



PORTLAND BUREAU OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

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Unreinforced Masonry Building Seismic Retrofit Project Policy Committee Meeting Summary

Committee Members Present: Hermann Colas, Sean Hubert, Tom Sjostrom, Carmen Merlo, Dennis Andersen, Matthew Eleazer, Walter McMonies, Margaret Mahoney, Reid Zimmerman, Jen Sohm, Tom Corollo, Ken Rust, Brian Emerick, Jonathan Malsin.

Other attendees: Ken McKinney, Amit Kumar (BDS), Mike Haggerty, Jessica Kinnard (CBO), Jonna Paefthimiou (PBEM).

PPS School Building Improvement Bond Presentation

Jen presented slides on Portland Public Schools buildings. [Refer to presentation slides.]

School buildings are old: half of schools built before WWII and half built 1946-1968. Only 2 new schools were built in last 40 years.

School bond passed in 2012: now trying to update many schools. There is a difficult bidding climate. They have over \$500 million to spend over the life of the bond. This is a lot to manage.

How did they decide which schools to focus on and where to do seismic work? Reviewed FEMA 178 forms from schools (done in 1990s). Grouped buildings as good/fair/poor.

Doing incremental seismic work. Prioritize collapse prevention and safe exiting.

Jen showed photos of improvements such as diaphragm bracing, removing hollow clay tiles, other change that improve safety but are invisible to users once it is done. There is a need to “tell the story.”

Funds became available from state Seismic Rehabilitation Grant Program (SRGP). There were in turn due to DOGAMI statewide needs assessment that showed great need.

SRGP ranking factors requires benefit-cost analysis, other factors [see slides].

Summary: passing URM retrofit standards will require continuous, subsequent voter-approved construction bonds. The 2012 bond has included 3 schools for complete retrofit/replacement and 11 schools for incremental improvement. And sometimes work reveals a situation is not what was thought;

what we thought were URMs are actually lightly reinforced concrete, other we thought were reinforced masonry are actually URMs.

Future capital improvements are contingent on school board referral and voter approval. Three high schools are now being mastered planned. Seismic retrofits and roofing will be continued; voters and parents value this. But accessibility, fire life safety, and technology upgrades are also needed.

Tom Corrolo: Are schools still used as fallout shelters?

Jen: The public think they would go to a school as a shelter, but in general many schools could not be used after an earthquake. There are BEECNs near some schools and there are parks near some schools that could fulfill this function.

Carmen Merlo: Why just go to collapse prevention, a higher standard would allow them to be used as shelters?

Jen: I support that, but the grant money is not there to go to a higher standard. I think the gyms at least should go that way, but we need more funds for that. In this construction climate just doing the basics we promised with the money we got is a challenge.

Margaret: Timetable for subsequent bonds?

Jen: A subcommittee is meeting to discuss timetable of high school master planning and other projects that could go on potential 2016 bond.

Jonathan: What is a master plan?

Jen: It's not specific to seismic, it's a public planning process for the entire site.

Tom: Have you estimated the cost of doing the seismic retrofits school-district wide?

Jen: Yes, in 2009 KPFF did estimates for different construction types / eras and got some \$/SF estimated that we extrapolated for the whole district: \$500 million. But now that we've done some work, I would push up the number; site conditions turn out to be more costly. And also those numbers didn't take into account other upgrades like ADA access and fire-life safety improvements that would be required at the same time.

Challenge of Seismic Retrofit for Places of Worship

Pastor Dennis Anderson presented on behalf of downtown religious uses. He stated that downtown churches are historic buildings, many are architectural gems, and they tell the story of the City. They also provide meeting and performance venues, daycares, and social services, feeding, and sheltering for people in poverty.

Neighborhood churches are also important. Half serve specific ethnic populations and many are social and community centers for those groups, and provide social services. Neighborhood churches also host daycares, AA meetings, Scout meetings, and similar.

Churches struggle with security, technology, and code upgrades. They have artwork, stained glass, musical instruments, organs, specialized furniture, and other items that have to be safely removed, stored, and reinstalled.

Church construction types vary and are complex and not always well documented. Many also have lead and asbestos issues.

Membership and income loss will result from temporary closure. Certified programs such as childcare will require recertification at a new location and then again when they move back.

When many churches are closed at once, then many downtown social services will be lost at the same time.

Churches have limited incomes, difficulty borrowing, and do not benefit from tax credits (because they are tax exempt).

Many churches will not have capacity to plan many elements of the upgrades: financial, architectural, moving, temporary relocation of services and staff.

