

From: [Hale, Matthew](#)
To: [CityRecorder](#)
Subject: Comments for City Council 11/27/23 - Agenda Item 5a
Date: Monday, November 27, 2023 4:39:36 PM

Efficiency Gains and Budget Cuts Before More Revenue

I urge all of you to reach out and communicate with the residents of Salem. I heard many of you state on May 15th that communicating and engaging with voters and asking for their approval is “grueling” and a “big lift”. I heard John Horvick, Senior VP from DHM Research recommend to you to “Emphasize transparency; inform and engage with Salem residents to help fill gaps in knowledge about how services are funded, and where exactly funds come from.” I encourage you **NOT** to approve spending upwards of a quarter of a million dollars to contract for engagement and interaction with Salem residents, and the formation of a revenue task force quite yet. You have already spent upwards of \$75,000 to mail a one-page advertisement on the failed payroll tax, and almost a quarter of a million dollars to put the payroll tax before voters – only to have almost 82% of the voters in Marion County and 83% of the voters in Polk County send you a clear and steadfast message. Don’t attempt to implement a new tax without community engagement and buy-in.

According to OPB on November 10th, “PGE customers will see a 17% increase on their energy bills starting Jan. 1, the largest rate increase in the past two decades.” In addition, according to CNN, “US inflation means families are spending \$709 more per month than two years ago.” We have had to make difficult choices over the past several years, and many voters expect the City to do the same. Don’t spend upwards of a quarter of a million dollars to contract for engagement and interaction with Salem residents when that’s your job. Why don’t you:

- Review and discuss the results of the 2023 Salem Satisfaction Survey. Last year’s survey results were published in mid-November, so this year’s results should be available any day now, **and**
- Go out and actually talk to residents and business groups, and listen to divergent ideas and thoughts – not just what you want to hear. You can do this without spending so much money and can hear directly from residents and businesses what they are thinking, and perhaps what they are willing to support.

Go back and start the decision-making process from the beginning once you have personally heard from residents and business groups. Do some detailed budget cut and efficiency analysis so you can garner our trust in the process. Don’t single focus your efforts on a revenue only approach to city finances that will only result in more failures for our

City. Residents that I regularly speak with want you to:

- Prioritize Police, Fire, and other **Essential** tasks first,
- Make cuts to Non-Essential programs **now**, and
- Understand the effects that out of control inflation and runaway government spending is having on everyone's budget and that most residents can't afford more spending from City government.

Thank you,

Matt Hale

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