

## Rachael Gangelhoff

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**From:** Kathleen Thorpe <kathleen@cleanyourdirt.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, September 17, 2025 2:08 PM  
**To:** CityRecorder  
**Subject:** Council Work Session Sept 17, 2025 Item 2  
**Attachments:** City Council 09172025 rev 2.pdf

September 17, 2025

Mayor Julie Hoy  
Salem City Council  
440 Church St SE  
Salem, OR. 93701

RE: City Council Work Session – Item 2  
Downtown Public Safety  
Improving Public Safety and Livability

Mayor Hoy and Salem City Councilors

I support the proposed livability options as listed in the staff report for tonight's work session: Homeless Service Team Expansion (two police officers & materials / services - \$418,700 annually) Community Policing Officers (eight police officers & materials / services- \$1,663,650 annually) Salem Outreach and Livability Services Team Expansion (two parks maintenance operators & materials / services - \$400,000 for 9 months) Co-Response Model Pilot Program (Fire Department costs of \$196,302 for six months for an EMT-Basic and a Paramedic)

I volunteer at SafeSleep United, let me describe a moment last evening. We generally prescreen guests, but frequently folks show up at the door and want to stay at our shelter. We do our best to determine if we can provide space for them. A woman came to the door asking if they could stay the night.

I stepped out to meet her, tall, slender, young, hungry. We got her a plate, and I sat down to chat. We only had a top bunk available last night, which they were willing to take. There were two real questions, could they safely use a top bunk and were they going to be able to settle down and sleep for the evening.

The woman shared that she was experiencing drug withdrawal. In her current frame of mind, a top bunk bed is not safe for her, and we didn't have a vacant bottom bunk. With that news, the woman was understandably upset, agitated, and afraid – there was nowhere safe for her to be inside, and the streets are not safe at all.

We considered other shelters, but none offer walk in service and most have wait lists. At this point, the woman was hysterical, so I suggested the Psychiatric Crisis Center (PCC). I called the police department and they sent an officer to bring her to PCC. Yet a police lieutenant told us that PCC cannot take her if she's under the influence of drugs. There are no options for this woman. She is one of many people who are falling through the cracks in our system.

It's easy to say that people experiencing homelessness just need to go to a shelter – after all, we have many more shelter beds than we had in the past. Yet shelters and programs are often full, and each has eligibility criteria that rule some people in, and some people out.

I strongly believe that a Co-Response Model with a mental health professional have more tools in their box than our current options can offer. A co-response model could have provided a better intervention in this situation, so this woman might have been able to sleep safely somewhere, instead of being outside crying in the grass.

A co-response model is one way to enable more safety and livability for people experiencing homelessness, for businesses, for the general public. More restrooms, water fountains, benches, trash cans, cell phone charging stations, are other ways that enable more safety and livability for ALL.

Kindest Regards,



Kathleen J. Thorpe  
2943 Tess Ave NE  
Salem, Oregon 97301

## Rachael Gangelhoff

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**From:** lorrie walker <dakotalor@msn.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, September 17, 2025 2:39 PM  
**To:** CityRecorder; Trevor Womack  
**Cc:** sen.katelieber@oregonlegislature.gov; Sen Patterson; Representative Tom Andersen; dj@church-at-the-park.org; jimmy.jones@mwwca.org; Stephen Goins; Gina Cepeda; Gretchen Bennett  
**Subject:** City Council Livability work session 9/17/25

All,

As a long-time citizen of Salem,

I feel safe downtown Salem day and night, my friends & neighbors do too.

I look people in the eye, smile and say hello. Unsheltered are not our enemies. They are family of many who live locally. Many of them were born & raised here. Went to school here. Worked here. Kindness goes a long way.

We should not promote fear. They are often paranoid & more fearful of us.

I believe we need to collaborate with Marion County and the state of Oregon regarding the issues we are facing.

The state of Oregon and Marion County Commissioners should be doing more to address the needs of mentally ill people who are homeless on our streets. Behavioral and mental health needs are high. Many are unable to care for themselves.

Arches, HOAP, UGM, Church at the Park, Salem Police, Salem Fire, etc. are often the first responders. Staff, advocates, and volunteers as well.

Salem needs help.

Toilets, trash receptacles, etc. are high needs for all of us.

Businesses would have fewer issues.

If Church at the Park clean team were approved, I feel certain improvement would happen quickly.

Communication, listening to ideas of people and organizations working with people is imperative to problem solving.

Business owners, advocates, organizations if communicating and collaborating could assist each other too.

Respectfully,

Lorrie Walker

Ward 2

Legal Guardian & Advocate

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## Rachael Gangelhoff

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**From:** Lynelle Wilcox <lynellx@comcast.net>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, September 17, 2025 2:24 PM  
**To:** CityRecorder; Julie Hoy; Paul Tigan; Vanessa Nordyke; Linda Nishioka; Shane Matthews; Deanna Gwyn; Dr. Irvin M Brown; Mai Vang; Micki Varney  
**Subject:** Public comment for City Council work session 091725 agenda item 2

Mayor Hoy and City Councilors

My name is Lynelle Wilcox. I live on Norway Street in Ward 1.

