

From: [Tami Carpenter](#)
To: [citycouncil](#)
Subject: FW: Contact City Council
Date: Tuesday, October 22, 2024 3:23:17 PM

****Mayor and Council are bcc'd****

Good afternoon, Public Works Director Brian Martin asked me to forward you the response below that was sent in response to an email concerning water/sewer rates increasing. Please let Brian know if you have questions.

-Tami | 503-588-6255
City of Salem | Mayor/City Manager's Office

From: Brian Martin <BMartin@cityofsalem.net>
Sent: Tuesday, October 22, 2024 3:09 PM
Subject: FW: Contact City Council

Hello Cheryl,

Thank you for reaching out and sharing your thoughts with us. We understand that rate increases and fees can be challenging, especially for those on a fixed income, and we appreciate your candid feedback.

Your concerns about government spending and transparency are important and the City strives to be as open as possible with our budget and how we allocate funds. The work done by our Public Works staff may not always be visible, but it is essential in maintaining the infrastructure that keeps our water, sewer, and stormwater systems reliable. These investments are what help us to prevent issues before they happen and allow us to continue to deliver high-quality water, stormwater, and wastewater services.

As a utility, we face the same inflationary impacts as members of the community, but on a much larger scale. We can't choose to cut back on the systems we need to treat our drinking water or how we treat our wastewater. We also can't let our pipes, systems, pump stations, and treatment plants fail. We have to be compliant with state and federal requirements and have to deliver our services 24 hours per day, seven days per week.

Every two years our Public Works Department engages with a Water/Wastewater Task Force to evaluate the financial health of the Utility and to make changes to the utility policies that govern and support the critical infrastructure included in Salem's drinking water, wastewater, and stormwater systems. This committee includes representatives from Salem City Council, Keizer City Council, Marion County Commission, City of Turner, other Water Districts, members of the business community, and members of the general public.

This past year we met six times between June and September. These meetings were advertised on our City website and were open to the public or available to view online on YouTube. As the

Water/Wastewater Task Force deliberated on the policy and utility rate structure, it was apparent that due to rising costs of materials and the general inflationary pressures in our overall economy, a 4.5% increase in 2025 and 2026 was needed and recommended by the committee to protect the system. This recommendation will now go to the City of Salem's City Council for their review and consideration at a public meeting on November 12, 2024, and if approved take effect on January 1st, 2025.

It is not too late to be involved in the conversation. City Public Works staff will present the committee's recommendation to the Salem City Council for their review before any increase in utility rates become official. If you would like to submit testimony, attend the City Council meeting, or provide comment during the discussion, you can still do that by November 12, 2024, at 5 p.m.

You can submit written testimony by emailing the cityrecorder@cityofsalem.net or you can submit paper copies at the City Recorder's office at the Civic Center, 555 Liberty St SE, Room 225.

You can also provide comment in person or online by attending the City Council meeting in the Council Chambers located at 555 Liberty St SE or by signing up to comment to provide testimony online before 3 p.m. on November 12 by following the [link to our website](#).

Here is more information on ways to submit testimony at a City Council Meeting:

<https://www.cityofsalem.net/government/city-council-mayor/about-city-council/comment-and-participate-in-a-city-council-meeting>

In your message, you mentioned the difficulty of some in our community to continue to pay for increasing costs of necessities. The City has instituted a program to help low-income individuals and seniors with their utility bills for those who qualify. You can find more information about those programs on our website at <https://www.cityofsalem.net/community/household/water-utilities/utility-payments-and-your-utility-account/utility-payment-assistance>.

Again, thank you for reaching out. We truly appreciate hearing from residents who are engaged and care deeply about the direction of our city, and I hope this message helps clarify some of the details regarding the utility rates and the process involved."

