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INSIDE: Island gift giving ideas, A5



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More evidence requested for BI police-court facility

Emergency? It's already been looked at since 2006, but could change save taxpayer money?

In 2006, a needs assessment said a new combined police and court facility was needed on Bainbridge Island.

Sixteen years later, the community is still waiting.

The old assessment said a new facility was needed because of security issues and redundant services. Other reasons were high standards and community pride, along with it being cost effective in the near term, estimated at \$4.32 million.

Now, the cost is more like \$20 million.

There are various reasons for the delay: the recession, changes on the City Council, changes in city government leadership, changes in land availability, etc.

And just when it looked like the former Harrison Medical Center would be turned into a jail-court facility - the remodel is set to start this year with it opening in 2021 - now a group of residents wants the council to again look at the site, saying the city is paid too much by the millions.

Concern about the process was raised when an ethics complaint was filed against former City Councilmember Kol Medina. It says that Medina did not recuse himself from the vote on Harrison, even though some of its employees donated money to the Kitsap Community Foundation, of which Medina was president. Medina recently resigned and moved to Walla Walla.

Medina was mayor when the Harrison property was approved by a 4-3 vote. Current Mayor Leslie Schneider voted in favor, while current Deputy Mayor Joe Deets and Councilmember Rasham Nassar voted against.

The city bought the property at 8804 Madison Ave. in 2019 for \$8.975 million, which was \$1.5 million over the assessed value, which



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The city has been wanting to replace the police station since 2006.

is another bone of contention.

Let's look again

Councilmember Michael Pollock brought up a letter from the citizen group, led by Dick Haugen, at a recent council work session. He asked that the issue be put on an upcoming agenda. "We owe it to taxpayers" to see if too much really was spent, he said.

Nassar agreed, saying the primary responsibility of the council is to take care of taxpayer money responsibly.

"We need to vet the project" if for no other reason than to prove to the public that it was the right decision, she said.

Councilmember Kristin Hytopoulos emphatically responded: "We're not reopening" this. "It would be a bad thing for the community. It's destructive to be reopening" it.



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The Harrison building has been selected to be the new Bainbridge Island Police-Court facility.

Even though she wasn't on the board when the decision was made, she said the issue was vetted previ-

ously so there's no reason to reconsider it. She added it looks bad for the city to be second guessing itself,

especially as it looks to hire a new city manager.

Even though he voted against it years ago, deputy mayor Joe Deets said he's not interested in opening that can of worms again. He said if they do this what would stop the council from revisiting other issues?

"I have a whole host of issues I'd like to revisit" but that would not be productive, he added.

Added City Manager Morgan Smith, who led the city at the time, some of the information in Haugen's letter was incorrect.

"I'm troubled by the email," she said. "It's opinion not facts."

Pollock concluded that portion of the meeting saying he would make a list of concerns and give it to the city so it could do research and get back to the full council.

TURN TO FACILITY | A6

Pleasant Beach Village to offer holiday events through December

BY TYLER SHUEY
Bainbridge Island Review

Pleasant Beach Village, located near the Lynwood portion of Bainbridge Island, is known for its cute and quaint shops year-round, but during the holidays the village transforms into a winter wonderland.

Dubbed "Holidays at the Village," this year's events will be slightly modified due to Gov. Jay Inslee's most-recent COVID-19 mandate pertaining to indoor seating and capacity. Although the events might look slightly different, PBV staff has forged through these hardships in order to provide families with a glimpse of holiday glee.

"We were sort of doing this before the current mandate anyway just to be extra safe," events coordinator Robert Freitag said.

Freitag said these holiday happenings have been ongoing for a while at the village, but only recently did staff start promoting them, adding to their popularity.

"It's always been a huge thing out here," he said. "The last few years we've been a



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Welcoming sign to Pleasant Beach Village.

bit more public about the whole thing. Last year we had a carousel here... It's always been here; we've just sort of ramped it up in the last few years."

The event that has gained the most appeal this year has been the Gingerbread House Parties. Typically the event is held in The Manor House, but due to COVID protocols it will take place in a spacious solarium called the "Wintergarden."

Freitag said the Wintergarden will feature holiday lighting with heaters trying to keep everyone warm. There will be nine socially distanced tables with a capacity of five people per table.

