

Tualatin's Dilemma

The Seneca Street Extension

Is it worth it?

Publisher's Note

There is no hotter topic in Tualatin politics right now than the Seneca Street Extension. The old K-Mart has been demolished and the construction will soon begin of the new Nyberg Rivers Shopping Center featuring Cabela's, New Seasons, LA Fitness and others. However, the issue of the Seneca Street Extension seems to have created a real frestorm.

From my understanding our City Council has approved extending Seneca Street in the *Master Plan*, which in itself is confusing. Here's why: It does not necessarily mean the extension will happen in the near future, it just opens the possibility. In other words, it's been approved, and in fact is part of the TSP (Transportation System Plan) but the when/how is still up in the air.

The major source of the controversy is that the Seneca Street Extension apparently needs to run **right through** our City Council Building across from the Library. Therefore, to move the road that now runs in front of the Library less than 50 yards to connect to Seneca, we might need to demolish the existing council building, put a road through it and build a new City Council Building at the cost of more than \$4 million (estimated).

Also, there is serious consideration to erect the new City Council Building in what is now the courtyard area

of the Library. This will also gobble up about 30 parking spots. (See the diagram) Many question the necessity of this move, particularly when the expense of the project along with potentially encroaching upon the Library's open space is in the balance.

Now that this project's Master Plan has been approved, the City is furiously seeking input from local people, our CIO's (Citizen Involvement Organizations) and anyone who wishes to comment. In the coming weeks you will be asked your input in your CIO meetings and e-mail surveys, Twitter, Facebook, the City Website, etc.

I'm happy to see the Nyberg Rivers Shopping Center come to Tualatin. It'll bring jobs, more shopping choices, and give our city a much more upscale feel than the former K-Mart (and Jiggles) ever could. But to lump the Seneca Street Extension into these plans is clearly a fly in the ointment that local people need to weigh in on before it's too late. Some feel it is already too late, others think it's still in the discussion phase. It depends who you ask.



Jonathan Crane,
Publisher

City Councilor's Weigh In: (okay, two of them!)

I reached out repeatedly to all six of our City Councilors to offer their feedback on this topic. I mentioned that I'd point out to readers that they were given this opportunity. Disappointingly, only two responded. No responses from Councilor's Truax, Beikman, Davis and Brooksby. **-JC**

I look forward to hear from CIO's on this issue. I believe extension needs to get done, but we need to look at our finances and evaluate what we can do. Extension might need to be at some time in the future. I'd like to see if citizens would support bond measure for a facility behind the police station that has more public

spaces. It could be bigger and have more meeting spaces.



Frank Bubenik
City Councilor

While I am hesitant to comment, as we are in the midst of a public input process, there are a couple of things I feel are very important to note.

The Seneca St. extension has been included in our last two Transportation System Plans, supported by Traffic Engineering studies, broad community input and support. TSP Community Task Force Members and City Staff spent a year working on our most recent TSP plan, including hundreds of community volunteer hours. It was the most community-inclusive, City Plan we have ever developed.

Most importantly, we really want to hear from the Tualatin community about how

and when a Seneca St. extension and subsequent City Hall relocation could be done. We are in the midst of a public input process and are working hard to reach out to everyone. The information on this project, and how to give us your feedback, will be available through individual CIO's, on the City's web-site, in upcoming Newsletters, and through City Staff. This is a chance to be part of the process and make your opinion count!



Nancy Grimes
City Councilor

Here's what our Mayor has to say:

As most folks know, the new Nyberg Rivers Shopping Center is moving forward. Last month I wrote that the Master Plan approved by the City Council calls for the extension of Seneca St easterly into the new shopping center in an effort to address congestion and safety issues on Martinazzi Ave between Nyberg St and Boones Ferry Rd. Of course, the construction of that extension means the removal of the City Council Chambers.

What has not been decided yet is exactly when this street should be constructed. It could be built simultaneous to the shopping center. Or, it could be built later; perhaps months, maybe years, possibly even many years later. There may be pros and cons to all the various timing options and the City Council is looking for your input on that timing.

