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The Imperial Republican

A new Imperial fire hall may be sited at the original location on Broadway, north of the library, based on votes and discussions at two meetings the past week.

However, no formal council action on building it there or at the school's Wellington field has been taken.

Pros and cons of both locations were tallied at a special meeting Friday night that included the council, mayor and IVFD members.

Monday's city council meeting did not yield action on the site; rather, council members tabled action on purchase of the Wellington property for the potential fire hall.

Another special meeting set for Wednesday night this week will further discuss the school property, as well as a contract with B D Construction.

In a straw vote taken at Friday's meeting, IVFD members favored the Broadway location, north of the library, by a 2-1 margin.

That was the original site the city set aside years ago, until the council decided to look at other locations, including the school's Wellington football field that lies south of East 12th St., bordered by Wellington and Park Sts.

Despite no council vote one way or the other, it appeared Monday they may look again more closely at the Broadway location, especially after Friday's special meeting vote and some of the other expenses that might arise, such as drainage, should the fire hall locate at the football field. "It's my stance right now that we should move forward on the Broadway property," said Council President Chad Yaw at Monday's council meeting.

Arterburn added, "If I had to vote tonight, I'd vote for this site here (on Broadway)."

Both said unknowns on the cost of infrastructure needs at the Wellington site led them to those concerns on moving ahead at this time there.

Time is also a factor. If the bond issue vote is to be on the Primary Election ballot, wording for that vote must be at the clerk's office by March 1.

Location of the building will affect the cost due to different building configurations and infrastructure needed at each site.

At the end of Monday's discussion, Fire Chief Nick Schultz said he would talk with the construction manager to shift their focus on building plans to the Broadway site.

The 7 p.m. meeting Wednesday is also hoped to clear up some questions in the contract wording within B D Construction's 32-page agreement.

B D of Kearney was hired earlier this month as the project's construction manager.

Council members also asked Utility Supt. Pat Davison to gather some cost estimates on potential power needs and sanitation sewer lines should a fire hall be located on the Wellington football field, now owned by Chase Co. Schools. Those estimates will be reviewed at Wednesday night's meeting.

However, the council decided not to have the school property undergo a preliminary survey to determine surface elevations.

After several months of negotiations with city and IVFD representatives, the school board voted last week to offer the entire football field property to the city for \$130,000.

The agreement requires the city to establish a soccer/sports field at the south end.

Jason Tuller, who directed the discussion at Friday's meeting with the firemen, presented information on number of vehicles driving by each proposed site, response times to each site, as well as the property tax assessments that could result from a bond issue.

During separate 27-minute blocks of time over the noon hour last Friday, 89 vehicles were counted on East 12th St., while 205 were tallied on Broadway, showing there is a higher traffic volume downtown at those times.

Should a \$1 million bond issue be sought, cost to taxpayers in the city of Imperial on a \$100,000 valued home or business would be \$64.96 annually over a 20-year period, according to Tuller's figures.

District realignment?

Monday's meeting discussion also turned to a possible realignment of the now separate city and rural fire districts into one.

That suggestion came from council member Arterburn, who said a "Suburban Fire District" might be something to consider.

Noting that building a new fire hall is a "huge issue," Arterburn suggested slowing down so whatever decision is made is the right one.

Arterburn said he wasn't sure a new fire hall should totally be paid for by city taxpayers, noting that some of the needs for the building expansion are due to the need for the large, rural tankers.

Currently, there is an agreement between the two fire districts that the city provides the housing for all fire trucks and equipment, owned by both city and rural. Each district pays for its own trucks/equipment.

During Monday's discussion, IVFD building committee member Brad Dillan asked if the fire hall focus has now shifted.

"Has the focus shifted from where we are going to put the building to how we're going to pay for it?" Dillan asked.

City Attorney Josh Wendell said if there's a perceived need to change how the fire districts operate, that can be addressed.

"But I didn't see that coming tonight," he said.

There were unanswered questions on how that might be accomplished.

Without the law in front of him, Wendell speculated that any change in makeup of the fire districts would have to go to a vote of the people, since both districts (city and rural) are taxing entities.

The lists below show the pros and cons on each site, developed by those attending Friday's special meeting.

Broadway Site Pros

Just where might the fire hall be built?

No stop signs
Central location
Already own the property
Utilities in place
Traffic flow is better/response time
Non-residential
Wide street
Traffic will hear whistle
Profile of location/community "face"
In a catastrophe, highway will be open faster
Closer to police station
Gym accessibility for fireman training
Snow removal 24/7 by State
6" water main
No drainage issues
More lighting/less children
Firemen preference
Adequate space for current needs/Some expansion

Cons

Parking issues
More children/larger families in area
Congestion
No room for expansion/more limited
Gym conflicts/activity conflicts
Church activities across street
Setback behind library
More traffic numbers
Construction congestion
Pedestrian traffic
Lose site for future retail
City would not gain a soccer field
Increased construction cost
Asphalt removal – added to construction cost
Return to fire barn through residential area

Wellington Site

Pros

More space
Location off Broadway
Room for future expansion
Family Fun Day would be close to fire hall
Room for parking
Potential host site for advanced training/mutual aid/jaws

Just where might the fire hall be built?

Convenience

More flexibility for building design

Leaves downtown open for retail

Less traffic

Pond—help mitigate building runoff

Save Cornerstone for residential commercial development (soccer field)

Restrooms/concession stand on site

Excess fences and lighting there could be utilized

Cons

Drainage issues/cost of dirt work

Activity congestion

Law enforcement cites more speeders at this site

Lack of utilities

Better for residential

Cost of property

School traffic/inexperienced drivers

Not centrally located

Firemen responding through residential areas

Kids on soccer field

Possible removal of concrete curb around track

Stop sign at 12th/Broadway

Need to consider no truck parking on 12th Street due to width of street

Out of the public eye/community pride

Grounds maintenance

Question as to size of water mains needed

North entrance – wind and ice possible

City responsible for snow removal on 12th Street

Residential on three sides

Further from targets/fuel loads

Will insurance rates go up, being further from downtown??

Heating apron on north side

Bus traffic could be an issue

Voter response for various reasons