

Council OKs \$40,000 for site search

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Timm Collins, reporter

Salem City Council agreed to fund a search for a new public safety facility location at Monday night's meeting. No construction has been planned.

The council agreed to spend up to \$40,000 to weigh the merits of building a new facility on the existing site or starting from scratch elsewhere.

The Vern Miller Civic Center was constructed in 1972. As the population has grown over time, city services have outgrown the facility.

In addition, the building has been deemed seismically inadequate for emergency responders such as police. In the event of an earthquake the building could topple rendering the facility useless when it potentially is most needed.

A council subcommittee, relying on input from the University of Oregon's Sustainable Cities Initiative, determined the police department's needs could be met by building a new facility on the campus of the Civic Center. The group also agreed it would be useful to consider alternative sights [sic] before asking voters for an estimated \$50 million construction bond.

The issue was met with contention.

Councilor Bob Cannon thought the council should move forward without a study, and hiring someone to "observe the obvious" is wrong.

"I think that we should not spend \$40,000 on a consultant to go out and find out if there is additional space. There is additional space. It's currently available," he said. "This is pure and simply a waste of money."

Councilor Laura Tesler sympathized with Cannon's opinion but said the study was absolutely necessary.

"I know it's eye-rolling to consider another study," Tesler said. "I would rather have a study and make sure we are doing the right thing by the police department."

The alternative site analysis will include at least one site with an existing building for retrofit and at least one bare-land site.

The analysis will consider existing buildings compared to construction of a new facility on bare land or at the Civic Center site.

The study requires at least three months, pushing a potential future bond measure to 2013.

In other business, the council scheduled a June 13 public hearing regarding an ordinance that would prohibit smoking in parks.