Sincerely,

Brian D. Martin, PE

Public Works Director

City of Salem | Public Works Department

555 Liberty St SE, Suite 325, Salem OR 97301-3515

bmartin@cityofsalem.net

Office: 503-588-6211 ext. 7796 | Cell: 503-385-3505

[Facebook](#) | [Twitter](#) | [YouTube](#) | CityofSalem.net



From: noreply@cityofsalem.net <noreply@cityofsalem.net> **On Behalf Of** feby@qwestoffice.net

Sent: Saturday, October 19, 2024 9:47 AM

To: citycouncil <citycouncil@cityofsalem.net>

Subject: Contact City Council

Your Name	Cheryl Eby
Your Email	feby@qwestoffice.net
Your Phone	5035853878
Street	1960 Garfield Street NE
City	SALEM
State	OR
Zip	97301
Message	<p>I am writing to all of you at this time due to the city's request, once again, to raise water/sewer rates. I don't know any of you, but I do know you do not represent the best interests of the people of this city. It's all about bleeding us dry of our hard earned income to prop up the city, raise wages for staff who don't do diddly, and bennies. None of the money ever seems to get to where it needs to go, like fixing our decaying roads and sidewalks, or dealing with water storage issues as we had a few years ago under Peter Fernandez.. It must stop now. And just for the record, I know you people have already decided how you will vote on this issue as you plan this well in advance of any meetings, but hold the meetings just to make it look like the public has input. We do not. So here goes. We are currently being charged far too much for just water and sewer. The following shows why: Water Volume \$18.12 Water Base 12.90 Wastewater Volume 18.41 Wastewater Base 18.38 Stormwater Impervious Area 7.49 Stormwater Base 13.22 Franchise Fee 4.43 Streetlight Fee 2.80 City Operations Fee 15.33 With all the additional fees tacked on which have no place on our water bill, we are paying far in excess of what we should be. We should only be paying for water/waste volume, nothing more. Then we would approve of raising rates, but with all these extra bennies for the city tacked on, no. Maybe you all enjoy paying all these excessive rates. We don't, especially as we are on a limited budget and are seniors. I want to encourage the council for once to do the right thing and tell the public works director NO to this increase. It is long overdue for city government to cut spending and the number of entities that make up government as there are far too many that are unneeded. If I ran my budget like the city does theirs, I would be in a world of hurt. It's time to tighten the purse strings and cut, and cut big. I hope you will do that, but somehow I just don't expect you will. I've worked in government; I know the mindset.</p>

This email was generated by the dynamic web forms contact us form on 10/19/2024.

From: noreply@cityofsalem.net on behalf of feby@qwestoffice.net
To: citycouncil
Subject: Contact City Council
Date: Saturday, October 19, 2024 9:47:29 AM
Attachments: [ATT00001.bin](#)

Your Name	Cheryl Eby
Your Email	feby@qwestoffice.net
Your Phone	5035853878
Street	1960 Garfield Street NE
City	SALEM
State	OR
Zip	97301
Message	<p>I am writing to all of you at this time due to the city's request, once again, to raise water/sewer rates. I don't know any of you, but I do know you do not represent the best interests of the people of this city. It's all about bleeding us dry of our hard earned income to prop up the city, raise wages for staff who don't do diddly, and bennies. None of the money ever seems to get to where it needs to go, like fixing our decaying roads and sidewalks, or dealing with water storage issues as we had a few years ago under Peter Fernandez.. It must stop now. And just for the record, I know you people have already decided how you will vote on this issue as you plan this well in advance of any meetings, but hold the meetings just to make it look like the public has input. We do not. So here goes. We are currently being charged far too much for just water and sewer. The following shows why: Water Volume \$18.12 Water Base 12.90 Wastewater Volume 18.41 Wastewater Base 18.38 Stormwater Impervious Area 7.49 Stormwater Base 13.22 Franchise Fee 4.43 Streetlight Fee 2.80 City Operations Fee 15.33 With all the additional fees tacked on which have no place on our water bill, we are paying far in excess of what we should be. We should only be paying for water/waste volume, nothing more. Then we would approve of raising rates, but with all these extra bennies for the city tacked on, no. Maybe you all enjoy paying all these excessive rates. We don't, especially as we are on a limited budget and are seniors. I want to encourage the council for once to do the right thing and tell the public works director NO to this increase. It is long overdue for city government to cut spending and the number of entities that make up government as there are far too many that are unneeded. If I ran my budget like the city does theirs, I would be in a world of hurt. It's time to tighten the purse strings and cut, and cut big. I hope you will do that, but somehow I just don't expect you will. I've worked in government; I know the mindset.</p>

This email was generated by the dynamic web forms contact us form on 10/19/2024.

