

CITY OF GEARHART
Worksession of the City Council
Tuesday, May 27, 2025
6:30 pm On-site and Virtual/Telephonic

A worksession of the Gearhart City Council was held Tuesday, May 27, 2025. Council members, City staff, and the public were able to attend on-site, virtually, or by dialing in on a telephone.

Present were Mayor Kerry Smith, Councilor Paulina Cockrum, Councilor Preston Devereaux, Councilor Dana Gould, Councilor Sharon Kloepper, City Administrator Chad Sweet, Police Chief Josh Gregory, Fire Chief Josh Como, Public Works Director Mark McFadden, FFA Architecture and Interiors Ian Gelbrich, FFA Architecture and Interiors John Pete, FFA Architecture and Interiors Phil Lopez, Klash Group Chris Mastrandrea, Executive Assistant Krysti Ficker, and City Treasurer Justine Hill. A quorum of the Council was present.

Mayor Smith called the worksession to order at 6:30 pm. Administrator Sweet gave an opening statement. He explained that the purpose of the worksession was to focus on the Public Safety Building project. He noted that the architects and the project manager would also be available to provide technical details and assist with any necessary clarification. He encouraged Councilors to share feedback and questions regarding the Public Safety Building project. Administrator Sweet mentioned he had received some questions, which were:

How is the online survey/voting progressing so far?; Why can't we just upgrade or expand the current fire station instead of building new?; What is the current thinking or response regarding combining with Seaside Fire?; Are there any other viable options on the table at this point?; Some in the community feel polling, not just surveys, is necessary. What are our thoughts on that?; One of the biggest concerns is the cost of the foundation. Can we break down what's driving that expense?; Is the Public Works building included in the project considered critical infrastructure?; Everyone wants a more affordable solution. What realistic options do we have to reduce costs without compromising safety or future resilience?; If the community selects the combined solution, where will the Police Department go?; What is the estimated cost to relocate administrative staff into temporary offices?; FFA mentioned the foundation cost is approximately \$10 million. What is the breakdown for soil mixing and foundation work?; Will the Public Works building be constructed to critical infrastructure standards as part of the overall project? Will it be built first?; Can we get segmented cost estimates for each component?; Are all of these buildings classified as critical infrastructure?; What factors are contributing to the overall high

cost of the project?; Was remodeling the existing building considered, and if so, why was it ultimately rejected?

FFA Architecture and Interiors Pete explained that they would like to give a brief summary of the engagement process and go over the last community meeting survey results. He mentioned that overall FFA Architecture and Interiors was impressed with getting consistent engagement throughout the process. He gave a brief summary of each of the community engagement meetings (e.g., site evaluation, structural information, geotechnical information, narrowing design options, cost estimates, recommendations).

FFA Architecture and Interiors Lopez went over the last community engagement survey, which had 68 participants. He explained the breakdown of the votes for the two Public Safety Building options, to which 10 were for the separated option and 58 were for the consolidated option. He did indicate there was not a “do not build” option presented to voters. He noted that the survey poll for the last engagement survey has been closed.

Councilor Gould talked about outcomes at previous City Town Hall meetings before partnering with FFA Architecture and Interiors. She indicated similar questions and inquiries were brought up, which were discussed; and that the result of those previous meetings was to move forward to investigate a new Public Safety Building. Moving forward, she recommends that strong notes be taken and translated to the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) that are already available on the Public Safety Building webpage.

Councilor Devereaux felt that the community engagement meetings had a consistent, supportive citizen group. He feels that any nay-sayers had an opportunity to come and share their viewpoints, yet they chose not to be there. FFA Architecture and Interiors Lopez noted that it did feel that people that attended the community engagement meetings had a better understanding of the process and the project. FFA Architecture and Interiors Pete agreed and reiterated that participants that were at the meetings appeared to have a better understanding of cost, size, and project outcome. Councilor Devereaux felt that citizens that attended were engaged in supporting the future of Gearhart. FFA Architecture and Interiors Lopez noted that one change in the last survey’s results was that there seemed to be a shift in the response to “more likely to attend” a future Town Hall meeting.

