

Mayor's Corner
December 2022

The first order of business at the December City Council meeting was to award the bid for construction of the new Carlton Civic Center. Attending this meeting were several neighbors who expressed concerns and questions about the new building. Their comments mirrored concerns and questions our councilors and I have also wrestled with over the last couple of years. The highest priority for the City Council is determining the best, and most efficient, use of the funds you entrusted to us when you elected us. Evaluating the options of either refurbishing the old building or building a new one was the top item on our "to do" list – the resolution of a conversation our city has been having for almost a decade.

Over the last two years, our city staff has updated cost estimates and researched the advisability of either refurbishing the old building or replacing it. Experts in every aspect of building construction and maintenance have been consulted and that information was provided to the Council and public. You can find some of that information here:

<https://www.ci.carlton.or.us/projectsland/project/goal-132-carlton-civic-building>. Staff is working on updating this page with additional information from the past year – so please check back in the next few weeks for summary updates.

Council has discussed the two options in detail and the final decision was made to replace the existing building with a new Civic Building that will not only provide adequate city-related services for several decades, it will become an amenity for our city, incorporating features that we all have wished for over the years: Community space to shelter residents in times of emergency, such as the 2021 ice storm; space for community activities – from a library nook to facilities for anything from yoga classes to birthday parties. This building will provide a community gathering place in all seasons, as well as a place for visitors to come and learn about our town, its history, and the amenities we have to offer. Our goal is to incorporate the amenities you told us were important to you when you filled out the community survey in the Fall of 2021 - and to create a central, attractive, welcoming facility that appears to have been part of Carlton since the beginning.

The designs were presented to the city at an open house in January 2022 and residents voted their preferences both as to design and exterior building materials. During the evaluation and decision-making process, we tried to keep residents updated and involved – information and updates were provided via public meetings and open houses; topics were always noted on the City Council's regular meeting notices, in my "Mayor's Corner" and in conversations during the "Envision Carlton" process. Council, staff and volunteers did as much as they could – short of going door-to-door – to ensure neighbors were aware of the project, could ask questions & get answers, and were able to provide input.

I realize that even with these efforts there are folks who missed the notices and conversations because... well we all have life outside of city government. This happens – I am not criticizing. However, I want to be clear that your elected officials have ensured every effort has been made to keep you informed of this process. Over the last two years, our Council has made some very difficult decisions – BUT only after hours of thoughtful debate, research, and consideration of what is the most cost effective and in the best interest of all; the decisions we make affect us as much as they affect you, and this decision was not taken lightly.

From the time I was elected to the City Council, to this year's election, my promise has always been that if you have a question about what's happening in our city government, ask me! If I don't have the answer immediately at hand, I will research and find it for you. If you still have questions about this specific decision (or any city issue), please don't hesitate to contact me. I'm happy to sit down and discuss. While change is always challenging, I want to assure you that this decision is significantly more cost effective than refurbishing the old building filled with hazardous materials such as asbestos and lead. Additionally, the City is in a solid financial position to afford this building due to its careful preparation and prudent strategic financial planning over the last eight years. After all of the debate and research, this is an exciting step for our community. We will have a building that honors Carlton's history, provides those features that YOU SAID were important to you right now, AND prepares Carlton for future generations, including your children. If you still have questions about this decision (or any city issue), please don't hesitate to contact me. I'm happy to sit down and discuss.