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FEATURED

## Lake Oswego begins property acquisition process for new treatment plant

Corey Buchanan Pamplin Media Group  
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The current Tryon Creek Wastewater Treatment Plant was built in 1964 and needs to be upgraded or rebuilt.

PMG File Photo

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The Lake Oswego City Council gave the go-ahead during a meeting Tuesday, Dec. 20, to begin the acquisition process for three parcels that hold 18 businesses in the Foothills District to make room for a new wastewater treatment plant.

The city must replace or renovate the current Tryon Creek Wastewater Treatment plant — owned by the city of Portland — to meet environmental guidelines. The City Council previously directed staff to pursue a new facility, which would be owned by the city and be more energy efficient, less odorous and require less land. However, costs for the project have ballooned since initial estimates and the city opted to wait a year to decide whether to proceed while developer EPCOR Foothills Water Partners completes more advanced designs. However, despite concerns from some business owners that there is nowhere in town for them to relocate and that relocation would severely hamper their business, the city is proceeding with the property acquisition process that may involve forcibly obtaining the land through eminent domain.



“We wouldn’t be here unless we absolutely had to be,” Mayor Joe Buck said. “These are not easy decisions, but we’re balancing them with a great public need.”

At the meeting, the city approved a resolution of public necessity, which establishes a public need for the properties at 99, 101 and 113 Foothills Road.

The city indicated that moving forward with the property acquisition while EPCOR completes designs provides businesses with additional assistance and time for relocation, while also giving them clarity that the acquisition will take place. The city also said that doing so would reduce “financing, construction costs and contingencies.”

City Manager Martha Bennett noted the original schedule asked the businesses to leave much sooner.

“We got an extra year because we recognized there are complexities with some of these businesses that don’t exist with a retail or office kind of use,” she said.

Buck and other councilors expressed that they wanted the city to do right by the local businesses through this process.

“I think we need to do a lot more than is just required ... we’re working hand-in-hand with these folks,” Buck said.

A representative for the company the city hired for relocation, Universal Field Services, said they have been working with property owners on relocation since last spring. Business owners and their lawyers previously stated in meetings and interviews that there was hardly anywhere for them to relocate in town due to the lack of vacant industrial land in Lake Oswego, and some said they hadn’t received much help. Some also deemed moving out of town untenable, as their customer base is in Lake Oswego.

However, a Universal Field Services representative said during the meeting that the company has already successfully relocated two tenants.

“This is a good process to give them as much time as possible to relocate,” she said, adding that finding replacement sites for some of the business has been tough. The city is required to provide relocation assistance, but it’s up to the businesses to complete the process.

The property acquisition would include an initial offer from the city followed by a negotiation, and the sale prices could be decided in court if the two sides can’t come to an agreement.

#### **MORE INFORMATION**



**Businesses concerned about looming displacements for Lake Oswego treatment plant project**

**Corey Buchanan**