The City will compile a common fact sheet as well as a staff report on the options including costs of construction of both the street and a new building. We are asking the Citizen Involvement Organizations (CIO's) to convene all the neighborhoods in town and share the details of these reports. Then we want you, through your

CIO, to tell the City your recommendations. These meetings will be occurring soon and it is very important to us that you participate in this process. I hope you will find out when your CIO meeting is and circle that date on your calendar. If the CIO meeting is not the best way for you to get involved in this issue, we will provide opportunities on the City website, Twitter, Facebook, or you can send us an email, a fax, or a phone call.

Whatever your preferred method, please take the time to read up on this issue and find a way to give us your recommendation. As I said before, it's your town and your money, so please, also give us your advice.

Thanks,



Lou Ogden,
Tualatin Mayor

Proposed extension of Seneca Street and a new city building

In August, City Council added as a condition to the Nyberg Rivers (Cabela's shopping center) master plan that Seneca Street must be extended through the Tualatin Library property. Also as part of the Master Plan is another new street, identified as A Street from Boones Ferry Road into the western edge of the Center. The new Seneca Street will eliminate our current City Hall/building. City Council will make key decisions on this matter in November or December, 2013.

With the initial vote behind City Council, they now are requesting citizen input as to:

1. If Seneca Street should be constructed, and
2. When should Seneca St. and a possible new City building be constructed, and
3. The scope, funding, and location of a new City building.

There are many unanswered questions for citizens to discuss. One of the major questions for residents: do we even want Seneca St. extended with its significant impacts on our Library? There is an estimated loss of 30

parking stalls on the Library property; the Library will have a major new road at its front, Seneca Street; and possibly a new City building constructed in the present Library plaza area near Martinazzi. The cost for the road and the possible new City building is estimated to be \$5.3M.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

The CIOs will be having meetings for their members to learn the FACTS and express their views. Please go to the CIO website, TualatinCIO.org, to find when your CIO is meeting. Riverpark CIO is holding its member meeting October 10th, in the Tualatin Police Station training room, beginning at 6:30. PLEASE ATTEND YOUR CIO MEETINGS TO PROVIDE YOUR VIEWS ON THIS IMPORTANT ISSUE!!



Jan Giunta is President of Riverpark CIO and 22 year resident of Tualatin.

Let's take this one step at a time

I am very concerned about the proposed extension of Seneca Street that would essentially isolate the Tualatin library on a "small island" surrounded by busy streets.

My young children and I visit the library often and have trouble with parking now. Fortunately, the street in front of the building is quiet and we can cross safely from the parking by the City building.

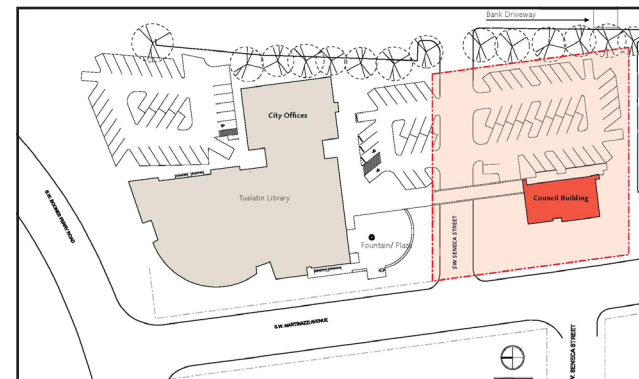
After reviewing the proposed changes, it makes sense to see if the new road connecting Nyberg Rivers to Boones Ferry will handle the traffic. There are multiple existing ways to get back on to Nyberg and hence to

southbound Martinazzi without adding the Seneca extension. It seems premature to make this change.