Livability options: I support the proposed livability options as listed in the 9/15/25 staff report:

- Homeless Service Team Expansion (two police officers & materials / services - \$418,700 annually)
- Community Policing Officers (eight police officers & materials / services- \$1,663,650 annually)
- Salem Outreach and Livability Services Team Expansion (two parks maintenance operators & materials / services - \$400,000 for 9 months)
- Co-Response Model Pilot Program (Fire Department costs of \$196,302 for six months for an EMT-Basic and a Paramedic)

Values: As long as implementation of these options is based on values of trust and connection, as opposed to punitive styles, these options seem likely to benefit people experiencing homelessness, as well as businesses and the general public. I appreciate that Police Chief Womack and Fire Chief Gerboth both convey strong values and deep commitment to building trust and relationships.

Restrooms: As we consider livability, I hope we also reconsider adding some restrooms.

Restrooms have been discussed during previous task forces, and a prior task force recommended adding bathrooms, possibly one or more of the Portland Loo rest rooms. Whatever happened to trying that?

We all know that restrooms are necessary - not just for people experiencing homelessness, but also for people who want to visit, shop, enjoy our parks, etc.

There was a time that the city hired security with a focus on watching the rest rooms/porta potties. That approach reduced restroom issues, and associated repair and maintenance costs. Security can be a worthwhile investment that enables more livability for businesses, the general public, and people experiencing homelessness. Yet if we opted for Portland Loos, the maintenance may be minimal.

Restroom funding: I realize that bond funds cannot be spent on homelessness specifically, but bond funds CAN be spent on parks. I hear that McNary Park might get a Portland Loo. What if multiple parks considered increasing restrooms, using some bond funds to accomplish that?

Other livability options: In addition to more restrooms, can we also consider adding drinking fountains, so everyone, sheltered or not, has easy access to stay hydrated on hot days? Can we add more trash cans back? Can we consider cell phone charging stations so that people can call for jobs, police, inquire about detox, recovery programs, shelter beds, and other supports that enable safety and moving forward? Can we add benches back, so homeless or not, people have more places to rest?

Collateral damage: As we removed benches so homeless people won't sleep on them, as we removed trash cans so homeless people won't sort through them, as we reduced public restrooms and reduced public restroom hours so homeless people wouldn't use them, we made things less and less livable for people experiencing homelessness. Those changes have ALSO made downtown less and less accessible for people who have grown to an age or developed a health issue or disability that leaves them now needing frequent restroom breaks, water to stay hydrated, and/or benches to stop and rest before they can walk another block.

Many of these individuals loved downtown, and shopped and dined there often when they were younger. Many of these individuals were active and engaged community members, volunteers, and some even helped develop aspects of downtown and our city. Now many of these people and others are no longer able to hang out downtown to shop and dine and window shop because the very things we did to reduce the presence of equitable fellow human beings who are experiencing homelessness also excludes sheltered individuals who now need the very things we took away.

As we do things that will supposedly increase the safety, livability, and bustling-ness of downtown, it's crucial to also consider the collateral damage of our decisions. If we make things less livable for people experiencing homelessness, we are also reducing who ELSE can participate in downtown activities.

Livability and safety for ALL reduces livability crimes and reduces the collateral damage that businesses are also experiencing, whether they realize it or not. Please consider that as you decide what safety and livability options to pursue.

Inclusiveness: Homeless or sheltered, everyone has the right to feel belonging, safety, and livability in our city. Money is tight, and yet perhaps park bond money might be used creatively to add rest rooms, water fountains, benches, and trash cans as avenues that increase belonging, safety, and livability for all

The homeless crisis is hard and sad in all directions. Yet the topic of homelessness is an opportunity to live up to our country's values and not down to our fears:

"For we hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."

The current recommendations of the Homeless Service Team Expansion, Community Policing Officers, Salem Outreach and Livability Services Team Expansion, and a Co-Response Model Pilot Program enable more safety and livability for people experiencing homelessness, for businesses, and for the general public. More restrooms, water fountains, benches, trash cans, and cell phone charging stations, are other ways that enable more safety and livability for ALL.

Thank you for your consideration.

Lynelle Wilcox

## Rachael Gangelhoff

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**From:** Lynelle Wilcox <lynellx@comcast.net>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, September 17, 2025 2:27 PM  
**To:** CityRecorder; Julie Hoy; Paul Tigan; Vanessa Nordyke; Linda Nishioka; Shane Matthews; Deanna Gwyn; Dr. Irvin M Brown; Mai Vang; Micki Varney  
**Subject:** Public comment 091725 Agenda item #2 - SB

Submitted on behalf of Shavannah Bouge, at her request

My name is Shavannah Bouge, Ward 1. I am sharing part of my story as public testimony for city council's consideration for the upcoming July 21 work session on homelessness, safety, and livability.

