

Putting Public Safety First – November Bond Election

By Søren Simonsen

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With the September primary election just behind us, and the November general election just a few weeks away, many people are engaged in campaigns, discussions, voting, and other civic activities. Much attention is focused on the mayor and city council races. Another important initiative will be on the November ballot—one that I hope is not overlooked.

In August, the Salt Lake City Council voted unanimously to approve a general obligation bond election that will allow city residents the opportunity to determine the future of our public safety facilities. Five public safety buildings—an East Side (Sugar House) Police Precinct and Fire Station, a Fire Training Facility and Station #14 replacement, and a Downtown Public Safety Administration Building, Emergency Operations Center and Parking Structure/Technology Center (the administration, emergency operations, and parking/technology structures are all part of a downtown complex)—are proposed for funding from a proposed \$190 million bond.

Part of the reason for these new public safety facilities is to address significant safety, environmental, and operational issues with the current facilities, as well as to provide much needed facilities that don't now exist. More importantly, Salt Lake City needs to improve our preparations for both a catastrophic event, as well as the delivery of quality day-to-day service to Salt Lake City residents, businesses and visitors. Many residents and businesses have already put into place personal and neighborhood emergency preparedness plans. Having a city-wide plan, and the facilities to support this plan, is no less important.

Recent natural disasters and political events have emphasized the necessity for efficient and effective deployment of public safety resources. Many of us have experienced first hand the impact of recent floods, tornados, wind storms, fires, landslides, and other catastrophic events in our city. We live in an area that is under the shadow of a major seismic event that could affect the entire region. Salt Lake City does not have an adequate Emergency Operations Center (EOC), and even isolated events in the past have stressed our ability to respond.

In addition to our emergency response, the storage of evidence used in solving and prosecuting crimes is spread throughout the city. The new administration building will centralize the storage and handling of sensitive information and evidence.

Our fire fighters currently train in portable trailers. Our aging Sugar House fire station is not large enough to hold new fire and ladder trucks, and with redevelopment plans under way that will bring new businesses and residents at greater densities; we are not adequately prepared to respond to emergencies.

Additionally, there are no police facilities on the east side of the City. Many businesses and residents are continually plagued with the impacts of undesirable activity.

Although we have contingency plans to make do with our current inadequate facilities if the bond fails, the approval of this bond in November will provide Salt Lake City with the proper facilities to support our ongoing public safety needs, while ensuring our ability to respond without impediment to a disaster.

I'm excited about the plans for the new public safety facilities, including our goal to have the facilities certified to high levels of sustainable design standards, which will also insure that they are safe, healthy, energy efficient, and cost effective to operate and maintain well into the future.

If you would like more information about the proposed plans, please join us for a District 7 Town Meeting on Thursday, September 27, from 6:30 to 7:30 in the evening. We will hold this public meeting to share information, answer questions, and respond to ideas regarding the proposed bond. You can also learn more by visiting the web site www.slcgov.com/police/psb_bond, or by calling 801-799-3500.