facility plan has squeezed out funds for making critical life-saving seismic upgrades to the Library and City Hall," local blogger Brian Hines wrote. "Several citizen groups urged that these be part of a second-try public safety bond, but their pleadings to save lives at City Hall and the library when (not if) the Big One Cascadia Subduction Zone earthquake hits weren't listened to by city officials."

Proponents say law enforcement officials need a "21st century police headquarters."

"Last November we — Salem voters — let down Salem Police by turning aside a modern police headquarters the city had proposed to replace a relic of a facility in city hall that is plagued with serious deficiencies and risks to safety," wrote Friends of Salem Police co-chairs Gerry Frank and Janet Taylor.

Ballots will be mailed out to every voter April 26, according to Marion County.

Send questions, comments or news tips

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