

Gearhart needs a new firehouse!

Why do we need a new fire station?

The existing firehouse is outdated. It was built in the 1950's by a coalition of local volunteers. They did most of the work themselves! The current building, constructed of hollow tile and cinder block, was built long before the impact of a Cascadia Subduction event was well known or understood. The city's substantial investment of many hundreds of thousands of dollars of equipment housed in the existing building should be safeguarded and protected. As our population grows our needs for services increases. For example, there has been a 44% increase in the number of fire calls in the last five years including:

- Emergency medical calls
- Motor vehicle accidents
- Beach rescues
- Home rescues
- Extrications
- Building fires
- Wildland/brush fires

A fire station/public safety building benefits everyone.

Mayor Matt Brown, along with city council members, has called the condition of our current fire house the city's most pressing issue. Proposed is a public safety building which would include both the police station and the fire department. The new building could also be designed to include a safe gathering area and secure shelter for people during catastrophes.

Wasn't there an attempt to pass a bond to build a new station in 2006?

In 2006 Gearhart residents voted on a \$3.75 million general obligation bond measure. The proposal included plans for a 17,000 square foot building that would house the police department, City Hall, and a fire station. Citizens voted 327-231 against it, largely because it was thought to be too ambitious a project. However, voters favored a new fire station but were not convinced a new city hall was needed. Jerry Eller wrote in a 2006 letter to the Astorian, "If leaders had asked for a bond to build a new fire station along with a new truck, I am sure that it would have passed easily." To save money the current idea calls for a smaller fire department/public safety building and a small renovation of the City Hall building.

A big difference between this bond proposal and the 2006 proposal is that residents are invited to be a part of the process as a grass root effort.

Where will the new fire station public safety building be located?

Nine possible sites were under consideration including city and private property, as well as the current firehouse location. Geology reports have already been explored, which ruled out some potential sites. Locations were prioritized by distance from the general population, accessibility for fire department volunteers, and “survivability.” After research the three optimal locations include the Trails End property, present location and part of the park at the end of Pacific Way. Ultimately location will be the council’s decision based on input from the public and fact-finding.

How much is this going to cost?

Although we are still in the exploratory phase, the fire committee has been working with a local architect who specializes in fire station design, a project estimator, bond advisors and our Fire Chief to determine an estimated cost for the project. All in, the estimate of the project will be about 5 million dollars including a building, replacing an obsolete fire engine, small remodel of the city hall building, architecture design and the cost of issuing the bonds.

In conclusion, we hope the people of Gearhart will support this process to help us figure out what is best for our community.

If you have additional questions, comments, or input please email them to chadsweet@cityofgearhart.com or call 503-738-5501. Keep an eye on our website at www.cityofgearhart.com for developing information and updates.

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The fire house committee members are: Jay Speakman, Chairperson; Carolyn Anderson, John Baum, Grace Bruseth, Marilyn Gilbaugh, Gary Gillam, Will Leroux, Lori Lum, Jeanne and Wilson Mark, and Tom Thies.

Consultants to the committee are: Fire Chief Bill Eddy; Tom Horning, Geologist; Ivars Lazding, Architect; bond advisors; project estimator; and City Administrator, Chad Sweet; Sue Lorain, City Council liaison.