"You're covered from the rain but there's plenty of air circulation," he said. "We're encouraging people to bundle up."

One gingerbread house for a group of five costs \$48 plus

tax. If you'd like to purchase an additional gingerbread house, it will cost an extra \$17 plus tax. Staff is also providing a take-and-make at-home kit for those who are uncomfortable participating at the village.

The first sessions start Nov. 28 and run through Dec. 23 with 24 sessions in total. Space is limited so sign up at holidaysatthevillage.com.

TURN TO VILLAGE | A



Courtesy photo

A lit-up Christmas tree with a stack of presents stands at Pleasant Beach Village during last year's Holidays at the Village.



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'Discrepancies'

In a phone interview later, Pollock said he has found some "discrepancies" and "irregularities" in his research. "Yea, it's been going on awhile, and we need to get it right," he said, adding it's a lot of money. "If we don't have time to get this right I don't know what we do have time for to get right."

He said when the Harrison site was picked the comparisons were not fair. Some of the sites were bigger for instance. "It was like comparing apples to oranges," he said.

Pollock said the appraisal also was off because Harrison was looked at as a medical facility, not as office space, which is what it was going to be. That would have reduced the cost by millions. Also, the city obtained medical equipment as a result of the sale, something it didn't need for a police station. Again, not buying that would have saved even more.

Finally, he said an ethics complaint against Medina regarding this issue must be investigated. He said it looks like Medina should have recused himself from voting, or certainly disclosed it as a conflict of interest.

When Pollock spoke up at the work session, he received a cool response.

"It looks like we want to move on, or sweep it under the rug. It might be painful but it would look bad to cover it up. We would look good talking openly and honestly about it and admitting there are problems," if there are indeed problems, he said.

He said he hopes he can convince the rest of the council that if it can save money on the police-court facility those funds could be spent elsewhere - on issues that are community priorities like climate change and sustainable transportation.

It was vetted

On the other side of the issue is Deets. He said while he voted against buying the Harrison property it wasn't because it wasn't his preferred site. It was because he wanted to negotiate a better price.

"I wanted to push a little harder, but my colleagues wanted to wrap things up," he said. "When it comes to saving money it starts with acquisition."

But now he wants to move forward with more pressing issues, like the COVID-19 pandemic, the economic crisis and kids out of school.

"Why are we talking about something's that been thoroughly vetted," he said. "It's taking our attention away from things that matter."

Nassar, who voted against Harrison along with Deets, disagrees with him about another look.

She didn't like paying too

much for the property and that the city bought the medical equipment. She favored another site, known as Visconsi, that was for a similar price and the city could have built to suit.

She didn't think Visconsi got a fair shot. For various reasons that proposal wasn't submitted until the 11th hour.

"It was a back of the napkin kind of thing," she said, adding the council felt a lot of pressure from then-Mayor Medina to make a decision for Harrison.

"There was always something strange about Harrison," she said. "It unfolded very quickly. The council didn't do its due diligence."

"All the other options disappeared, and Harrison was the only solution to the problem."

She said the council has to regain the public's trust after it decided to spend \$20 million on a facility a few years after the community shot down spending for a \$15 million facility. It was also hurt by the complaint against Medina alleging quid pro quo.

Nassar would like the council to find an affordable option and take that to the voters. "We have to restore public faith in government," she said.

Another no vote

Meanwhile, Ron Peltier, who was on the council at the time, also voted against Harrison.

"The City Council in my opinion acted with an inappropriate sense of urgency, let CHI Franciscan dictate the price, and bailed them out of

Fast facts

- In 2015, the city tried to pass a \$15 million measure to find a new police station, but it failed with 75 percent disapproval.
- In 2017, the city surveyed residents about six possible sites for a police-court facility. New Brooklyn rated first, Vineyard Lane second and the current police station site third.
- In 2019 funding was approved with \$12 million from current budget and \$8 million in long-term debt.

a failed location at taxpayer's expense," Peltier says in a letter to the Review.

He favored many other locations, one the Visconsi site on Wintergreen Lane. "We really didn't take the time to reasonably explore that as an option," he said.

He actually thought the city should have taken advantage of the Fire Department's offer to locate the new police and court facility within the redevelopment of Station 21 at Madison and Highway 305. Cost was estimated at \$7.5 million in 2014.

