

Council receives recommendations on Salem police facility

The Salem City Council voted Tuesday night to receive the Blue Ribbon Task Force recommendations for a new public safety facility.

The proposed new public safety facility would be the headquarters for a new police station and an emergency dispatch center. The task force also recommended the new facility be located off the Vern Miller Civic Center campus, and range in size from 75,000 to 106,000 square feet.

Early estimates put the cost of the new facility at approximately \$50 million. However officials no longer have a clear cost estimate for the facility. There have been no new cost estimates presented by the task force regarding the facility.

The city council did not necessarily agree with the recommendations or support them. Acting to receive the task force recommendations means that they will be discussed in future meetings and staff sessions.

There was opposition to the recommendations, however, particularly over splitting a bond measure needed to raise money for the facility from another measure that would seismically upgrade the Vern Miller Civic Center.

Salem resident Brian Hines urged the council to go back to the original plan created by city officials.

"Build both a new police facility and seismically retrofit city hall and the Salem Public Library. There is no reason to delay making essential preparations for the Big One earthquake that is a matter of when, not if."

Hines also pointed to the immediate danger the building faces in the event of an earthquake.

"Consider the chart **next to the Earthquake Timing section** of the Wikipedia article about the Cascadia Subduction Zone. The intervals before six "Big One" earthquakes have been studied, the most recent one being in 1700 — 315 years ago.

Here's the intervals for three of the six: 201 years, 250 years, 330 years. We're now at 315 years since the last Big One."

He asked a pointed question to the city council.

"Why would City officials put off seismic strengthening of city hall and the library when the next super-devastating earthquake to hit the Pacific Northwest could strike at any moment?"

Task force chairman T.J. Sullivan said he understood the seismic concerns, but countered Hines' point by highlighting the failures of previous bond measures that combined disparate goals.

"We tried to pass a kids and cops measure years ago and it failed," Sullivan said. "They were two unrelated separate measures put together, and the public rejected them."

Council member Brad Nanke agreed that Oregon was overdue for a major earthquake, but cautioned that the council had to prioritize its timing on how to proceed with each bond measure.