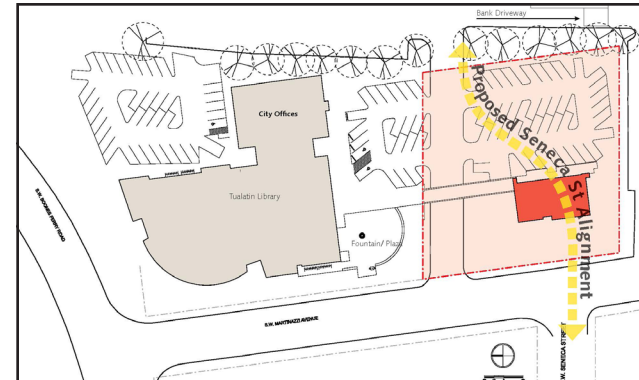


Shauntel Hogan and her family have enjoyed the wealth of community events in Tualatin since June of 2011.

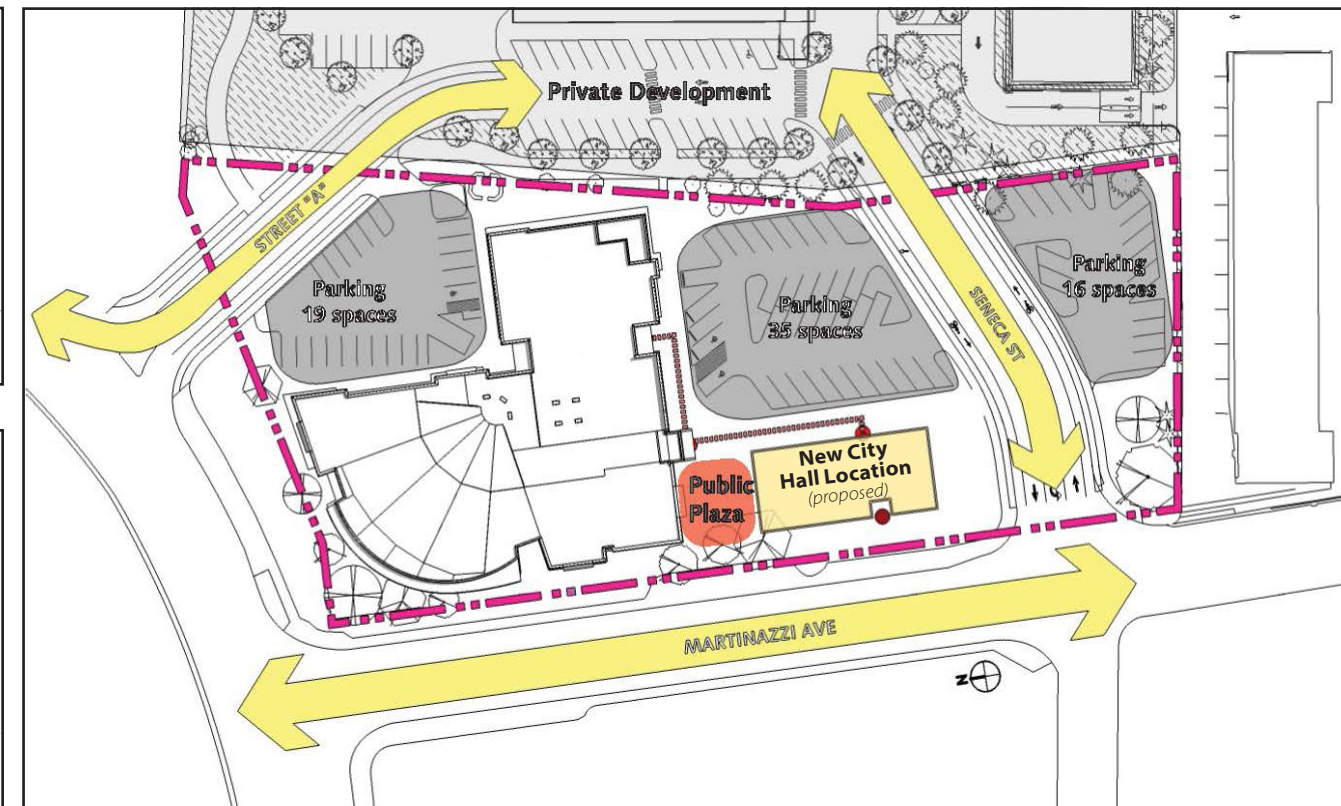
Note: While Tualatin Life strives to offer balanced opinions, the letters received from readers were all opposing the extension. After numerous pleas on facebook I was only able to get one supporting the extension and that was because I asked (begged) her to write it. **-JC**



Existing Layout



Possible Solution?



