

11-15-1919

## Letter from Plummer to Bigelow

H. E. Plummer

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### Recommended Citation

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# CITY OF PORTLAND, OREGON

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

A. L. BARBUR, COMMISSIONER

O. LAURGAARD,  
CITY ENGINEER

November 15, 1919

Mr. C. A. Bigelow,  
Commissioner of Public Affairs.

Dear Sir:

I am submitting to you herewith preliminary suggestions relative to the proper extension of the existing Public Market. Apparently there are a number of locations that might be considered but the ones which are to be considered seriously at this time I believe are three. First, the extension of the existing market down Yamhill Street to the waterfront and extending along the waterfront a sufficient distance to provide ample accommodations for booths, buildings and curb space. Second, the acquiring by the City of the blocks known as the Corbett and Failing Blocks, same being located between 5th and 6th, Yamhill and Taylor and Salmon Streets; if these two blocks were acquired, it would be necessary to construct buildings on the same. The third location which should be considered is that of Taylor Street running from 2nd to 4th Streets where a curb market similar to the present market on Yamhill Street might be located. There are some advantages and disadvantages in connection with each of these three locations and I will endeavor to briefly summarize these.

I will take them up in their reverse order. The extension of the public market along Taylor Street probably offers the possibility of obtaining an extension in the quickest possible manner. The property owners along Taylor Street would no doubt be agreeable to a market being established here as it would without doubt increase the return from their property. The cost of the curb umbrella sheds would be about, \$15,000.00. The objection which has commonly been made against markets located in the street would, of course, apply to such an extension. This extension would not provide for booths, cold storage, or many of the other things which are felt to be desirable in connection with a market extension. The extension along Taylor Street should be given consideration then only as a more or less of a temporary extension to provide increased facilities for the market until more extensive facilities can be arranged for.

The utilization of the Failing and Corbett Blocks for a proposed public market is one that is very attractive to quite a number of people and in some respects this proposal is excellent, particularly from the standpoint of convenience of location. There are, however, some difficulties which are more or less insurmountable. For instance, the south one hundred and twenty feet of the Corbett block is held by Mrs. Henry W. Corbett as a life time estate and the terms by which it was bequeathed to her are such that it would be difficult, if not impossible, for the city to acquire a title or the right to use the same. The north eighty feet of this block, however, is held by the Corbett boys and they would in all probability be able and willing to dispose of the same at a reasonable price. The Failing block does not offer the same difficulties as the Corbett block as there would apparently be no legal entanglements in connection with the city buying or leasing the same.

There is a serious difficulty though in my mind in connection with the large investment that the City would have to make to acquire these two blocks. The Corbett block is assessed for a valuation of \$421,000. for land and \$9,900. for improvements. As the land is assessed at 75% of its value, the assessed valuation of this land and property would be \$570,000. The Failing Block is assessed for a valuation of \$271,500., and the improvements for a valuation of \$9,000. The total assessed valuation of the land and improvements then would amount to \$369,000., and the total assessed valuation of the two blocks would be \$939,000. It is probably true then that these two blocks would be held at more than \$1,000,000. The cost of a one story building on each block, providing booths and other public market facilities, would be about \$100,000. for each building. The total cost then of developing this project with the equipment, booths and other facilities, construction of buildings, and the property, would amount to not less than one and one-quarter million dollars. It would appear to me that it is very much of a question even if this property could be obtained whether it is advisable at this time to put that much money into a public market. The facilities that would be afforded would not provide for a market that would take care of the needs of Portland for a number of years and the expenditure of money would be very great. I also feel in connection with this project that the location of the public market on these two blocks would tend to keep retail trade of a high character from going south and the markets in this location would not have the best effect on the development of property in a southerly direction from the present business center. Of course, it is true at the present time that the present occupancy has a very detrimental effect on the spread of business in a southerly direction. However, when these residences are removed from these two blocks, I believe that the blocks should be put to use in connection with some high grade business.



The last market extension to discuss and the first one mentioned is that of the extension of the curb market to the riverfront and the utilization of river property. This extension of the public market along Yamhill Street to the river and along the river appears to me to be the most logical and practical extension for the reason that this extension can be made by a series of steps, any one of which would not involve a large amount of money. The first step would be the building of umbrella sheds along the curb down Yamhill Street. The next step would involve the acquiring or use of land along the river and the construction of buildings, and sheltered booths providing cold storage and other facilities. The acquiring of land along the waterfront would be very much more economical than buying the Corbett or Failing blocks because this land is assessed at from \$96,000. to \$150,000. per block. This location of the market along the waterfront would be very convenient, it would be accessible for river transportation and follows out the ideas of the original projector of the public market scheme, John F. Carroll, late editor of the Telegram.

If the market is extended to the waterfront and the city acquires some property along the waterfront, it will probably be desirable to utilize a portion of the property for buildings, sheds, etc., leaving the portion of the property nearest the river open and unbuilt upon to be utilized for a public levee or thoroughfare. Such a development of the riverfront could be made very attractive and the riverfront, instead of being one of the most unattractive parts of the city could be made one of the most attractive and one which the residents of the city would show to visitors with pride. The general effect of the market in this location on the growth and development of the city would, in my opinion, be decidedly better than if the market was located on the Corbett and Failing blocks. Then too there is another very good reason in favor of the waterfront market and that is the economy of its development and the possibility for further extension. This matter of further extension of the market is something that must be kept carefully in mind and the market should be located in a place where extensions can be readily arranged for. At the present time, the property along the waterfront is not utilized in such a way that the return to the property owners is in proportion to the money they have invested in this property and without doubt the city will be able to acquire such property from time to time as may be needed for market purposes and for market extensions. If the public market is to be enlarged in scope so that it affords enlarged facilities, including a market for selling produce in wholesale quantities, cold storage facilities, etc., it will be necessary for the city to construct permanent buildings. This can be easily done along the waterfront and the cost of these buildings, together with the land necessary for the same, will be very much less than if very expensive property such as the Corbett and Failing blocks is utilized.

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It is probable that some people will say that the extension towards the riverfront will not prove successful because the people will not go there but will continue to do their purchasing in the neighborhood of 3rd, 4th and 5th Streets. I think this objection might be well founded unless the market is divided into divisions. For example, if one part of the market was reserved for vegetables, another part for fruit, another part for meat, another part for flowers, etc., the people wanting to purchase flowers or meat or fruit would go to that part of the market where they were on sale regardless of whether that part was at 4th or 1st Streets. If the market is left in its present condition with the different kinds of produce being sold in any location, it is probable that the upper portion of the market will do much the larger volume of business.

It seems desirable to me that the extension to the river be undertaken as soon as possible and the construction of permanent buildings in which attractive booths could be provided which would undoubtedly attract the public and draw them down towards the riverfront. I have been accumulating information relative to this extension of the market and hope in the near future to make a further report, going further into the question of costs than I can attempt to do at this time. I also hope to have blueprints showing the value of property, together with some tentative plans for development with rough estimates of the same.

I trust this discussion will meet with your approval.

Respectfully submitted,



Inspector of Buildings

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