His favorite location was the current police station property. The city already owns it, it's at a walkable landmark and tells those arriving off the ferry our police are here to protect us, it would contribute to the vibrance of downtown and building there would not involve expanding urban development into a residential zone.

He added the current police station site was not discussed much as an option because a 2007 Ferry District Plan calls for moving the police station

for commercial development. He also said later on concerns were brought up about ferry traffic congestion and the need to build a two-story building with underground parking, making it too costly.

As for Haugen, in his letter to the council, he said the fire station proposal would have been the better decision because it was larger and cost less. He said he never liked the Harrison site as a citizen because it is too close to a church and assisted living center. And he said the group he is part of thinks the council did not have accurate and thorough information regarding other sites that were being looked at when it made its decision.

In response to Haugen's letter, Smith wrote the Yaquina property was dismissed because it is in a residential area. She also said the Harrison site is larger, 2.81 acres compared with 2.04. And Yaquina was a vacant lot, while Harrison had a fully developed building.

As for the current police

station site, she said renovating the building was never an option because it wasn't structurally sound enough, and building a new station there was the highest cost option.

Hearing examiner

The hearing examiner recently approved the Harrison site with the addition of a two-story stairwell, a locker room and an area for eating. While there was no public comment, Barry Loveless, project manager for the city, did respond to complaints made earlier.

Regarding no sally port, he said there will be a secure, gated fenced area for transporting prisoners.

"It has all the functionality of a sally port," he said. "Police decided they can live with that compromise."

As for places for clients and attorneys to meet, Loveless said the interior has been revamped so there will be one and maybe even two private rooms for them.

Finally, for overall safety, Loveless said it is true some court attendees or victims would have to walk a block "exposed to danger from public transport" or the parking lot, but the police station right there does contain officers. He said if there is concern, there are transportation options that can take people right to the door.

"The court and police are isolated for the most part. There isn't really any overlap," Loveless said.

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VILLAGE

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"With people sort of looking forward with caution, they're trying to figure out things that they can do that are safe. We're trying to offer people a little bit of an escape and something to enjoy," Freitag said.

The Wintergarden is also open to the public Wednesday through Sunday from 4-8 p.m. when folks can enjoy a holiday cocktail or local takeout from a restaurant.

If you want to get the little ones out of the house, taking a Holiday Loop through the village might be the perfect joyride. Beginning Nov. 27 at dusk, vehicles will be welcomed to follow the bright lights and holiday decorations up Woodson Lane and along the loop at Pleasant Beach Resort. The loop will be open to vehicles nightly



Courtesy photo

A gingerbread house that was made at last year's Holidays at the Village.

through Dec. 31. "We're doing a lot of deco-

rating around Pleasant Beach Village," Freitag said. "We're going full board with the lights and everything."

The one night the Holiday Loop won't be taking place is Dec. 8 from 5-7 p.m. when staff will be holding the Lights & Leashes events, when folks can walk their furry friends through the village to experience the holiday atmosphere.

"It's sort of our little pet-friendly event," Freitag said.

Along those same lines is the Tips 4 PAWS fundraiser throughout December. All tips left at PBV merchant shops will be matched by Pleasant Beach Village to support PAWS of Bainbridge Island and North Kitsap. This is the fifth year of the fundraiser, which has raised over \$100,000 to support the PAWS pet adoption program since 2016. Freitag added there will be a little Santa's mailbox for people to make donations.

The one event that isn't feasible this year due to COVID is Winter Weddings, since those are held indoors, Freitag said. Aside from that, he is looking forward to the seasonal events and all those who come out to enjoy them.

"It's a continual and building tradition, and we encourage everyone to come out," Freitag said. "It's wonderful to just kind of walk around the property once we get the lights up. It's a beautiful winter walk."

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PUBLIC PARTICIPATION MEETING
Remote Meeting

The Buxton Center for Bainbridge Performing Arts (BPA) is a proposed 5,000 sf addition which will house a new lobby and multi-purpose room. The site is located at 200 Madison Avenue N.

Thursday, December 10th, 2020 at 6:00pm
Online Meeting via Zoom
Meeting login info & instructions at
www.bainbridgewa.gov

This is a mandatory meeting pursuant to BIMC 2.16.040. For more information, please contact:
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ktayara@bainbridgewa.gov or (206) 780-3767

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