Proposed Solution, including "Street A" for 'right-in, right-out' only traffic to Boones Ferry.

Seneca Street expansion just makes sense

There are two reasons why I support the City's plan to expand Seneca Street. First, our city buildings need consolidation. The current City Council building is too small and the employees are scattered around town in city owned and rented office spaces. The building was built when Tualatin was much smaller and the size of the city and number of employees has grown. A larger building is needed where our city employees can function together as an efficient unit.

Secondly, downtown is getting a much needed remodel. Through this project, the old K-mart, Jiggles and random abandoned signs and

structures will be removed. It makes sense that we follow a cohesive plan for downtown that the City Council has proposed.

Thanks to all the leaders who have spent time working towards a better, more efficient Tualatin.



Beth Roach
Tualatin Resident

Why demolish it?

I think that taxpayers in Tualatin should be asking for full disclosure of just why the decision to extend Seneca St. less than one block is a good reason to spend well over five million dollars and where was the open process promised by City Council is. Just this year Council, the Budget Committee and staff warned us of coming funding problems when the budget was adopted; now they have money to burn. Which is it?

If the concern is simply congestion on Martinazzi then it would be simple to run a curb down the center from Boones Ferry to Nyberg making all driveways and entrances "right in -right out" only. A little time spent

looking at the traffic information submitted by the developer shows this would work.

Tualatin has many traffic problems of higher priority as any driver can point out, yet it seems this decision is being pushed along rapidly by Council. No voter should ever be fooled into thinking this is a necessity or bonds to finance it are a good idea.



Dennis Lively
Resident since 1971

Nyberg Rivers and Seneca Street

As citizens of Tualatin, we have a new issue that has arisen that is of major concern to all of us who care about the livability of our city, and the use of public funds. It has to do with the new development that is being built on and around the old K-Mart site (Nyberg Rivers), where Cabela's and other new tenants will be located. The overall plan looks great, and is bringing new businesses and restaurants into our community. But there is one huge exception to this – and that's the public area bordering Martinazzi Avenue, just to the west of the commercial development. The current planning includes the demolition of our City Council building, the extension of Seneca Street through this property, and building a new city building at the front door of the library.

Many concerned and knowledgeable citizens have written letters, editorial comments, or have voiced their concerns through our CIOs. Space doesn't permit listing of all of these concerns, but some primary ones are:

- The new building would be too small to accommodate all of the city functions. City offices would remain in the library building, limiting the library's expansion. The new plaza adjacent to the library would be obscured, and the ambience that was carefully designed into the library's surrounds would be compromised.
- There would be 30 fewer parking spaces, with already too few parking spaces available. Many spaces would be on the south side of Seneca, meaning that library patrons, including mothers with children, would have to cross a busy, 68-foot wide Seneca Street. Other parking would have to be done in the shopping complex, which is not realistic.
- The City has stated that the funding of future capital projects will be "challenging." The estimated cost of \$4.3 million for this new

building (which will certainly go up!) will have to be funded from several sources, and will surely tax our city's resources. One citizen's analysis pokes gaping holes in the city's ability to fund as currently described, particularly regarding debt service on borrowed money.

Here are some questions that must be asked at this time:

- Where could the money be better spent? Tualatin-Sherwood Road traffic abatement?
- We built a beautiful new police station some years ago – shouldn't we proceed with a new city building similarly, with appropriate funding, and of a size that makes sense for the future?
- Couldn't we wait for a year or so following the completion of the center, and see if there really is a need for the Seneca extension?
- Why is the timeframe for citizen input so short, as the Council states it wants to make a decision by November or December? Why must we have to write letters such as this in order to be heard?

This is reminiscent of the "bridge over the park" issue that came up a few months ago – which was finally stopped after a negative public reaction. Why must we be in a reactive position, rather than be included in the initial planning? The City Council and the Mayor were elected to work for us, to represent our interests. I hope they are listening.



