

City Council hearing on Sears Armory rescheduled for June 12

By Mark Ellis
The Southwest Portland Post

In the matter of the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) process which will decide the future of the Sears Center Armory, it's down to three possible uses and four proposals.

At a May 8 public meeting at the facility named for Korean War hero Jerome F. Sears, David Sheern (Portland Development Commission associate project coordinator) briefed citizens about the City Council hearing on the matter, rescheduled to June 12 at 2:00 p.m. at City Hall.

Once City Council has made their recommendation, PDC will submit a Final Re-Master Plan. The Department of Defense will then make the final decision on the site's new use.

"We will present our findings to the city council," said Sheern, "and then it will be their decision as to what to submit to the DOD." Those findings include a broad analysis of the various proposals, existing condition of the property including certification of the base environment as toxic waste free, and traffic impact studies based on proposed usages.

The City Council will also consider a huge stack of public input surrounding future use. If the mood at the meeting was any indication, that input includes a fair share of contention and concern.

Four proposals made the final cut. The Housing Authority of Portland (HAP) and Community Partners for Af-

fordable Housing (CPAH) both propose that the 1961 vintage armory and site be converted to a mixed-income housing development. Under their scenario, housing opportunities would become available for the disadvantaged and homeless.

Westside Christian High School envisions a quality educational facility, and has agreed, if selected, to contribute generously to programs aimed at helping the disadvantaged constituency. The final proposal is for a Portland Emergency Response Management (POEM) facility, which entails transforming the site to a center from which to coordinate city-wide emergency response mechanisms.

Under the housing plans the existing facility would be demolished to make way for new housing units and HAP and CPAH office complexes. With the Westside Christian High School and POEM proposals, the existing brick and mortar of the base would remain.

In 2005 the Army decided for various reasons to declare the facility surplus, with a final pullout scheduled for 2011. The PDC undertook the BRAC process, and determined that the site was eligible for residential, educational, or--as was the case with Army operations-office/industrial use. Various proposals were put forth, and the March 8th meeting signaled that the list had been winnowed down to four.

The Westside Christian High School proposal would house the school's administrative offices and classroom space enough for 275 students. "We



Portland City Council will hold a hearing on June 12 to help decide the fate of the Sears Armory. (Post file photo by Don Snedecor)

believe that Westside Christian is the ideal reuse candidate for the Sears Armory," said Westside principal Andy Sears, who affirms that the school's plan is the only proposal not requiring public funds.

"Instead," says Sears, "public funds are generated." Project manager Steve Reiff said, "Westside Christian is a high quality academic institution that would be a long term asset to the neighborhood."

The school has committed to provide community space on the grounds

should they become the new owners, and have agreed, if selected, to contribute generously to long term funding of the city's Home Again Mentoring program, aimed at helping the homeless and disadvantaged constituency.

Under both the HAP and CPAH
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