

# Panel reviews plans for new Salem police station



Michael Rose, Statesman Journal 11:21 a.m. PDT October 8, 2014



Salem Mayor Anna Peterson has formed a blue-ribbon task force to review options for the Vern Miller Civic Center, a 41-year-old complex of city offices and a police station that need seismic improvements.

To date, talk of spending millions of dollars to make the civic center safer and build a 75,000-square-foot police station has produced a lukewarm response, at best, from Salem residents. Critics assert that the city settled on one plan for the civic center and excluded the public from the decision-making process—allegations the mayor strongly denies.

(Photo: Statesman Journal file)

Peterson's 14-member task force will give the city a second chance to consider alternatives for the civic center and, possibly, rally taxpayer support for a large public investment. The task force will develop a set of recommendations for the civic center site, 555 Liberty Street SE, and present them to Salem City Council.

On Tuesday, the mayor's hand-picked task force had its first meeting. The group toured Keizer's modern, six-year-old police station, comparing it to Salem's cramped and seismically unsafe, police headquarters.

"It's not just my friends. Let's make that clear," Peterson said of the task force. Suggestions from councilors and community members helped guide the selection of task force members, she said.



Members of a task force to review options for the Vern Miller Civic Center tour the Keizer Civic Center on Tuesday. (Photo: DANIELLE PETERSON / Statesman Journal)

The group includes current and former city councilors, members of city advisory boards, a real estate professional, a representative of the Salem Area Chamber of Commerce, a Willamette University administrator and others.

This year, discussions about floating an \$80.5 million bond measure to pay for a redeveloped civic center site didn't sit well with taxpayers.

**RELATED:** [The changing view from the Vern Miller Civic Center \(/story/news/local/heritage/2014/07/27/changing-view-vern-miller-civic-center/13185961/\)](/story/news/local/heritage/2014/07/27/changing-view-vern-miller-civic-center/13185961/)

A city-sponsored survey of 400 registered voters found Salem residents were about equally divided in support versus opposition for a bond measure. The possibility of putting a bond measure on the ballot this year faded.

Kasia Quillinan, who served as a city councilor during the tenure of Salem Mayor Mike Swaim, said the proposal presented by the city seemed more like a "trial balloon" than an actual plan.

The current mayor picked Quillinan, who is a member of City Watch, a local progressive-leaning organization, to serve on her blue-ribbon task force. Quillinan agreed to join Peterson's task force with the understanding it would have a broad scope, she said.

"I hope I can be the voice of community sentiment," Quillinan said.

Geoffrey James will bring his expertise as an architect to the task force. He is a member of Salem Community Vision, a citizen group that's been critical of the city.

"I am strongly in favor of building a police facility," James said.

It's the city's projected cost for the project that James find objectionable. He asserts the city could save money by developing a police station at another location instead of placing it on the civic center site.

James previously served as a member of the Courthouse Square Solutions Task Force, a citizen advisory group that recommended structural repairs for the county and transit district owned Courthouse Square.

The Courthouse Square building and bus mall, which suffered from design defects, re-opened in March after a \$23 million repair job.

James has since signed on as a consultant with Maryland-based Structural Group Inc., the engineering company hired to fix Courthouse Square, according to his LinkedIn account.

James said he wasn't working for Structural Group during Courthouse Square's remediation. He doesn't view his affiliation with the engineering firm as a conflict with his work on the task force.

James explained that the type of seismic upgrades envisioned for the civic center wouldn't require Structural Group's expertise in repairing "problem buildings." Local contractors could tackle the project, he said.

T.J. Sullivan, a former city councilor and owner of a Salem insurance firm, is the chairman of the task force. The mix of people with different viewpoints on the task force should be able to make a "community based" recommendations, he said.

"Whatever decision comes out, the council can point back and say we did put together a group of citizens to dig into it," Sullivan said.

Eventually, the task force will issue a report to Salem City Council. The task force doesn't have a deadline to complete it work, but the mayor indicated that she doesn't want the meetings to drag on for many months.

*mrose@StatesmanJournal.com (503) 399-6657 or follow on Twitter @mrose\_sj*

### **Task force members**

Here are the members of the Salem Police Facility Blue Ribbon Task Force:

Jim Bauer, Willamette University

Sheronne Blasi, State Auditor's Office; former city councilor

Jason Brandt, Salem Area Chamber of Commerce

Claudia Burton, city budget committee member

Dan Clem, city councilor

Diana Dickey, city councilor

Geoffrey James, architect; Salem Community Vision

Monty King, Citizens Police Advisory Committee

John Lattimer, Marion County

Jennifer Martin, Sperry Van Ness Commercial Advisors LLC; Downtown Advisory Board

Anna Peterson, mayor

Kasia Quillinan, City Watch member; former city councilor;

Paul Rice, Friends of the Library

T.J. Sullivan, former city councilor

*Source: City of Salem*

Read or Share this story: <http://stjr.nl/1vQUdgi>

#### **MORE STORIES**



**Former addict aims to educate clergy on drug dependency.**

[\(/story/news/2014/10/05/former-]((/story/news/2014/10/05/former-)

[addict-aims-educate-clergy-drug-dependency/16675961/](#)  
[\(/story/news/2014/10/05/former-addict-aims-educate-clergy-drug-dependency/16675961/\)](#)  
Oct. 8, 2014, 9:38 a.m.



**Marion County children poorer, worse off than elsewhere**

[\(/story/news/2014/10/08/marion-county-children-poorer-worse-elsewhere/16914285/\)](#)  
[\(/story/news/2014/10/08/marion-county-children-poorer-worse-elsewhere/16914285/\)](#)  
Oct. 8, 2014, 9:25 a.m.



**Water damage forces closure of Wild Pear Restaurant**

[\(/story/life/food/2014/10/07/water-damage-forces-closure-wild-pear-restaurant/16894431/\)](#)  
[\(/story/life/food/2014/10/07/water-damage-forces-closure-wild-pear-restaurant/16894431/\)](#)  
Oct. 8, 2014, 9:09 a.m.



**Inmate with state fair turkey leg leads to investigation**

[\(/story/news/nation-now/2014/10/08/mississippi-inmate-turkey-leg-investigation/16905025/\)](#)  
[\(/story/news/nation-now/2014/10/08/mississippi-inmate-turkey-leg-investigation/16905025/\)](#)  
Oct. 8, 2014, 6:59 a.m.