From: [Cindy](#)
To: [CityRecorder](#)
Subject: Proposed Rate Increases, City of Salem H2O, sewer, stormwater Jan 2025/2026
Date: Sunday, October 20, 2024 10:18:38 AM

October 20, 2024

City Recorder's Office
555 Liberty St SE, Room 225
Salem, OR 97301

Dear City Council,

I am writing to comment on the proposed rate increases for the City of Salem's water customers. I strongly discourage additional increases in rates at this time. City of Salem's water customers already experienced significant increases for this current year, 2024, that began in January with a 5% increase in utility rate and an additional 6.25% increase in operations fees. We cannot bear another rate increase at this time. Certainly, there must be other ways to find the budget to support the needs.

I can only speak for myself, but I have done everything in my power to reduce my water usage at my single home residence. I have systems and procedures in place at my home to limit water usage, and yet my bills continue to rise. As far as I am aware, the City of Salem doesn't offer any incentives to customers like me who are interested in reducing use. In looking at my water consumption history I use between one and four consumption units, averaging about 2 per month. My inside appliances are low water use. I do not have an underground sprinkler system and do not water my lawn letting it brown during the drier months. I do have a modest vegetable garden that I water in the summer. I try to plant natives in my landscaping to reduce water usage.

I have witnessed my water bill rise from an average of \$77.76 in 2022 to an average of \$82.11 in 2023. This year (10 months in 2024) so far is averaging \$89.33. So, I have personally experienced a 15% increase in the last two years. That seems high, and I am just one little residential customer.

I urge the City Council to consider other options instead of across the board rate increases. If no other sources of funding from budget review and re-allocation can be found, I urge the Council to look at usages and consider charging those customers who have higher usages more, giving the little guys like me a break. I am already paying 15% more than in 2022. Better yet, implement a program to give back in the form of a credit to those of us who are reducing our usage. Even a small credit at the end of the year, or some periodic cycle, would be appreciated.

In summary, I am a residential customer from a modest home. I average 2 consumption units of water per month. I have seen an increase in my rates of 15% since 2022. I urge the Council to consider other sources of funding. If raising rates is the only solution I urge the Council to not increase rates across the entire customer base giving those of us who use less and already contribute more a break.

Respectfully submitted.

Cindy Haley
Salem, OR

From: [Cindy Lenker](#)
To: [CityRecorder](#)
Subject: PROPOSED RATE INCREASE TESTIMONY
Date: Tuesday, October 22, 2024 9:01:09 AM

As a life-time resident of Salem and a property owner, it's disturbing that when we completely shut off our water at the main during an extended trip, we still returned to a \$100 water bill. When I called to question the amount, I was informed that that is the "average" water bill WITHOUT USING A DROP OF WATER/WASTEWATER/OR STORMWATER because of all the additional taxes, fees, add-ons to our City of Salem "water" bill.

We are a family of two who, when watering minimally last summer just to keep our plants alive during the summer, face an over \$200+ monthly water bill now. But, the City wants more. On one hand we're encouraged to plant and grow to help our communities and those living without the ability to have a garden or supplement their food supply, but on the other hand to do that we're forced to pay TOO much for the water needed.

