

Salem Parks and Recreation Advisory Board

(SPRAB)

July 25, 2022

Dear Mayor and City Council,

We write as members of the Salem Parks and Recreation Advisory Board (SPRAB) requesting additional opportunities to collaborate with City Council. We are incredibly grateful for the work that City Council and City staff do to protect our parks and green spaces but believe that additional communication between SPRAB and Council can lead to even greater improvements for our community. We are proposing five opportunities for increased engagement between our two bodies.

The pandemic has underscored the need for community investment in parks and natural resources as well as local recreation opportunities. We often hear from the public about desires for new amenities or resources, but we have limited opportunities to communicate these comments to Council. Our existing setup is mostly focused on our annual report and occasional letter.

Salem Revised Code Section 13.055, relating to SPRAB, states: "At least once each year the Council shall meet in joint sessions with the Board to review existing and changing policies, review Board bylaws, and tour facilities and programs."

We do not feel that the current code requirements are being met and have created five specific recommendations that would provide more formal opportunities for Council and SPRAB to work together. We believe that these options will decrease the workload of Council, draw on the expertise of our board members, allow for more community engagement, and help elevate the role of Salem's boards and commissions.

We suggest the following changes:

1. **Create an annual agenda item for a representative of SPRAB to present to City Council.** Currently, the SPRAB Chair attends a December or January Council meeting to share our Annual Report and is required to sign up for public comment. We believe this report should be formalized as an agenda item each year to allow for more discussion. This will also allow Council members to share issues of interest or concerns that can be taken back to SPRAB for consideration.
2. **Invite a representative of SPRAB to Council Work Sessions related to parks, trees, or other issues within our portfolio.** Currently, SPRAB members can watch work

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session meetings as a member of the public. We believe that having a member of SPRAB participating in relevant work sessions alongside City staff will allow us to better serve in our advisory capacity to Council and provide insight from our own meetings.

3. **Invite a member of Council to serve as a liaison to SPRAB.** As noted above, we encourage more direct engagement between City Councilors and members of SPRAB. We would like to have at least one member of Council join SPRAB meetings on a semi-regular basis, perhaps quarterly, to share updates from Council and receive feedback from the Board.
4. **Direct SPRAB to review specific issues and present recommendations, when appropriate.** We believe that SPRAB can be more effective at responding to the concerns of Council and providing recommendations. For example, our Parks Usage and Planning Subcommittee was created in 2021 in response to a motion from Councilor Nordyke. That Subcommittee created a detailed list of recommendations for Council to consider and we would like to see more opportunities for collaboration along these lines.
5. **Involve SPRAB with implementation of the Climate Action Plan.** With the Council subcommittee on the Climate Action Plan underway, we see an opportunity for greater collaboration on the strategies in the Natural Resource section. This could take the form of directing specific issues to SPRAB (see Request 4 above) or opportunities for us to participate in relevant work sessions (see Request 2 above).

We appreciate your consideration of these changes. We welcome an opportunity to discuss these changes further and look forward to working together more closely going forward.

Sincerely,



Dylan McDowell, Chair
Salem Parks and Recreation Advisory Board