

Springfield School Board votes to spend \$2.4 million to buy ODOT building on A Street for new district offices

SPRINGFIELD — The Springfield School Board voted Monday night to spend \$2.4 million to buy the Oregon Department of Transportation building at 640 A St. to serve as the school district's new administration building.

No funds from the \$71.5 million bond measure approved by voters in 2014 will be used for the purchase, school officials said. Instead, buying the ODOT building will be paid for or financed from the district's operating fund, which also pays for teachers and classroom instruction.

The board's vote was unanimous — and included the support of two new board members, Erik Bishoff and Tina DeHaven, who were appointed and sworn in earlier in the evening.

The ODOT building will replace the current Administration Building at 525 Mill St., where the board holds its meetings.

A recent report found that the building on Mill Street, nearly a century old, is at high risk of collapsing in the event of a strong earthquake.

A 25-member facilities advisory committee recommended in July that the district move the 50 employees who work in the headquarters on Mill Street to a new location as soon as reasonably possible. The move to the ODOT building likely won't happen until next year, however, officials said Monday.

The three-story building on Mill Street has no type of reinforcements in the walls to hold them in place, according to a report issued in July by Hohbach-Lewin Inc., a structural engineering firm based in Palo Alto, Calif.

The exterior concrete walls are not anchored to the floor and roof structure, which means that if a powerful earthquake struck, the walls could pull away from the floors and roof.

The school district has said the estimate to seismically retrofit the headquarters building would be \$8 million. The cost to build a new headquarters has been estimated at \$7.75 million to \$8.5 million.

