

Salem council to pay for more environmental studies



Michael Rose, Statesman Journal

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(Photo: Courtesy of Mountain West Investment Corp.)

Salem City Council on Monday agreed to provide more funds for environmental investigations at the former Boise Cascade site in downtown Salem.

The council agreed to use \$200,000 in urban renewal funds for the environmental work. The environmental studies are needed (/story/news/2014/09/07/new-environmental-tests-loom-riverfront-park-land/15230235/) to protect the city's interests, as it prepares to buy 3.8 acres for an expansion of Riverfront Park, city officials said.

By December, the city hopes to close on the \$2 million purchase of riverfront property, which is part of the old Boise site. The seller is Mountain West Investment Corp., a local developer.

John Wales, the city's urban development director, said a long-forgotten pipeline was recently been found on the Boise property. The underground pipe is located along railroad tracks, in railroad right-of-way, above Pringle Creek.



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New environmental tests loom for Riverfront park land

(<http://www.statesmanjournal.com/story/news/2014/09/07/new-environmental-tests-loom-riverfront-park-land/15230235/?from=global&sessionKey=&autologin=>)

The pipeline isn't on the property the city plans to purchase.

But Wales noted that the source of contaminants in the pipe likely originated from the property the city wants to buy. A bleaching plant for a paper manufacturer once was located on that site.

The environmental tests will determine if any contaminants from the old pipeline are seeping into the Pringle Creek and the Willamette Slough.

Salem City Councilor Bruce Rogers asked Wales why the city should pay for environmental tests when the pipeline isn't on land the city is interested in buying.

Wales said the city wants the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality to issue a "Prospective Purchaser Agreement" before it takes ownership of the property. The agreement, he said, would affirm that the city isn't liable for environmental problems that might be found in the future.

"This is the buyer's prerogative, not the seller's," Wales said the DEQ purchaser agreement.

Rogers wasn't satisfied with the explanation. He was the only councilor to vote no on providing the funding.

"I get it. We're buying insurance but I don't like it," Rogers said.

The urban renewal funds authorized for environmental investigations are in addition to \$150,000 in city park system development charges that the council in January approved for environmental work.

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