

From: [Doug Luth](#)
To: [CityRecorder](#)
Subject: Operation fee increase
Date: Sunday, June 11, 2023 8:14:24 AM

I oppose this fee or any increase therein!

This “fee” was originally enacted without a vote of the citizens; it contains no restrictions on how often or how much an adjustment can be applied any time the council chooses. It should be repealed until the citizenry votes on it!

Where can one obtain the ordinances, statute’s , rules regarding the petition process?

Douglas Luth
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Salem
Ward 7

Sent from my iPad

From: [Dan Porth](#)
To: [CityRecorder](#)
Subject: budget
Date: Sunday, June 11, 2023 7:28:32 AM

Councilors,

Below is the text of an e-mail I sent to the Budget Committee. I believe it is still relevant and I want it considered as you vote for this year's budget. For the record, I'm a 34 year resident of Salem, the last three years residing in Ward 4.

With regards to the City budget I do have a few thoughts:

- I am absolutely against any payroll tax unless it goes to the voters. We've all just been hit with the statewide transit payroll tax (I think 1-1-21 start date) and the paid family leave act (started recently). Both of these were added without voter input or approval. I know this isn't Portland or the Portland/Metro area, but they've also added an income tax for "daycare for all" and a "supportive housing tax." Taxpayers/employers in the Portland area also pay a transit tax (Tri-Met) along with a city AND county tax. Even Ted Wheeler (who I don't agree with on any topic) has come out against more local taxes because he believes (rightly so) that it's driving people away from Portland. Salem doesn't need or want to be like Portland, especially regarding taxation.
- The discussion (at least the discussion that makes the news) is all about raising taxes to fund programs. What about making decisions to proactively cut programs that maybe aren't core city programs? Nothing would help restore faith in government more than a government body actually reducing its footprint instead of constantly expanding. The city budget needs to fund core services such as public safety and infrastructure. I know there are lots of demands on city resources and this is much easier said than done. BUT budget reductions are always a reaction to lack of or lost funding and NEVER a proactive decision.
- This may not be in the realm of what you are looking for but streamlining city services by partnering with other local governments could save money. For example, could the library be combined with the Chemeketa library system and moved out of the city budget? Same with parks. Just north of us there's the Tualatin Valley Parks and Recreation District. This District serves (my understanding) many of the smaller cities in Washington County rather than each city running its own park and rec district. It could improve and increase what's available to our residents at an overall lower cost AND move it out of the city budget (it would be its own taxing district). We never hear about innovative thinking or ideas on budget issues.
- New taxes that don't correlate to services provided are especially galling. Hotel taxes to fund tourism make sense. A new payroll tax simply to backfill the general fund doesn't make sense. And then to further politicize it by excluding some from paying the tax (Councilor Nordyke wanting to exclude low-income wage earners from new payroll taxes - *at the time I wrote this original e-mail this was the case...it may no longer be so*) at the expense of others furthers discord in the community.

If anyone has questions about my comments, please let me know.

Best regards and thank you for your service to our city,

Dan Porth

(503) 580-3423

If you call me, leave a message!

From: [Hale, Matthew](#)
To: [CityRecorder](#)
Subject: 6/12/23 City Council Comments
Date: Sunday, June 11, 2023 8:26:19 PM

Let the Voters Decide – 6/12/2023

The proposed city budget that begins this July 1st projects a 3.2% increase in revenue, but it also has a spending increase of 9.4%. To satisfy this spending increase, you are now about to pass along a 71% increase in the City Operations Fee and enact a Payroll Tax at a rate of 0.00814 (0.814 percent), which will burden the median Salem wage earner (earning \$62,185 a year) an additional \$506 a year in taxes.

Before you decide to make these decisions in the confines of the City Council Chambers, please consider the following information that you were presented on May 15th, and compare that to the fact that there have been no City press releases at all indicating the magnitude of these tax increases being decided upon:

- DHM Research presented detailed results of their focus group discussions to you on May 15th detailing the City is on the Wrong Track, and residents are
 - Concerned about Homeless and Crime,
 - Concerned about Housing Affordability, and
 - They are concerned about the Cost of Living

Key takeaways from the focus groups were

- The City has adequate money but is not spending resources effectively,
- They were paying too much in taxes already,
- They preferred lower payroll tax rates than the highest rate proposed, a rate of 0.0066 (0.66 percent),
- They wanted the City Leaders to look at budget cuts first, and
- They had a lot of doubt about our City Leadership

When pressed by Councilors about if voters wanted to be able to vote on tax increases, DHM stated that from their experience, 9/10 voters would want to be able to vote on a tax increase of this magnitude.

- When asked “will we need more?” by concerned councilors, the CFO stated “can’t say for sure” and the City Manager stated it’s “a half-step” to eliminate the fiscal cliff in the short term. What concerns me is that voters are unlikely to have a say at all in these decisions, and the median wage earner in Salem could be paying up to \$506 a year in payroll taxes, and an additional \$66 per year on their water bill. What’s even more concerning is that this increase in taxes and fees of well over \$30m per year will only add 13 new Police Officers for community policing in the

downtown corridor and East Salem area, and 3 more Police Homeless outreach officers to address crime and homeless concerns.

- I'm encouraged by a few City Councilors stating that they wanted to "ask" voters rather than "telling" voters, or in the case of the Budget Committee Chair (Councilor Gonzalez) – it's "our responsibility to go to the voters." In fact, Councilor Gonzalez stated that "I asked twice for small cuts from staff and never got answers so we could build trust in voters." Has Councilor Gonzalez ever received a response to his requests from city staff?

Don't be lulled into convincing yourselves that engaging with voters and asking for their approval is "grueling", a "big lift", and there is "not enough time to educate voters and gain their trust" like I heard a majority of you say on May 15th. Be transparent, engage with voters, tell your story, and communicate, communicate, communicate.

Now is the time for you to overcome the "doubt" that residents have with you. Build some trust with residents and voters. Residents of Salem will be shocked if you decide as a City Council over the busy 4th of July and Summer Vacation time period when residents are vacationing, busy with family, and working on their homes to pass a Payroll Tax lasting till December 31, 2031 without being asked for their approval.

Sincerely,

Matt Hale

Ward #4