

Why it makes sense to consider a new City Hall/Police Station at this time

By Bruce St.Denis, City Manager

The idea of replacing the current City Hall/Police Station has been discussed for years.

- The building is 70 years old.
- It was constructed to be a lumber yard and not a facility to house critical operations.
- No one recalls the roof ever being replaced (only patched) so the condition of the roof beams and decking are unknown.
- The floor has obvious points of settlement which is understandable since in previous projects we have found that sawdust was often used as fill.
- A significant portion of the building has no provision for the introduction of outside air or any air filtration/circulation at all.
- The City commissioned an Architectural and Engineering firm to do a study to review the conditions of the building. They found that many of the bearing walls were made from hollow block (possibly Terra Cotta). These walls have a very low likelihood of withstanding even a moderate earthquake or tsunami. The following is a quote from that report.
- **“It is the opinion of the Tolovana Architect and our consultants that the useful life of the current City Hall building has been realized. Since it was constructed for the storage and sale of building materials, the construction techniques employed were not meant for a higher occupant load or increased structural capacities of a public building. When considering the many phases of expansion over its history, the building is simply not able to be remodeled in an economic manner as compared to constructing a new facility.”**

Many of the issues with the facility can be addressed through significant renovations.

But unless the structural elements are upgraded to modern requirements for an emergency facility the renovated building will not be any better at withstanding a moderate earthquake or tsunami than what exists now .

Why is the ability for a Cannon Beach City Hall/Police Station to withstand moderate earthquakes or tsunami’s so important?

What will the benefit of a New City Hall/Police Station be after an event?

- The structure will be constructed to facilitate a quick transition from offices to an emergency management facility.
- Back-up power and communication systems will be built in and protected within the facility
- PD will be able to coordinate and assist in search and rescue as well as other public safety issues as they arise.
- The Police Department portion of the facility will also be hosting at least 50 police officers from numerous jurisdictions and will be the City agency that will be getting most of the inquiries in the first few days after an event.
- Public Works will be able to manage initial road clearing efforts (essentially the width of one lane for as much of the city as possible) to allow partial access for first responders, allow people

to get in and out of their neighborhoods and for staff to assess the condition of public infrastructure.

- Depending on availability of access points to the City, within a few days the Public Works Department will be coordinating the work of numerous contractors and support staff from other jurisdictions to implement right of way clean up and utility restoration.
- The Finance Department will coordinate and maintain the financial records required to document reimbursement requests to Insurance Companies and FEMA, pay bills to contractors and others assisting in the relief efforts and follow up to collect payments due to the City.
- The better the City manages the documentation the less we will have to pay out of pocket. The out of pocket could be in the multi-millions.
- Community Development (CD) will be making damage assessments reports and estimates to make sure City will qualify for relief funding.
- CD will also be responsible for determining what buildings are safe for re-entry.
- We will need Community Development (Planning and Building) for decisions and permitting for repairs, rebuilds and redevelopment.
- Our I/T folks to have to get and keep our communication systems up and running.
- .

Besides City staff here is a partial list of the groups that will have to be coordinated by City Staff from whatever EOC the City has in place at the time of an event.

- Rescue crews from outside jurisdictions
- Back-up Incident Command System teams.
- Red Cross
- Heavy equipment contractors for initial clearing
- Contractors and partners from other jurisdictions to restore utilities
- Debris Management contractors to sort and remove debris left at the curb by residents clearing out their homes or businesses
- The City's Medical Corp
- Contracted Mass Care contractors
- CERT and other rescue volunteers
- Temporary housing contractors (Eventually temporary housing will be an opportunity for accommodation partners to keep their rooms occupied until tourists return)
- Temporary bathroom contractors
- Food and water distribution points
- Food vendors to feed emergency crews (This will be an opportunity for local restaurants to maintain their businesses and keep their employees)
- We will have no hope of pulling things together without bringing in outsider contractors and utility workers with the expertise and wherewithal to help all of us rebuild.

Here are some of the risks that we accept if we do not build a new City Hall/Police Station:

What happens if an event occurs while we are operating from the current building, but it is unoccupied?

If it is a medium earthquake or tsunami, the existing City Hall/Police Station will most likely collapse due to the construction materials and methods originally used when it was built to function as a lumber yard.

- Any information or equipment such as computers, Police gear, PW equipment, paper copies of utility system plans, or any equipment meant for or that would be used in responding or managing the crisis will be lost.
- There will be no reliable location for citizens or their family members can go to seek help or information.
- City staff will have no place from which to work or a location where we can tell outside resources coming to help to respond.
- We will not have a place where we can effectively manage the influx and efforts of heavy equipment companies, search and rescue personnel, first responders, utility contractors, debris management companies, mass care providers and volunteers.

What happens if an event occurs while we are operating from the current building, but it is unoccupied?

- All the conditions described above will apply.
- If the event occurs while the building is occupied anyone inside will be injured or worse. In either case they will go from the helper to victim list.

This building is not for the benefit of City staff.

A well-constructed City Hall/Police Station would be an investment for and by the residents and businesses to have the City Staff in the best positions to assist, protect and help them rebuild their lives in the event of a medium or greater disaster.

I strongly suggest that the degree to which we equip/prepare our team should be in proportion to our expectations of their performance in managing any emergency.