



Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian

Aerial view of property in the Highlands offered as part of a potential land exchange.

Firehouse: Highlands offers greater elevation



Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian
Land in the Highlands considered a possible location for the Gearhart firehouse.

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site faces legal challenges from the Palisades Homeowners Association and a reluctant seller in landowner Edward Murphy.

“In your presentation accompanying the ‘new public feedback survey’ it is implied that the Murphy family is agreeing to sell the property for \$3 million,” Murphy said in a letter to the city delivered at the meeting. “Two years ago we would have agreed in order to avoid litigation but since then, assuming that the city was no longer trying to take our property, we have planned on listing and sale for residential purposes.”

Murphy asked the city to sign an agreement waiv-

ing its right to condemn their property. “We hope you will let the voters know that you will need to litigate to acquire our property if they are in favor of a bond,” Murphy wrote.

Even without the homeowners association’s approval, the city could pursue eminent domain to demonstrate public need for the new station at the High Point site, Watts said. Rezoning, annexation and other legal issues could complicate the process.

The Highlands site presents an outcome where everyone wins, Watts said. “The win to the city is we would save \$3 million to \$3 1/2 million, so we would be offering our citizens a great amenity with a fire station at

an even higher location than the High Point station.”

The elevation at the site is between 70 feet to 72 feet, City Administrator Chad Sweet said, 10 feet higher than the High Point site.

“Given all the positives, it seems to be likely public support for this location,” Watts said.

The next step, Sweet said, would be a visit to the location with councilors, negotiations with developers and a survey of public interest.

A geotechnical study, at an estimated \$25,000, would follow.

“I think the site is a very good site for our fire hall,” City Councilor Dan Jesse said. “I think we should pursue it.”

Consultant: Expected to deliver strategic plan

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committee of Celeste Bodner and Michael Hinton will bring several options to the full board for their

review and selection in May, Archibald said. The park district would then schedule a special meeting to make the final selection. A contract could be signed by May 26.

The park district’s board of directors anticipates delivery of the proposal within six months.

Three meetings in April and May are planned to

invite public comment related to the recreation center planning process: child care and youth programs, recreation for all, and sports tourism.

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