

PROJECT IS UNPOPULAR

New Building for Water and Light Commission.

IS FREELY DENOUNCED

LOCAL TAX PAYERS PRONOUNCE THE SCHEME EXTRAVAGANT.

Consensus of Opinion that Additional Room Should Be Provided at the City Hall—Patrons of the Department Demand Concentration of City's Business—Cheaper Temporary Quarters Suggested.

The action by the city council Monday evening in authorizing the board of water and light commissioners to negotiate for the purchase of a site on West First street, on which to erect a building for the use of the department, proved to be anything but popular. In short it provoked criticism of the most vigorous nature, and if there are any who favor the project, aside from the members of the commission they certainly were not very numerous yesterday and last evening. Representatives of the News Tribune interviewed well known citizens indiscriminately upon the subject, and in almost every instance the idea was branded as absurd and an act of gross extravagance, for which there was not the slightest plausible excuse. Concentration of the city's business was the cry and if, as is true, there is an insufficient amount of room at the city hall at the present time, it was contended that the board should rent more convenient quarters, and at the same time cheaper ones, nearer the city hall, until that structure can be provided with an extra story or two.

Although the board was not given the power to close the deal, the resolution was generally understood by the aldermen and accepted by the board as meaning that the council gave its approval to the plan to build on First street, and was against utilizing the city hall by adding a story.

But business men and citizens generally, who pay taxes, are amazed at the mere suggestion that the city should spend \$20,000 or \$25,000 to have an office on a side street, inconvenient to the majority of the people using water and gas.

A prominent Duluth real estate man and property owner smiled when asked for an expression of his views as to the proposed purchase of a site. "You will have to count me out of the discussion," he said, "as I am trying to sell the commission a lot and therefore do not care to talk."

A Few Expressions.

F. W. Kugler:—"The proposition to spend \$20,000 and put up a new building on West First street for the use of the water and gas department of the city, is the most foolish and unwarranted one I ever heard of. If there was any argument advanced in favor of it worth considering, it would be different, but there isn't. The city hall is the most convenient from every point of view: it's on the car line, and innumerable more people pass there every day than on the south side of First street, between Fourth and Fifth avenues West. The business center of the town is moving in an easterly direction, and anyway it is not and never will move up the hill. But aside from the question of convenience to the people, look at the cost. If they estimate \$20,000 as the price, it means \$25,000 will be needed before the thing is finished, after which comes in the matter of heating, janitor and taxes. The city probably receives two or three hundred dollars taxes a year now, which will be cut off, and taking all these things into consideration it is a pretty expensive proposition. But here's the city hall. For an expense of probably \$7,500, a story could be added and the Superior street floor altered to suit the needs of the water department, and that would be all. There would be little extra expense for heat, janitor service and other items of maintenance, and it would be a better place than First street. I have met a score of people today, and they all expressed themselves against the city buying any more property where there is no occasion for it. I hope the mayor will nip the scheme in the bud by vetoing the council resolution authorizing them to get bids on lots."

A Queer Proposition.

C. C. Steele, of Smith, Farwell & Steele:—"It seems to me that the water board's proposal to spend \$20,000 or more to buy a lot on First street, and build for the use of the water and light business, when the city already owns property, that apparently may be utilized to better advantage, is to say the least, a queer proposition. With the city itself tied up with bonds, and taxes as high as they are, if the water board has more money on hand than it knows what to do with, it could be used to better advantage than sinking it into real estate, when there is evidently no necessity for it. In any event I don't believe West First street is the best location. Business is drifting toward the east just now, and from present indications Second avenue East on Superior street will be a good location for any business within three or four years. Then I think the city's business should be concentrated, rather than scattered about. The city hall can be enlarged to meet the requirements, and instead of spending a large amount of money for a new building, I think it would be in the interest of economy and business to have the water and gas business done right there."

I Freimuth:—"I am very much op-

PROJECT IS UNPOPULAR

(Continued from Page 1.)

posed to the city spending \$25,000.—for that is what it will probably amount to, for more lots and buildings—when it has good property on its hands that could be used to better advantage. Of course I don't know what arguments the water and light board has, but it seems to me that they would have to be pretty good ones to justify the unnecessary expenditure of so much money. If the board wants its office away from the city hall and on First street, why doesn't the city give it the armory building or part of it. That's a piece of property that's giving no returns on the money invested, from what I hear, and it could be altered to meet the board's requirements at a comparatively small cost. The city hall is, however, in my opinion, the best place, not only from convenience to the public, but in the item of cost. A story could be added and the place fitted up in good shape for \$7,000 or \$8,000 I should think. The board ought to go slow before spending the large amount of money, necessary to put up another building."

H. A. Hill:—"If the water and gas department moves I think the city hall is much to be preferred as a location to West First street. It will prove an expensive proposition to erect and maintain a separate building, which does not appear to be warranted by the situation. The city hall can be suitably enlarged for a comparatively small cost, and I believe it would be much the better plan for all interests to do that."

B. Silberstein: "I have talked with at least 50 people since the action relative to the purchase of a lot and the construction of a water and light commission building was taken Monday night, and not one of them was in favor of the proposition. The idea is preposterous. If I were a member of the board of water and light commissioners I should be opposed to the plan. I think they should add another story to the city hall. The water and light commission could provide itself a very desirable home there, and we would have the city department together."

