



By [Tom Henderson](#) • Staff Writer • October 28, 2019

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City forms committee to examine public facilities

The McMinnville City Council last week supported the formation of a 20-member advisory committee to draft a plan for dealing with the city's recreational facilities.

Councilors have been discussing since July about the possibility of a new facility combining the community and aquatic centers, based on report by Portland-based consultant Ken Ballard.

However, Mayor Scott Hill said Tuesday he wants people to know the council is concerned about all city facilities, not just the recreation centers.

"Right now, we're more involved in a high-view look at what we're doing," Hill said. "We're looking at facilities across the board for the city. We have many, many facilities that would not withstand an earthquake, and that's what we're looking at -- the resiliency of those buildings."

Ballard's report and subsequent conversations about a possible new recreation center are just part of a much larger process, he said.

"We've taken parks and recreation out and looking at that as one unit of this bigger discussion we're going to have," he added.

Hill said numerous people have approached him expressing frustration at not being able to talk about the proposed recreation center at council meetings.

"Know that you're going to have plenty of opportunity in this process that we go through," he told Tuesday's audience members.

No council decisions will likely be made on any city facilities for the next two years, he added. "It takes time to have transparency and have individuals participate," he said.

In the meantime, councilors approved the formation of the advisory committee to meet over the course of the next 18 months.

Parks and Recreation Director Susan Muir said members will also look at the library and senior center.

Muir, City Manager Jeff Towery, Library Director Jenny Berg and Fire Chief Rich Leipfert will interview and select members for the 20-member committee. About 40 people have already expressed an interest in serving on the committee, Muir said.

Eventually, Hill said, the scope of the process will include all city buildings. Parks and recreation facilities get a lot of attention, he said, because people are passionate about them.

“If they don’t have a real passion for fire and safety, they better have, because we’re saving lives,” said Hill. “We need to do the right thing from that perspective.”

Muir described Ballard’s report as just a first step.

“It needs to go through a process to get right-sized for McMinnville,” she said.

Recreation facilities definitely pose a problem, she added.

“Right now, we’re kind of held back by our buildings,” said Muir. “They’re barriers to us to delivering great services to our community.”

Given that committee members will discuss more than recreational facilities, Muir recommended removing any “rec” references from the committee’s name.

“We think the name could be more reflective of what they’re going to do and what we want them to advise us on,” she said.

Councilor Zack Geary said it’s important that the city take action on aging facilities such as the 95-year-old community center.

“The cost of doing nothing is extremely impactful to me,” he said.