

EWEB wants to steer site plan

The utility proposes that a panel shepherd redevelopment of its riverfront property, should the parcel be sold

By JEFF WRIGHT
The Register-Guard

A 13-member Riverfront Advisory Team would help guide the development of choice property that the Eugene Water & Electric Board hopes to vacate, according to a plan favored by EWEB officials.

About 20 acres along the

Willamette River could be declared surplus if EWEB moves its operations complex to a 52-acre site along Roosevelt Boulevard in west Eugene. The utility intends to maintain its administrative headquarters at the site on East Fourth Avenue next to the river.

However, General Manager Randy Berggren cautioned Wednesday

that skyrocketing building costs could force EWEB to look for design savings that would delay construction at the Roosevelt site until 2008. Another option, he said, is to scrap the move entirely and instead refurbish operations at the riverfront site.

EWEB officials have said they want to get maximum dollars out of the sale of the riverfront property, with proceeds applied toward the new operations complex, thus reducing the expense to ratepayers.

Recent projections have bumped the cost of relocating to Roosevelt

from \$76 million to \$98 million. EWEB commissioners plan to review the Roosevelt project in detail at a work session Jan. 31.

The elected commissioners met for an hour Wednesday in closed session to discuss the potential sale of the riverfront property, but offered no public comment or action afterward.

In a recent memo, EWEB staff members endorsed a proposal that would have EWEB, rather than the

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city, take the lead in creating a master plan for any riverfront property that becomes available.

Under the proposal, a 13-member advisory team — consisting of two EWEB commissioners, two Eugene City Council members, one Eugene Planning Commission member, three EWEB employees, two city employees and three citizens — would help select a consultant and consider public comment on how best to develop the parcel.

EWEB staff members said they favor their proposal over other options calling for the city to take the lead in creating a master plan, or for the two public agencies to do so jointly. EWEB believes that it can maximize sale proceeds under its favored option.

The city must approve a master plan before any redevelopment can begin. In addition, the City Council must approve any bonding scheme for underwriting the Roosevelt project, and also has the right of first refusal when it comes to buying the riverfront parcel.

City Manager Dennis Taylor said he is gratified EWEB appears to recognize the importance of a master plan for the site, and is less concerned about who oversees the plan. The particulars can be worked out, he said, at a joint council-EWEB session scheduled for February.

City code says any redevelopment of the EWEB property must "create a 'people place' that is active, vibrant, accessible and multi-use." It also must incorporate an educational element that will teach people "about our river, our history and our city."