If we are forced to tighten our belts to make ends meet, why isn't the City required to do that, too? I realize costs continue to rise, but maybe some of the "other" things added to our water bill need a deeper look and possibly some things can be adjusted or eliminated to ease the burden.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my concerns,

Cindy Lenker
Native Oregonian and Salemite

From: [Donna Bleiler](#)
To: [CityRecorder](#)
Subject: Salem Utility bill increase
Date: Tuesday, October 22, 2024 7:40:36 PM

I am a single disabled lady, live alone, and I still pay \$90 a month - too much for a single person. How many more people will be put on assistance due to a rate increase?

What I object to is having to pay for bottle water or filter to not ingest the poison Salem insists on adding to the water. But not everyone can afford to do that or may not know what the harm is that is being added to the water.

Now, an analysis of 27 studies found strong indications that fluoride may adversely affect cognitive development and intelligence in children. This should be concerning to the council.

So I ask, can your conscience justify feeding school children and low income families the toxic fluoride, because they can't afford bottled water?

Why not dispense with fluoride additives to fund the increase? We cannot afford an increase during this inflation. Once President Trump is reelected, inflation will subside and increases due to inflation will become overpayment abuse. At minimum, the increase should be suspended until March to see if it is still justified.

Donna Bleiler

Fluoride study:
<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC3409983/>

Chronic Fluoride Toxicity

- Can result from long-term exposure to excessive fluoride levels
- Effects on cognitive development:
- Lower IQ scores in children exposed to high fluoride levels
- Possible negative impacts on memory and learning
- Comparison to other neurotoxins: fluoride seems to fit in with lead, mercury, and other poisons that cause "chemical brain drain"
- Ingestion of fluoride-containing products, such as toothpaste, mouthwash, and supplements, can lead to toxicity

Acute and chronic effects:

- Acute toxicity: gastrointestinal symptoms, seizures, and respiratory depression
- Chronic toxicity: skeletal fluorosis, dental fluorosis, and possible cognitive impairment

Comparison of dental health between countries that don't use fluoride and those that do:

1. Decline in tooth decay rates: Both fluoridated and non-fluoridated countries have experienced a decline in tooth decay rates over the past few decades. This suggests that other factors, such as improved oral

hygiene practices, dietary changes, and access to dental care, have contributed to this decline.

2. No significant difference in tooth decay rates: A study cited in the search results found that 16 non-fluoridated countries and 8 fluoridated countries with similar socioeconomic characteristics had comparable tooth decay rates among 12-year-olds.

3. Fluorosis prevalence: Countries that fluoridate their water supplies have a higher prevalence of dental fluorosis, a condition caused by excessive fluoride intake during tooth development. This is particularly concerning for children and infants who may ingest high levels of fluoride.

From: noreply@cityofsalem.net on behalf of fhbruyns@gmail.com
To: [CityRecorder](#)
Subject: Contact City Recorder
Date: Friday, October 18, 2024 2:57:51 PM
Attachments: [ATT00001.bin](#)

Your Name	FREDERICK BRUYNS
Your Email	fhbruyns@gmail.com
Your Phone	5033396196
Street	750 Church St NE
City	Salem
State	OR
Zip	97301
Message	Regarding: Proposed rate increases for City of Salem water, sewer, and stormwater services. Testimony: The proposed 4.5% increases for 2025 and 2026 seem to be excessive. 1) Oregon has the the third highest water rate average of all U.S. states, and Salem's rate exceeds the Oregon average. (Statista.com) 2) These increases would exceed the rate of inflation of goods and services generally according to the BLS consumer price index. 3) These increases exceed the average of increases in the Oregon average weekly wage (OED). High and higher water rates reduce the affordabiliy for Salem residents and businesses. Oregon is losing population, and service increases that outpace our capacity to pay will drive more of us away. If the increases are justified by a short-term need, Salem should report how it will stabilize and reduce rates in the future. Thank you for considering my testimony.

This email was generated by the dynamic web forms contact us form on 10/18/2024.