Councilor Gould wants to make sure that citizens still have an opportunity to have their questions answered. She wants to find a way to better communicate. She does feel that FFA Architecture and Interiors and Klosh Group have done their jobs and that the City Council needs to identify the best way to get information out. Mayor Smith agreed that FFA Architecture and Interiors and Klosh Group provided

clear and concise information, which he really appreciated. He feels that the Council needs to find a way to get citizens feedback and input. Councilor Cockrum asked about the feasibility of individually sending emails back or responding with a link to assist with answering questions. She questioned if knocking on doors was the best approach to getting information to citizens. Administrator Sweet feels he has a communication action plan in process. He wants to do regular Blog posts and keep to the facts. Councilor Kloefer inquired about the feasibility of a mailer that could go out to voters. Administrator Sweet said that he and Attorney Peter Watts are working on a communication survey (poll) with a consultant. Councilor Devereaux felt that the most powerful figure to get out is the Historical Cost Escalation - Pacific Northwest (Mortenson Construction Cost Index) graph.

Councilor Gould pointed out that the cost is significant; however, the focus should be on needing a new Public Safety Building (e.g., replacing a roof analogy). She does not want polling to mislead people. She does not want confusion on the terminology of asking if citizens want a new facility, but rather emphasizing the need for a new facility. She feels more communication is necessary on the benefits of the need for the facility. She thinks caution should be used with the polling language. Mayor Smith agrees; however, based on information he has gathered, approval ratings must be at 70% before a bond is taken to voters. He wants a poll to show that the City Council has the approval numbers before putting it on the ballot. He feels November is a good aim; however, he does not want another failure. He is worried about City staff morale. There was continued discussion on wants versus needs; mold test on the fire station; community engagement; embarrassment of having staff /volunteers work in facilities; home values; insurance rates; infrastructure; staffing; grants; merging with other cities; construction costs; critical infrastructure; soil types; public works; extending the period of the bond; and educating citizens.

FFA Architecture and Interiors Pete transitioned the discussion into a breakdown of the costs of the project. He showed a pie chart on Total Project Costs - Site Improvements + Foundation, (site improvements and foundation \$8,400,000; the remainder of project costs \$25,000,000). FFA Architecture and Interiors Gelbrich indicated that there is sticker shock associated with the project costs. FFA Architecture and Interiors Pete discussed a pie graph with Total Project Costs By Program, which was based on percentage of square footage to costs (fire station \$15,900,000; police station \$8,400,000; public works \$5,800,000; city hall \$3,300,000). FFA Architecture and Interiors Gelbrich felt the City Council should target the citizens who are undecided.

There was continued discussion on the aesthetics of the building; maintenance of a new facility; coastal environment; public works being designed as critical infrastructure; roof lines and evacuation structures; police temporarily relocating to Seaside during construction; seismic retrofit grants; feasibility of a

remodel; meeting adequate size of current fire trucks; educating citizens; escalation costs; staff feeling safe in facilities; collaborating with the Gearhart Rural Fire Protection District; incorporating the eastside in discussions; Councilors building relationships; thinking creatively to communicate; potential polling citizens; and keeping social media in perspective.

Councilor Cockrum remembered a comment made by a citizen that stressed the issue of a new Public Safety Building being a matter of urgency, which she feels is even more essential moving forward. She also appreciated a comment made by another citizen during the community engagement meeting that pointed out this was a generational project.

FFA Architecture and Interiors Gelbrich again recommended searching out the citizens in the undecided category and making sure they hear accurate information.

Administrator Sweet indicated that he would following up with additional information on polling; get financial numbers on different types of general obligation options; updating the FAQs; sharing segregated department cost estimates; working on a communication plan for the citizens on the eastside of Hwy 101; working with the Gearhart Rural Fire Protection District; and communicating harder than ever before.

The Mayor adjourned the worksession at 7:46 pm.


Mayor Kerry Smith
Chad Sweet, City Administrator