I had a husband, family, and home for 16 years. We broke up, and we both spiraled down and started using drugs. There was domestic violence, and then a no contact order, so he ended up living in his vehicle while I lived in the house. We both got more deeply with drugs. He was convicted of some crimes, which resulted in him being required to go to a treatment program for a full year.

With the loss of our family's main breadwinner, I was no longer able to afford rent. I was evicted, and bought a trailer to live in. When my husband came out of his rehab program, he was clean, and he took the kids because I was not doing well. I was homeless, stressed, and using.

I had some relationships that were violent; I went deeper into addiction, with ongoing violence in my relationship. Each time my friends and I were swept was more trauma and hardship – to figure out how to get things to a new place, and where can we go? Not having any place to actually be adds to the stress, which often increases drug use, just to cope.

Every place we went was just another situation of being swept again. The trauma and stress of that keeps you in a position of being unsafe, so using meth enabled me to stay awake for my safety. Using and dealing drugs also enabled us to have a little bit of money to buy gas and

propane - to stay alive, to try to do things to move forward. But it was just ongoing circles.

I needed to be with my kids again, so I needed to become clean and housed. I went to detox and recovery, and I have now been clean and sober for 4 years. I've been housed again for 2 years. I am providing a clean and stable environment for the kids.

I realize that people who experience homelessness can seem scary to some people. I hope that people might think more deeply about that. At my church, we have a kid who has autism, and he sometimes rocks and waves his hands, and screams loudly. His behavior is very disruptive at those times, and it seems scary, until you recognize that he has autism, and this is part of his intermittent usual behavior.

Similarly, in experiencing homelessness and now working at a shelter for women experiencing homelessness, we sometimes serve women who experience mental illness, and some situations are disruptive and can seem scary. Yet as we learn what is typical for each woman, we see that screaming or cursing, or yelling at people we can't see is very rarely dangerous. When someone is being difficult, it reflects someone having a difficult time. In those situations, kindness may be more important than anything, and kindness can often change the dynamics, as someone feels heard and seen.

Mental illness affects many people – homeless or not. The difference is that we SEE mental illness more visibly when someone has nowhere to be. Homeless or not, mental illness or not, some people will commit violence. Always have your intuition and situational awareness engaged. Yet national statistics show that people experiencing homelessness are more likely to be the victim of violence than a perpetrator of violence against a stranger. The stabbings at UGM reflect a huge gap in mental health services and supports – NOT a reflection of people experiencing homelessness being dangerous.

When someone is homeless without shelter, they are constantly swept; they are treated as if they are vermin or invisible, and they experience discrimination on an ongoing basis. Survival mode living takes a toll on all, most especially on the people living in survival mode. Self worth and hope often fade, and mental illness or addiction can grow because of the ongoing danger and trauma.

The crimes downtown seem to be mostly livability crimes - feces in doorways, broken windows, camping and fires, trash, petty theft - crimes that are reflections of people having nowhere to sleep, go to the bathroom, eat, or live. Of course, no one should have to deal with those things – not the people with nowhere to live, and not the businesses.

Yet livability crimes are a reflection of people who are not able to have basic human needs met. We have done a lot to increase places for people to live, and to increase shelter beds, and there are still more people than there are places for people to be, and there are still many people who can't meet shelter entry criteria, ie not being able to do activities of daily living independently, so we still will have many people who are unsheltered homeless.

Meanwhile, we have shootings, gang violence, including young gang members who specifically commit violence against people experiencing homelessness. One teenager beat a homeless man to death. As we figure out how to make our city safer, what if we focused on reducing **actual** violence as a priority?

And what if we continue more of the things that are proven to work ie, creating more permanent supported housing, more places for people to be in the meantime, and if we focused on having mental health professional as first responders for people having a mental health crisis. These things reduce livability crimes and increase livability for ALL.

As we profess values of inclusion, community-ness, and belonging, and we do an annual survey that repeatedly shows that people who are

homeless often experience discrimination daily, it calls the question of whether those values apply to all people who live or work in Salem, or not?

We're investing so much in clean up, when we could invest in more prevention - if we provided restrooms, trash cans, trash service, cell phone charging stations, water fountains, places for people to sit when they are weary to enable more livability for ALL, livability crimes would decrease, and we'd also be more aligned with Salem's professed values.

Thank you.

Shavannah Bouge

## Rachael Gangelhoff

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**From:** Mark wigg <mark\_wigg@hotmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, September 17, 2025 11:25 AM  
**To:** CityRecorder  
**Subject:** safety and livability

To improve safety and livability:

1. Please expand the low-income housing stock by allowing RVs and trailers to be lived in on private property. Portland and Eugene allowed this.
2. Please tell the legislature to fund housing eviction. Prevention of eviction is the least expensive way to prevent homelessness and 40% of the evictions involve children.
3. Please do not close the Mill Creek URA until we work with partners to provide an RV park in the area. This will aid employers and those needing housing.
4. Please focus on cleaning up camps below the high-water line so we don't send the tons of trash down the Willamette as we have done year after year and so campers are safely moved to higher ground.

Thank you for your service.

Mark Wigg  
Ward 2