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Irrigon Public Library on hold

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The Irrigon Public Library has not been able to open the doors on its new facility due to a misunderstanding in the blueprints that led to a wall being build below safety standards.

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that's when I pulled the (occupancy permits)," said Cook.

As a result, the \$1.2 million Irrigon Public Library was vacated June 11. It had been open since May 19.

"It was a surprise and a big shock to me," said Marsha Richmond, director for the Oregon Trail Library District. "Especially since we didn't know why it was being closed down."

The question has now shifted to who is going to handle the retrofitting. Since the city owns the lot where City Hall stands, and the Oregon Trail Library District owns the other, the two have yet to come to an agreement as to who is responsible. City Manager Aaron Palmquist hopes the two parties can come to an agreement without going to court.

"The city's approach is always 'How do we get there on behalf of our community?'" Palmquist said. "That's the top goal. If anyone has to pay, who is going to pay? Taxpayers, right?"

Lawyers representing Irrigon and the Oregon Trail Library District are deliberating, according to Richmond.

Plans to move the Irrigon Public Library into a new \$1.2 million home were shelved after city inspectors found some of its walls were built below safety standards.

City of Boardman building inspector Brett Cook said the building's main problem is a fire hazard, but only technically. Currently, a one-hour wall, named for how long it can withstand heat should a fire break out, separates the library from the adjacent City Hall building. State law requires a four-hour wall because the buildings, while connected, are on two separately owned lots.

The city of Irrigon owns the lot which has housed City Hall since 2007 and the Oregon Trail Library District owns the lot with the new library.

"When I found that it required a four-hour wall,

Lawyers representing Irrigon and the Oregon Trail Library District are deliberating, according to Richmond.

Before the building's truncated term, Irrigon's public library was operated out of a school bus parked behind the city's lone gas station. Though the orange paint was fading, it was carpeted and furnished into a makeshift library. In 2009, those operating it started fundraising through bake sales and yard sales to raise \$1.2 million for a permanent home for their 2,500 books.

The five-year process ended with a soft opening in May before the permit was revoked by the Boardman building department, which contracts with the city of Irrigon.

Richmond said she and her staff boxed as many books as they could and loaded them into a van, returning to a mobile library status with a mere 150 books. Today, the van is parked next to the empty library and the books are brought to the patio on Mondays and Tuesdays. The library still lends books and ran a summer reading program for kids, but they did it all outside in the summer heat.

"We're doing our best to serve the public, but it's been difficult to do with the recent setbacks," Richmond said.

Both Palmquist and Richmond are hoping to get the library back open soon.

"Both organizations involved work on behalf of the citizens and the members of the community," Palmquist said. "The sooner this can be worked out, the better it'll be for the community."

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