From: noreply@cityofsalem.net on behalf of skazz999w@hotmail.com
To: [CityRecorder](#)
Subject: Contact City Recorder
Date: Saturday, October 19, 2024 4:19:40 PM
Attachments: [ATT00001.bin](#)

Your Name	Philip Ratcliff
Your Email	skazz999w@hotmail.com
Your Phone	5039744858
Street	4665 Tragen Ct SE
City	Salem
State	OR
Zip	97302
Message	<p>I received a postcard from the city, regarding the proposed rate increases for water. Water is the most basic necessity in daily life besides air. Your constant rate increases for water have been above the rate of inflation. You are not reacting to inflation in setting rates, you are causing inflation. I doubt that inflation factors into your rate hikes. It is because the city council cannot balance its budget. ---- I think that I speak for the general public by stating that we are sick and tired of the never-ending rate hikes. The lack of professionalism in having to increase rates in order to balance the budget is disgusting.</p>

This email was generated by the dynamic web forms contact us form on 10/19/2024.

From: [R.Struckmeier](#)
To: [CityRecorder](#)
Subject: Reduce Utility rate increase
Date: Tuesday, October 22, 2024 11:48:35 AM

Too much is too much. I HUGE rate increase was granted last year. The utility provider needs to sharpen its pencil and reduce expenses. Please do NOT grant this 4.5% increase. Please limit the increase to the previous 12 months' CPI of 2.4%.

Randy Struckmeier
2695 Eastlake Drive SE
Salem, OR 97306

From: sheila_sheilabambeila.com
To: [CityRecorder](#)
Subject: Water hike
Date: Saturday, October 19, 2024 3:27:39 PM

Hello-

I already anticipate citizens telling the city that now is not the time to raise rates, and like last year, the city pushing it through. Again, I'm sure there will be testimony, and it will be ignored. Maybe find a way to have the state buildings pay for water they use... we get screwed over being the capitol. I'm tired of rising costs. We can't afford more tax/rate increases!

Sheila Gramlich

Get [Outlook for iOS](#)

From: TBOregon@nasarulz.com
To: [CityRecorder](#)
Subject: Proposed Rate Increases
Date: Sunday, October 20, 2024 10:13:36 AM

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to the proposed rate increases for water, sewer, and stormwater services in the City of Salem. As a concerned resident, I believe these increases are unjustified and place an undue burden on the citizens of our community.

Firstly, many residents are already struggling with the rising costs of living. Increasing utility rates will exacerbate financial hardships for families, seniors, and individuals on fixed incomes. This is particularly concerning in a time when economic stability is uncertain for many.

Additionally, it's important to note that residents who live in rental apartments typically do not pay directly for their water usage. This means that the burden of these increases will disproportionately fall on homeowners and other property owners, which could lead to higher rents as landlords pass these costs on to tenants. This creates a ripple effect, ultimately impacting even those who are not directly billed for these utilities.

Moreover, Portland General Electric (PGE) is also requesting another rate increase. These cumulative increases in essential services make it increasingly difficult for residents to manage their financial obligations. The compounding effect of multiple rate hikes for basic utilities is a significant concern for our community's financial well-being.

Secondly, the proposed rate hikes do not appear to come with a clear and detailed plan on how the additional funds will be utilized to improve our city's water and sewer infrastructure. Transparency and accountability are crucial when asking residents to contribute more from their limited resources. We need assurance that the funds will be used effectively and efficiently to benefit the community as a whole.

There is also a lack of exploration of alternative solutions that could alleviate the need for such steep increases. For instance, implementing more aggressive water conservation programs, seeking state or federal grants, or even restructuring existing budgets could be viable options. It is essential that all possible avenues are thoroughly explored before resorting to increasing rates.

In conclusion, I urge the City Council to reconsider the proposed rate increases and to engage with the community in finding more equitable solutions. The voices of the residents should be heard and valued in this decision-making process. Let us work together to find a path forward that does not disproportionately impact those who can least afford it.

Sincerely,

Terry Bouie

5045 Hearth Court NE

Salem, Oregon 97310