Jerry Larsen is a 23-year Tualatin resident. He has served on the School District Budget Committee, the Aquatic District Budget Committee, is on the Board of the Tualatin Valley Community Band, and a member of the Tualatin Historical Society.

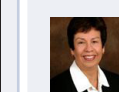


Facebook Comments:

Here is a sampling of some of the comments from an August posting on our Facebook page. There were more than 45 comments from local people.

Like · Comment · Share

1 45 2



Jan Giunta Seneca St is a dead end street on both ends. It is a road only onto a shopping center with the other dead ending at the lake. And with the new extension of Seneca we also lose 30, yes 30 valuable parking spaces for our fabulous library!! Where do the residents win here? Get to pay for a new City Hall and lose 30 parking spaces.



Michael Blackmon I think in the short run it is a lot of money. I think in the long run aligning the streets is a good thing. Having lived in Tualatin since 86, I have seen lots of improvements. This will just be one more that needs to happen.



Scott Fisher And the benefit to the citizens of Tualatin would be...? The other question, of course, is what are our other options aside from demolition and reconstruction? We could always move back into the building over Mashita Teriyaki like we did a hundred years ago! Seriously -- are there other options?



Daniel Payne Waste of money. Really wasteful.



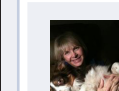
Phil Connors I cannot believe the City made the decision to demolish City Hall w/o collecting direct public input on the specific matter. Jan Giunta has a point that the decision was wrapped inside of an unrelated traffic/development matter that circumvented meaningful citizen participation. In other words, if the City decided on a course of action for any purpose that would ultimately cost citizens \$4M (plus financing costs and interest), would you not expect a little more public outreach/debate on the specific reason for undertaking so much debt? Since I am ultimately for a new and improved Council building, I won't fight the result. The process, on the other hand, was certainly less than transparent. We can do better.



Terri Ward I don't see how this was all "behind closed doors" when I have reading about the proposals, upcoming votes and meetings. This wasn't done secretly. If the decision has been made and people had the opportunity to show up and express their opinions, why are we having this conversation?



Sherilyn Bullock Lombos But the alternative is to leave the driveway between the Library and Council Building the way it is; it is already unsafe and congested; redevelopment of the site will only make that worse. That's not a good alternative. We can come up with about half of the money to replace the Council Building in cash from various savings (still leaving adequate reserves and contingencies), and borrow the other half, using the money we are spending right now to lease office space, to pay that loan off. We wouldn't need to raise taxes to do this; we wouldn't have to cut services; and we would maintain prudent reserves. In the end, we solve an already existing and gonna be worse traffic problem, we take advantage of an opportunity to have the developer build the street, and we replace the building without impacting the taxes the good folks of Tualatin pay. Where's the downside of that?



Toni Anderson Unbelievable! Millions of dollars for a new city council building that's used twice a month just so a street can be extended a block?? More out of control spending by our city. Taxpayers, did anyone ask you? That's big N.O. This has nothing to do with Cabelas. It will go in either way. This wasn't about the street. Just about an expensive building contract. We will also lose the plaza in front of the library. If you use the library, do you think parking is easy there? Wait til we lose 30 parking spaces.



Chad Darby There are a lot of good passionate opinions in here for both sides of the issue. It highlights to me that a vote should go before the peoples. Sherilyn Lombos points out that a good chunk of the money is available. That's great to hear, but what I haven't heard is what other things we might be giving up that the money could afford. There are trails people want along the Tualatin, there is a master plan to develop recreational opportunities around the Hedges Creek wetlands, there are folks that desire more educational opportunities like a PCC building would offer. I don't feel that the traffic is unreasonable or unsafe by the library and I'm there all the time. I guess I am just wondering what other uses we could put the "extra" money toward that would benefit the citizens. If a new city hall is our best use of the money, then I'd be for it if the citizens could decide. I am surprised that we can continue to debate backyard chickens in the CIOs, an issue introduced in 2010, but I haven't seen a widespread effort to include the citizens on this much bigger issue.