

Carpenter warns against fire science, Guard co-location

By *ALI HELGOTH*- Staff Writer

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ELKO — Elko runs the risk of losing the National Guard Armory and the economic benefit of the University of Nevada, Reno Fire Science Academy if a co-location plan goes forward as is.

Assemblyman John Carpenter issued that warning to Elko City Council Tuesday night during its public comment period after a presentation by academy Executive Director Denise Baclawski. She left before Carpenter made his comments.

The Interim Finance Committee is expected to decide whether to approve the purchase during a meeting today or Thursday.

The Board of Regents agreed to sell the property to the National Guard for \$10 million. Of that, \$8 million would come from the state and \$2 million from the federal government.

Carpenter told city council he will tell the Interim Finance Committee he does not support the sale and will recommend the sale not go through until an agreement between the two entities that includes details of co-location is worked out.

"I've never seen a real plan," Carpenter said, adding that the Interim Finance Committee could vote to give the \$8 million allocated for a new armory to the university for the land and then the armory not co-locate with the Fire Science Academy.

It's a concern he's expressed repeatedly since the co-location plan was first proposed by Gov. Jim Gibbons.

"We might lose the armory and we might also lose the fire academy out there because there is no plan," he said. Carpenter said he thinks the purchase shouldn't go through unless a plan is in place "in case this whole thing blows up."

He said all the Board of Regents cares about "is getting some money out of it to reduce that debt, then they'll wash their hands of it."

Baclawski said the co-location details are not complete, but she thinks the purchase can and should go forward.

In an interview with the Free Press earlier this month, she said the sale of the property is the first in a multi-step process.

Councilman Jay Elquist asked if the co-location alone would be enough to allow the Fire Science Academy to be self-sufficient. She said it wouldn't be and funding from the federal government would be required.

After Carpenter's comments, Elquist said the lack of certainty regarding sustainability is a concern for him. If the Fire Science Academy closes, "then you have a guard out on an island," he said.

Elquist said it's a complex balance because having the armory in Elko would be good for the city, but the city also benefits from the existence of the Fire Science Academy.

If the sale does not go through, the National Guard will likely build a new armory at the Elko Regional Airport. The \$8 million allocated by the state was originally intended for that location and the federal government has approved money for the airport site.



Carpenter