

# New environmental tests loom for Riverfront park land



Michael Rose, Statesman Journal

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(Photo: Courtesy of Mountain West Investment Corp.)

The cost of buying land for a proposed expansion of Riverfront Park has just risen because of an underground pipe.

During environmental investigations related to the city's planned purchase of 3.8 acres at the former Boise Cascade site, a long-forgotten pipeline was found. The pipe, a remnant of a paper manufacturing operation's bleach plant, has raised environmental questions. Those questions will need to be answered before the city attempts to expand Riverfront Park.

John Wales, the city's urban development director, said the discovery of the buried pipe "was a surprise to everybody." The pipe isn't on the property the city intends to buy, but located nearby along railroad tracks

above Pringle Creek, he said.

Salem City Council at Monday night's meeting will consider providing \$200,000 in urban renewal funds for another round of environmental investigations. The money would be in addition to the \$150,000 in city park system development charges that the council already authorized for environmental due diligence.

In January the city agreed to buy a portion of the Boise site, known as the Park Parcel, from Mountain West Investment Corp. for \$2 million. The pending sale is part of a public-private partnership agreement between the city and Mountain West, which is building a mixed-use development.

While the old pipeline has been plugged and isn't connected to anything, Oregon Department of Environmental Quality wants additional investigations to make sure that dioxins and other contaminants aren't seeping into Pringle Creek, Wales said.

"They want to make sure there are no other surprises down the creek where it goes into the slough," he said.

DEQ learned that the pipe might be a problem after Mountain West provided data on the former industrial site, which has already been through multiple environmental reviews, Wales said. The pipe is located on Mountain West property in the railroad right-of-way.

Sale of the park land to the city is scheduled to close by the end of December. Before the city takes ownership of the property, however, it wants assurances that it will be protected from future environmental liability.

One of the city's conditions to close on the property: attaining a "Prospective Purchaser Agreement" from DEQ.

The DEQ agreement would provide the city with liability protection. The state agency will not issue the agreement until it is satisfied that all necessary environmental reviews have been completed.

"We're paying money up front, but this is to protect us," Wales said of the cost of environmental due diligence work.

In other council business:

- A new ordinance that would establish a [three-hour parking time limit](/story/news/2014/08/26/parking-time-limits-return-downtown-salem/14606033/) for on street parking in the Downtown Parking District will have its first reading. The three hour time limit would be temporary, beginning in October and ending Feb. 3. At its Aug 25 meeting, Salem City Council asked staff to prepare the ordinance after hearing complaints that free, unlimited parking was reducing the turnover of parking spaces and harming downtown businesses.



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[Parking time limits to return to downtown Salem](#)

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- The city's proposed ordinance for [regulating medical marijuana \(/story/news/politics/2014/09/05/oha-levies-first-fines-marijuana-dispensaries/15157399/\)](http://www.statesmanjournal.com/story/news/politics/2014/09/05/oha-levies-first-fines-marijuana-dispensaries/15157399/) clinics is also scheduled to have its first reading. City staff have recommended scheduling a public hearing on the issue on Sept. 22 before enacting new regulations.



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### Public meeting

Salem City Council meets at 6:30 p.m. Monday in council chambers, Vern Miller Civic Center, 555 Liberty St. SE.

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