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OP-ED: GOOD CALL, NOT RECALL!

by [Editor](#)

By Tom Bender

Like Richard Mastenik, I was at first amazed at Dave Dillon's release that the City of Manzanita was planning to spend \$1.75 million to purchase the Underhill Plaza to relocate city offices. We are both old enough to remember when that was a lot of money.

But as details came out, I stood up to applaud and thank the City for their action. Here's what I'm seeing now:

1. The City was very smart to get an approved option to buy from the seller before going public. There's almost zero undeveloped commercial-zoned land outside of tsunami inundation zone in Manzanita, and even with the City having a signed option from the seller, local realtors tried to bid the price up. If you don't have a signed option before going public, someone else will snap up the property, raise the price, and try to resell it to you.
2. There *has* been opportunity for public discussion, after Dillon's press release, at two city council meetings, etc. The City has also committed to a very open public discussion process about what the best options can be for use of the land. I feel Richard should have attended those meetings, contacted the city, or sent written comment, if he had concerns.
3. The City's decision to move City Hall and the Police Station outside of the inundation zone and away from concrete block buildings that would collapse and kill staff during the earthquake is commendable. The City of Seaside is moving their schools out of the inundation zone - for the safety of the children, and to act as an evacuation center. Hooray! Manzanita's new Civic Center can also be an evacuation center, with solar electric panels on the roof, etc. And have enough room for city operations as the city continues to grow, and for other uses.
4. The City got better than a fair price for their purchase. The County Assessor's records for the Underhill property show a RMV value of \$1.994 million, and those RMVs on long-owned property are often only half of actual sales value. The asking price was above that, and they sold it to the city for *below* that - \$1.75 million. And the October tornado even helped by clearing the land for development!

development.

5. The Underhill property (including the cleared land behind the buildings) is 5.6 *times as large* as the City Hall and the Police Station portion of its property. It's the equivalent of almost twenty-four 50'x100' lots. Can you buy even one commercial zoned lot in Manzanita for \$73,000?
6. When we see the land purchase price, we may not remember that the City will now be selling the existing City Hall and Police Station properties on Laneda. Comparing numbers from the County Assessor again, land value alone of those two existing city-owned properties (RMV, not actual sales value) is \$240,000. RMV with buildings is c. \$872,000. So with the City selling those properties, they should be able to recover a significant portion of their cost of acquiring the Underhill property.
7. There's more land in the Underhill property than probably needed right now just for city offices. What else of benefit to the community could be located there? A conference center? A small city park? Workforce housing? The City has previously taken no action in response to the 2007 Buildable Lands Inventory which showed that, even then, there was not affordable housing in the city for 70% of residents. What are your thoughts?
8. So my recommendation to people of our community is to NOT sign Mastenik's recall petition, but instead to come and take part in the discussions about how best to use the Underhill property for the benefit of the community. It's time to move forward for community safety, to reverse global warming and inundation of the city, and to deal with unaddressed housing issues of the city - just to start a list! Everyone will have different ideas, and the combination, through discussion, will give us all the best. So, thank you in advance!

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