Needs include time for planning and fundraising, technical expertise, and concierge service to move through the process.

Margaret asked if Seattle provides any support for religious uses.

Dennis said no.

Jen notes that only 20% of Portland residents have children in PPS. Similarly, many Portlanders are not church-goers. But both schools and churches serve as community centers. 90% of services churches provide are to non-members. However, churches tend to be insular in their functioning and they don't have a big presence for the general public.

Margaret asks if other churches are aware of the discussion.

Dennis says Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon has publicized it.

Margaret asks if they would be places of shelter.

Carmen says not, they are not large enough.

Hermann asks whether the legislature is against providing additional financial support for churches because they are already tax-exempt.

Dennis says that a small but growing vocal minority is concerned about tax exemptions for churches, housing allowances for clergy, and similar. But that many see that social benefits churches provide have a great value to the public.

Timeline and Readiness for Public Hearings

Margaret asks that the group turn to the item Review Timeline and Readiness for Public Hearings out of order, since Sean must leave early. There are no objections. She says she wants to discuss this; the group has discussed many items but does not yet have a body of recommendations to take to the public. Enforcement has not been discussed and should come at the next meeting. She says that the public meetings should be to give feedback on recommendations. Carmen confirms.

Sean says there are recommendations for affordable housing and historic uses. Dennis says he could put together recommendations for churches in the same format. Jen says that schools can meet but need a phased approach because they simply need more money and time to pass those bonds. Also, they have 25 buildings so how would they get through them all in the timeline? They would also need a prioritization strategy for those.

Margaret asks if Jen would review the standards with her portfolio in mind. Jen says she will again review.

Walt says that with the private building owners, most have 1-2-3 URMs, very few have more than ten. But any entity that owns a lot of URMS, they may need to negotiate a schedule.

Jen mentions that in the early 1990s PPS put together a transition plan for ADA that prioritized the improvements; something similar might be helpful here.

Sean says it may make sense to pool the recommendations from the previous retrofit committee and recent discussions about special groups, and then review them together.

Walt mentions need for insurance.

Jen says school district might just go into debt to make the projects possible. This would impact their annual operating budget. Similarly, they would need to stage the work because students might be out of some school buildings for a year while they did it.

Margaret suggests that the next meeting discuss enforcement and then focus on a very rough draft of the report.

There is discussion about the total cost of all the work. Carmen says the cost for the City to do work on its own buildings would be \$68 million. Hermann comments that it would be hard to find the workers and materials to do all the work in time to meet deadlines. Brian says that if the timeline is extended, people will postpone starting. Tom Carrollo suggests that the timeline could be extended for an owner that provides a phased work plan.

Carmen discusses the desire to update the City's benefit costs analysis (BCA). Seattle did a study recently that seemed to show retrofits were not cost effective. Ken Goettel, who did a study for Portland in the 1990s, has been retained to update the BCA. He is a respected authority in this field and strongly refutes the conclusions of the Seattle study.

Tom Sjoström asks how this fits the committee's timeline. Carmen says he can provide interim work products to make sure the group has time to review it together before items go to Council.

She states that there were significant problems identified with the Seattle study, including: the economist only used 30-year life for buildings, and used assessed rather than replacement value of the building. They also assigned relatively low economic values to human suffering.

Brian points out that changes in the real estate market can quickly make a project more or less economically feasible.

Margaret says that staff will put together a draft report for the next meeting, and discussion will focus on enforcement and review of the draft.

There was a question about how many private schools were included in the URM database, and what their situation might be. Margaret asks to call out how many churches, schools, affordable housing structures, and others are included. Someone asks if the database is final. Amit says the database is mostly complete but will continue to be improved as new information comes available.

Review Draft URM Communications Strategy

Carmen reviews the Draft URM Communications Strategy. [Refer to handouts.] She says the City will mail brochures to owners of known / suspected URMs. Carmen mentions that outreach is already planned for a few groups: DRAC, SEAO and PBA. She asks that committee members also share information with their professional organizations/networks and asks for suggestions for other groups that the City / committee should reach out to. Carmen mentions plans for URM walking tours and a video of the tour also, including information about the risks they pose, how to tell brick veneer from a real URM, how to check for retrofitting.

Carmen asks members to provide feedback on the draft brochures and FAQ.

Hermann asks about what the message will be to the building owners in terms of next steps. Carmen states that it will focus on next steps in the policy-making process. Margaret comments that the enforcement discussion may relate to that also.