



By [Dora Totoian](#) • Of The News-Register • December 11, 2020

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McMinnville, Linfield to pursue siting new rec center on university land

[Updated: Friday 7 p.m.]

The city of McMinnville and Linfield University have agreed to pursue siting the city's future recreation facility on Linfield-owned land next to its campus.

Linfield President Miles Davis and city manager Jeff Towery announced the potential partnership at Thursday's MacPac meeting, saying they have gotten only as far as being open to explore all opportunities.

"Being in education is a unique position and it is a trust for a town," Davis said. "Every once in a while, you get an opportunity to blue sky something."

The university released a statement Friday saying it and the city have agreed to sign a memorandum of understanding to have preliminary discussions.

The new facility would be located on the 80-acre parcel of land bounded by Highway 99, Booth Bend Road, Keck Drive and the Linfield campus. The land, currently leased for farming, was donated to the college by Hewlett-Packard after Linfield purchased the company's adjacent plant buildings and the 17 acres they were on for \$4.2 million.

While the initial agreement doesn't commit the city to a final decision on a partnership with Linfield, Towery said he'll do everything possible to make it happen. Davis concurred.

MacPac is a 19-person city advisory committee formed last year to develop future plans for renovating current facilities or building new ones, including community center, aquatic center and library. It is tasked with identifying a location, programming and design for a single facility or facilities, and making a recommendation to the city council.

The details of how MacPac's work will change with Linfield in the equation and how facility operations and finances would be shared are still vague. Councilor Zack Geary, a member of MacPac, emphasized the group still has an important role in seeking to understand what the community wants out of its new recreation facility.

Davis and Towery highlighted the opportunity for the property to eventually house more than just a combined community and aquatic center, including the potential for a performing arts venue and other community spaces.

However, Geary made it a point to tell MacPac members the mission remains to first meet the critical needs of the city.

Davis and Towery also said the city is trying to apply a diversity, equity and inclusion framework as it pursues this partnership. They appreciate the location because it's on Highway 99, has a bus stop nearby, and can easily be wheelchair-accessible, among other reasons.

Mayor Scott Hill noted the Linfield site is a prime location, and it will help in drumming up support for a possible bond that may be required to fund the project.

"When we talk about a legacy project, it's in a legacy location," Hill said. "When you're looking at a bond and the efforts that go on from that perspective...it takes a heavy lifting and it needs passion from people who go out and tell the story."

See Tuesday's News-Register for more.