

Council Business Meeting

March 2, 2020

Agenda Item	Mayor Recommendation: City Hall Construction	
From	Kelly Madding	City Administrator
Contact	Kelly.madding@ashland.or.us	

SUMMARY

The Mayor has requested that the question of whether the City should attempt to demolish City Hall or preserve it, should the May 19 capital bond measure pass, be brought back to the City Council for review.

POLICIES, PLANS & GOALS SUPPORTED

PREVIOUS COUNCIL ACTION

During the February 18 City Council Business meeting, the Council approved moving forward with a Capital Improvement General Obligation Bond for the construction of City Hall and the structural renovation of the Community Center and Pioneer Hall. At that time, the Council directed Staff to return at a later date with a recommendation on whether to proceed with a demolition permit for City Hall or to proceed with preserving the historic building.

BACKGROUND AND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

This is an evolving process and there has been new information provided to the City Council:

- During the February 18 City Council Business meeting, the Chair of the Historic Commission, Dale Shostrom read a letter on behalf of the Historic Commission recommending preserving the existing City Hall building, meaning preserving the existing walls.
- The demolition process has been reassessed by staff in light of this project and would likely be long, complicated, and possibly unsuccessful.

FISCAL IMPACTS

The preliminary cost estimates provided by ORW Architecture show little difference in the cost of demolishing City Hall and building a new building or retaining the existing building walls and reconstructing the inside of City Hall.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

N/A

ACTIONS, OPTIONS & POTENTIAL MOTIONS

I move to preserve the existing City Hall building should the May 19, 2020 General Obligation Capital Construction Bond pass. This entails preserving the historic walls while creating a seismically safe building within them and which would house a modern City Hall.

REFERENCES & ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Ballot Language including Caption, Question, Summary, and Explanatory Statement
Attachment 2: Memo to Council regarding changing the method of reconstructing City Hall

CAPTION

General obligation bond authorization for three City capital construction projects. (10 words; max. 10 words)

QUESTION

Shall City issue \$8.2 million in general obligation bonds to finance City Hall, Pioneer Hall, and Community Center capital projects? (20 words; max. 20 words)

SUMMARY

This measure authorizes the City of Ashland to issue general obligation bonds in the amount of \$8.2 million to finance capital construction projects, including design, to make these three City buildings safe and serviceable for decades to come: City Hall, Pioneer Hall, and Community Center. The proposed bond would cost Ashland taxpayers approximately \$0.2090 per \$1000 of assessed value per year. The average assessed value for a single-family dwelling in Ashland is approximately \$310,000. The assessment on a home with that value would be \$64.79 per year for 20 years.

City Hall, built at the turn of the last century, is substandard in terms of seismic survivability, energy efficiency, internal systems, ADA access, and interior functionality.

The Ashland Community Center and Pioneer Hall have major structural defects that currently limit or preclude their use for most community events.

Because construction costs are rising faster than inflation, postponing these three projects until a future election would likely result in higher constant-dollar costs and would not necessarily avoid the need for bonding in the future. (173 words; max. 175)

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

Current City Hall is an 1891 unreinforced brick building initially built to house a fire station and a few administrative offices. A subsequently-added stucco exterior sheath and multiple other exterior and interior alterations in the last century have resulted in a structure that does not meet current building codes, access requirements, or energy efficiency guidelines. The unreinforced masonry structure would likely not withstand a significant earthquake long enough for staff and customers to exit the building safely.

The majority recommendation of a 2017 City advisory committee on preferred City Hall locations was to keep it at its current site. Based on preliminary designs, the estimated cost for retaining a restored City Hall on the Plaza is \$7.2 million -- including final design, temporary relocation of staff, any necessary demolition, and construction work.

City Council will collaborate with the Planning Commission, the Historic Commission, and historic restoration specialists before approving final design.

The Ashland Community Center was constructed in 1922 and partially restored in the mid-1980s. It has housed local community meetings, dances, exhibitions, and other public and private events. In early 2019, the north facing wall began to fail, bulging outward such that the building became unusable.

Structural repair will require, at a minimum, a new roof, ceiling, and wall and foundation repairs and will cost up to \$500,000, based on preliminary estimates.

Pioneer Hall was originally built in 1921; a restoration and expansion project was completed in 1988. Since then, Pioneer Hall has been available by reservation for public and private events. A 2018 assessment of Pioneer Hall identified a number of needed corrective measures, including roof structure repair, seismic rehabilitation, Heating/Air Conditioning upgrades and ADA access improvements. These deficiencies have constrained use of Pioneer Hall, especially in wintertime, when a heavy snow load could cause roof failure. Based on preliminary estimates, rehabilitation of Pioneer Hall will cost up to \$500,000

If the bond passes and costs for these three capital projects prove to be less than currently estimated, the associated property tax rate will be reduced accordingly. If the costs prove to be greater than currently estimated, aspects of the projects would have to be scaled-back and deferred. (360 words; max. 500 words)

From: Mayor Stromberg
To: Ashland City Council
CC: Kelly Madding, David Lohman, Dale Shostrom
Subj: Changing the method of reconstructing City Hall

1. When we decided at our previous meeting to put a measure on the May 19 ballot to authorize issuing bonds to finance making City Hall, Pioneer Hall, and the Community Center safe and serviceable for decades to come, we directed that the existing building be replaced on the same footprint. In the referral of the bond measure, no decision was made on the appearance of the finished structure.

2. We now have some additional information that I believe would enable us to make that decision so that voters would have a better sense of what the outcome of a yes vote would be.

3. I have therefore asked that the City Hall project be added to our agenda for the February 4 Council meeting to evaluate this new information and decide if we are ready to make clear that our objective is, as much as possible, historical preservation of the current building .

4. In brief, the new information is:

- New ideas have surfaced for staging a restoration effort (as opposed to demolishing and putting up a new building) that may make it possible to reduce impacts of the construction process on the downtown area.

- If our decision were to demolish the old structure and build anew on the current site, the required approval process would be long, complicated and possibly unsuccessful.

- Extensive public input plus an official statement from the Historic Commission raise the issue: shouldn't the City's renovation of its primary building, a contributing structure in an officially recognized historic heart of our community, demonstrate the principle of preservation of our historic heritage?

Suggested motion: "I move that the Council's previous decision to demolish the existing City Hall and replace it with a new building on the former one's footprint be changed to reconstruct the existing City Hall in such a manner as to preserve its historical character and substance."