

NORTH OGDEN CITY PUBLIC SAFETY BUILDING

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- **WHY WOULD THE CITY NEED A NEW PUBLIC SAFETY BUILDING?**

The simple answer is the current building is inadequate as a public safety facility. It is unsafe for citizens who need to transact business there and it is unsafe for police officers who work in the facility. To recruit and retain officers in today's environment it is important to provide a conducive work environment. Additionally, the City is growing rapidly and there is inadequate space for growth in the current building. Safety of its citizens is the number one responsibility of government and to fulfill that responsibility the City needs the proper tools. Also, the court facility does not meet current requirements imposed by the State of Utah.

- **WHY DOESN'T THE CITY JUST EXPAND THE EXISTING BUILDING?**

The main portion of the current building was built in the 1960's and was not built to house police. Although there have been several remodels since that time, the current building does not meet current seismic codes, has several defects and is not energy efficient. Expanding the existing building is a short-term strategy that would not be an efficient and effective long-term solution.

- **HOW WOULD THE CITY PAY FOR A NEW FACILITY?**

Due to the potential cost of the project, the City would have to issue either a revenue or general obligation bond (incur debt) to pay for the facility.

- **WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A REVENUE BOND AND A GENERAL OBLIGATION BOND?**

The issuance of a general obligation bond requires a vote by the citizens. The bond is backed entirely by the City's credit worthiness and its ability to levy taxes on its residents. A GO bond typically has a corresponding property tax increase that is dedicated to bond repayment. A revenue bond does not require an initial vote during an election and can be authorized by the city council after public hearings. In North Ogden City's case, revenue bonds would be collateralized by pledging sales tax revenues. In the event there is inadequate sales tax revenues to make the bond payments the City could use money from other general fund sources including funds generated by property taxes.

- **WHAT IS THE PROPOSED COST OF A NEW FACILITY?**

The City currently does not have a firm cost as design work has not been completed. The initial estimate provided by the professional firm who performed the feasibility study

and outlined the facility is roughly \$11 million dollars. However, until the design of the building is finalized and actual bids are received, that number is simply an estimate.

- **I WAS TOLD THE BUILDING WOULD COST APPROXIMATELY \$6 MILLION. WHY HAS THE COST INCREASED?**

The \$6 million number was never supported by a professional opinion or bid. It was based on the costs other cities have paid in the past 5 to 10 years. The size of the building or the quality of construction has not increased since the start of the project, some 18 months ago. However, construction costs have increased significantly during the last 5 years.

- **WOULD PROPERTY TAXES BE RAISED AND IF SO WHAT WOULD BE THE ANNUAL DOLLAR INCREASE IN MY NORTH OGDEN CITY TAXES?**

There is a high probability taxes would have to be adjusted to repay the bond, whether it is a revenue or general obligation bond. The City is currently reviewing its budget to determine if there are ongoing revenues that could be used to repay the bond without substantially increasing taxes. Based upon current interest rates and a repayment term of 20 years for a \$10 million bond, the City would be required to pay principal and interest of approximately \$600,000 per year. If the City had to generate the entire payment in incremental revenues this would result in an AVERAGE property tax increase of approximately \$100 per year per residence.

- **HAS THE CITY LOOKED AT ELIMINATING ITS POLICE FORCE AND UTILIZING THE WEBER COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE AS THE PROVIDER OF PUBLIC SAFETY?**

Yes, the City will look at all alternatives and will gather information from the appropriate sources to make an informed decision. The City council will not only look at costs but will also consider the great quality of service that is being provided by the City's police force. With contracting the City Council would lose some control over the day-to-day operations. The City is confident safety and other needs would be met by the sheriff, but there would be a loss of the personal touch provided by our own police department.

- **WHY COULDN'T THE CITY JUST PAY CASH FOR THE FACILITY?**

In the last several years the City has spent a substantial amount of money on other projects and has committed to the completion of several others. Based upon the current generation of cash, inflation of construction costs would substantially outpace the ability to save. The City must also maintain a rainy-day fund to guard against unknown fluctuations in the economy. The City would utilize any funds that are determined as excess and are legally available to help pay for construction of the facility.

- **WITH THE CONDITION OF THE ECONOMY WHY BUILD NOW?**

Utah's current unemployment rate is 3.6%, the 5th lowest in the nation. Based upon the City's sales tax collections (an increase of % over the prior year) it appears North Ogden's economy is still very vibrant. The City recognizes there are some citizens who may be struggling and every effort would be made to minimize the effect that building a Public Safety facility would have on those citizens. Additionally, interest rates are near all-time lows and it appears construction costs will continue to accelerate. It is important that the City's infrastructure outpaces anticipated growth.

- **CAN THE COURT MOVE TO THE ADMINISTRATION BUILDING AND USE THE COUNCILROOM?**

Yes, court can be held in the council room. Modifications to meet state and security standards would require some construction. Offices that are currently occupied by other city employees would be needed to have room for a judge's chambers as well as a prosecutorial conference room. With these offices required, and fixed next to the courtroom/council chambers, it would not be advisable (nor allowed by state certification standards for a Class II court – see attached certification standards for Utah justice courts) to have the remainder of the court employees in another building. This would require more space for the court administrator, judicial assistants, and front counter space for the court window. Construction costs have not been calculated because the Administration Building is currently at capacity with other City employees and departments.

- **CAN THE COURT MOVE SOMEWHERE ELSE SO THE CITY DOES NOT HAVE TO PAY FOR AND HOUSE THE COURT (Interlocal Agreement)?**

The City Judge and others have seen this occur in the past in other jurisdiction. This can be done but must follow the practices of Utah Code 78A-7-1. It is a long process and must be approved by the Judicial Council of the state of Utah. When a court is dissolved the judge must be paid through the end of the judge's term. Any outstanding contracts must also be fulfilled. Basically, through an agreement between two cities, or a city and a county, one party gives up the court and sends charges to another court where personnel are provided, including judicial assistants, prosecutor(s) and judge. In exchange for this service, the money from any citations is retained where the case is heard, with the original jurisdiction receiving pennies on the dollar from fines.

- **WHY IS THE BUILDING SO BIG?**

The new facility will have many of the attributes missing from the current facility. It will also be built to accommodate growth for many years.

- **WHAT IS WRONG WITH THE CURRENT BUILDING?**

The age, design, and size of the current building makes it an unsafe and inefficient facility for current and future operations.

- **HOW WOULD A NEW BUILDING BE SAFER FOR ALL USERS?**

A safer parking area outside for staff and detainee loading and unloading. Inside there will be secure areas creating separation from visitors and staff and any individuals who are being detained and questioned about any criminal violations.

- **HOW WOULD I BENEFIT FROM A NEW PUBLIC SAFETY BUILDING?**

The building would provide the officers with the resources needed to effectively, and efficiently provide service. Much of the work officers do is proactive in nature which prevents crime before it happens. All citizens benefit from this. North Ogden has a reputation as a safe community and investment in a public safety building will help to continue to support that reputation.

- **HOW MUCH CRIME IS THERE IN NORTH OGDEN?**

Although North Ogden is one of the safest cities in Utah, we have our fair share of crime. Our officers have averaged around 13,000 calls for service every year for the past several years. Violent crimes and persons crimes are relatively low but due to the demographics of North Ogden, but property crimes are unfortunately quite common.