



# CITY OF PROSSER

## Washington

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### **Community Listening Session Schedule**

*Prosser, WA:* The City of Prosser wants to hear from you! Mayor Randy Taylor and the Prosser City Council are hosting a Community Listening Session during a Special City Council meeting on Tuesday, June 20, 2023, starting at 7:00 p.m., at the Prosser Community Center located at 1231 Dudley, Ave., Prosser.

The purpose of this Listening Session is provide Prosser residents with the opportunity to speak about the City's need to establish a new Police Station and City Hall. It is the City's intent to use the information gleaned from this session to provide Council with a recommendation for moving forward with the project.

As well, the City wants your feedback on how it can better communicate with its residents not only on this project, but on any/all matters pertaining to City operations and programs. What is working well? Where can the City improve its communication efforts with its residents?

This will be a facilitated conversation, led by a former city manager with a great deal of experience in assisting communities with their public communication outreach efforts.

To get the conversation started, the City is offering this Question and Answer (Q&A) information sheet that offers background information on this project.

**Q: Why do we need a new Police Station and City Hall?**

**A:** In May 2021 a fire that started in a local business with a common wall to the City's Police Station destroyed not only that business, but also the Police Station, and left City Hall uninhabitable. City functions are now scattered throughout town in leased buildings and temporary makeshift accommodations for the public and city staff. While necessary given the circumstances, the decentralization of city services is hampering efficiency of operations and is proving an inconvenience for the public.

**Q: Were the original City Hall and Police Station adequate in size to meet current and future needs of Prosser?**

**A:** No, the facilities were built in the early part of the last century when the population was 1,000 - 1,800 residents. Today the Prosser has population of about 6,200 people, projected to increase to about 10,000 people by 2030, and possibly up to 15,000 within the 20-year planning horizon. That said, had the buildings not been so damaged, the City



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could have made due, while it continued the planning process for new or upgraded facilities. The core of the original structure was built to house a bank on the first floor, and a meeting space for the local chapter of the Mason's on the second floor. Over the years, the building was remodeled and space reconfigured as adjacent properties were purchased and added on to the structure. A large portion of the City Hall building was actually the former fire station. Also, the police department was not designed to keep our officers, victims, or inmates safe while in custody, and was decades out of date with current policing operations.

Q: Were the Police Station and City Hall insured? And, for how much?

A: Yes, the building was insured, as well as the contents. They were insured for their fair market value at the time, which was about \$4.5 million.

Q: Has the City already purchased land for a new City Hall and Police Station?

A: Yes, with land values rapidly rising, the City used a portion of the insurance proceeds to act on an opportunity to secure vacant land in the center of the City while still affordable. It is located on the north bank of the Yakima River, at the intersection of Wine Country Rd., and North River Rd., across the street from Les Schwab, and adjacent to the boundary of Historic Downtown Prosser.

Q: Was rebuilding City Hall, the Police Station, or both on **the original site** evaluated?

A: Yes. The link to the Feasibility and Site Analysis completed in May 2022 is here: [202016 Feasibility Manual 051322 Compressed.pdf \(cityofprosser.com\)](#)

In summary however, the advantages and disadvantages to rebuilding at the original site (and on City-owned property behind the Skating Rink) are as follows:

### Advantages:

- Preservation: retains an historic building.
- Downtown: Police Station & City Hall stay downtown.

### Disadvantages:

- Too restrictive from the standpoint of future growth and function of the Police Station portion of the project.
- Hazardous materials: unknowns with site excavation and demolition/renovation.
- City Hall and Police Stations in separate buildings, results in additional costs for site acquisition and annual maintenance.



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Q: The question of a new Police Station/City Hall was rejected by the voters in November 2021. So why is this being brought back up?

A: First, while staff is in temporary quarters around the city and while the level of service is lessened, city services are being delivered. But, the need for a centralized location convenient to the public remains. Further, recall that 2021 was a difficult time for the community, nation, and world, as we were all in the thick of the COVID pandemic. The practices mandated and employed to help make us safe, had an enormously adverse impact on the City's ability to get information out to voters in a manner in which they could learn about the project in an open setting. On a matter of this import, the city would normally have hosted multiple in-person public meetings but that was not possible in 2021. While the City did conduct multiple meetings online, not everyone accessed those meetings, so they were sparsely attended. Likewise, the Planning Committee was limited by the same rules. The City Council and senior staff recognize that at the time the ballots went out to the voters, there were more questions than answers. With COVID restrictions lifted now, and City operations out of crisis mode, now is a good time to kick off some community conversations, to inform the public of these issues, and together discuss potential solutions.

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