T. J. Davis:—"I think the proposition of the water and light commission to purchase a lot and erect a building is a mistake. If the board has money to invest in a new home, let it invest it under proper contract with the city in putting another story on the city hall. They ought to remodel the front of both the city hall and the police headquarters building, and make it a single top, extending over both structures in front, and placing the light well in the rear. When the city is in funds it could reimburse the water and light commission for the additional story."

C. E. Bassett, of French & Bassett: "The move is a foolish one, nor do I approve of putting an additional story on the city hall. That building is a positive disgrace to a city the size of Duluth. I should be in favor of tearing down the structure or disposing of it, and erecting a new building more in keeping with the size and demands of the city. Until we can have a new building I should be in favor of paying rent for the water and light offices."

F. R. Leslie:—"We have trouble enough now running about to find the various city departments, and I think the tendency should be to consolidate them instead of making them permanently separate. As a measure of economy the suggestion that has been made to add one or two stories to the city hall, to provide a home for the water and light commission, should not lightly be considered."

N. S. Mitchell:—"I should think it would be altogether better and in the interests of economy to build a story or two on the city hall. The building was designed to be enlarged in that manner, when the foundation was put in. The city hall is crowded at present, and more room would be welcome. In this connection the water and light commission could be provided for in good shape."

A. B. Siewert:—"By all means, if the light and water commission wishes to move, let room be provided at the city hall. City expenses are high enough as they are. A story or two on top of the city hall would afford more room for the present occupants, and provide for the commission. I haven't seen anybody favoring the purchase of property and construction of a new building to provide new quarters."

W. C. Sherwood:—"I do not look with much favor upon the proposition of the water and light commission. I think we should keep the city departments together when possible, and certainly the idea of putting another story on the city hall is a very good one. It is desirable for more reasons than one, most of which will appeal to all citizens, I think."

M. S. Burrows:—"As a business proposition it is ridiculous to think of running two institutions, a city hall and a building for the accommodation of a concern owned by the city. City departments should all be together in the city hall under one roof. It is a sort of fifth wheel proposition to ask for a separate building for the water and light commission."

Charles Schiller:—"I should think that the water and light commission could rent cheaper than it could own a location and building on First street, and if it could be arranged so that the rent could be paid to the city, so much the better. The proposition of the commission, in my estimation, is not the wisest plan. I think people generally would like to see the commission in the city hall building."

S. Loeb:—"If the water and light commission is anxious to establish itself on First street, the Armory building might be considered before money is spent for a lot and new building.

There is heat and light at the Armory, and plenty of room. I don't believe it is necessary for the commission to make an independent investment."

T. H. Pressnell: "If I remember rightly the foundation of the city hall was designed for a six-story structure. I should think that to add to this building would be the most desirable way of providing the water and light commission with new quarters, from every point of view."

R. M. Bell:—"I think the city departments should be kept together, as much as possible, and do not see the wisdom of any one of the departments buying real estate and constructing a building independent of the city hall. It is easy enough to enlarge the city hall, and this would be a good time to do it."

Colonel C. H. Graves:—"I am sorry to see any of the city departments inventing plans to spend money. There are buildings in the business part of the city which the water and light commission can rent cheaper than it can own the proposed real estate and building investment."

M. M. Gasser:—"When I read of the proposition in the News Tribune, it struck me as very humorous, as the water and light board need no great amount of room. I should say, by all means put another story on the city hall."

W. A. Wagner:—"I should think, speaking of the proposed new home of the water and light commission, that to add another story to the city hall would be the most reasonable and economical thing to do under the circumstances."

A. Fitger:—"My opinion is that the business should be kept together as much as possible, and at the city hall. If this is impossible there is plenty of room in the Armory."

George R. King: "By all means let them put a story on the city hall. It would be the cheapest way and altogether the most desirable."

Louis Hammell:—"There is no occasion for purchasing a new building. An addition to the city hall is the thing."

West Duluthians Object.

Following are some of the expressions from prominent West Duluthians:

William Spencer, druggist:—"All of the city offices should be in one place if possible, and I would favor the proposition of erecting an extra story on the city hall."

Young & Walker, grocers:—"The expenses of the deal should be considered, and notwithstanding that the money comes from the water and light department, it is from the pockets of the people, and we cannot afford any think of this kind."

D. G. Parsons:—"We should spend no money needlessly, and as the city hall proposition is cheaper, I am in favor of accepting it."

J. A. Scott, real estate:—"The city hall is to my mind the logical location for the office of the water company, and would answer the purpose. The present building would hold another story easily."

Frank Wade, hardware merchant:—"It is an outrage to even consider the erection of a building for the water and light department."

David Sang, ex-alderman:—"I don't see how the council would ever consider such a proposition. Even the city hall was built, it was said, that when more room was necessary another story could be added. I spoke to the contractors some time ago, they said that the walls were in good condition. The city hall is the place for the water and light offices anyhow."

S. C. Murphy:—"It looks like another of those cut and dried schemes. We should have all of the city business transacted at one place. A building of the kind mentioned on First street is nonsensical."

N. C. Hendricks, dry goods merchant: "From the little I have heard of the proposition, I would think the city hall the desirable location."