

From: [Jessie Preis](#)
To: [CityRecorder](#)
Cc: [citycouncil](#)
Subject: Testimony for 2/24/2025 City of Salem Council Meeting
Date: Monday, February 24, 2025 5:00:08 PM

Dear City Recorder,

Please include the following as testimony for the 2/24/2025 Salem City Council Meeting regarding item 5.b. Referring a five-year Community Services and Livability local option levy to Salem voters.

Mayor Hoy, Members of Council, City Staff and fellow residents of Salem,

My name is Jessie Preis. I have lived in Ward 1 for 20 years. I am a wife, mother of two daughters, Educator and Community Organizer. I spent 12 years community organizing for the City of Salem until this body ended my program a little over five years ago.

Anyone who knows me, knows that I care deeply about this community, especially my little corner of it in NE. I adore our Englewood School and Park. I love our library, both the books and the other community services it provides. I haven't used Center 50 Plus much yet, but I know people who depend on it.

Despite all of this, I strongly urge you to vote no on referring a five-year Community Services and Livability local option levy to Salem voters in May.

I believe it would be a waste of everyone's time, energy and money when it is destined to fail at this time. Mayor Hoy just spent two campaigns convincing voters we needed trust, transparency and no new taxes. She has been in office barely a month and she has already broken all of her promises.

- 1) She's gotten her hand slapped at least twice for voting to give her business friends City contracts rather than recuse herself due to conflict of interest.
- 2) She has had secret conversations with Councilors and a closed door meeting to fire our City Manager at the cost of nearly a year of his full salary, so there goes another \$256,000 or so.
- 3) We have recently had another \$5 tacked onto our City utility bill.
- 4) In her search to find all of the mismanaged funds she keeps going on about, her team of business experts not only didn't find them, they found that City staff were already operating at a level that far above anything that should be reasonably expected for a City of our size.
- 5) Despite the fact that polling that was done in regarding this levy showing that it is unlikely to pass, here we are going ahead with deciding to put it out for voters in May.

Please hold the line this year. Rearrange the way some things are currently organized, earn back a bit of trust from citizens, and make some hard choices. Perhaps next year we will have some solid plans for a long term fix that might have a chance of being approved. I know the root of most of revenue shortfall is still the result of some very poor political choices made

back when I was a child so I know it won't be quick or easy.

Even if I wanted to support the levy in May I can't afford to. My family paid: *\$7,389.55 in property taxes in November

*Our property and auto insurance came due in Dec and went up hundreds of dollars

*Our Utility bill went up \$5 for a fee and I don't even know what it is supposed to cover

*Our garbage hauler, Republic Services's, franchise agreement was renewed by council and despite our getting less service, they upped our rates again.

*Our PGE bill has increased 41% over the past four years.

*NW Natural, internet, phone, groceries, gas and and everything else costs us significantly more than it did even last year.

*I have been un or underemployed since my City of Salem community organizing program was cut five years ago.

*My husband's City career of 18 years was ended in 2009 and it took him almost a decade of un or underemployment to find his new career.

Yet my family continues to volunteer our time to make our community a better place for everyone because we know how, and because it is the right thing to do. We have already given more than anyone should ever expect of us.

I do have ideas, not just complaints, surrounding reorganizing communication and community outreach, pausing some tax credits for developers and other big businesses for a year, going back to one City Manager and no Deputy City Managers, helping former Councilor Anderson in his request for compensation for all of the services to all of the property exempt from property taxes, yet still use City services. I would welcome those discussions.

I will also say that it continues to feel like (at least in my little corner of Englewood), City Council and Administrative staff are actively trying to punish us for not paying even more taxes. Continuing to make painful cuts to what is left of Libraries, Parks and Center 50 Plus unless we pay even more taxes and fees unfairly affects us more than the louder, richer residents of Salem.

It also looks bad to me and my neighbor friends, to make these cuts at the expense of the general fund "needs" of the Police Stand Alone Unit and their new palatial taxpayer-funded facility. I am not trying to say that SPD doesn't also need more money, but perhaps they could try something different with the funds that they already have for a year. Bring back the Crime Prevention Unit and the school officer liaison program to build at least a sliver of trust. And how about getting an effective person in charge of media relations who works with other City Departments?

Fire could be more be more outreach oriented too, apparently. Just last week I was told Salem Fire no longer does education in the community, but that we are welcome to bring our kids to the station. Transporting a few hundred kids to the station by bus is not an option, and walking them all there would take so long the activity would be over before we got there. Also, I saw Police and Fire out walking with kids earlier this month for Walk and Roll to School Day.

Personally, based on 12 years of experience while the City was paying me, and a lifetime of just naturally community organizing, I feel that continuing to make cuts to educational, community engaging and crime preventative services is extremely short sighted across departments.

Please hold the line this year. Please don't waste the time, energy and money to put this on the May ballot when it is destined to fail. Spend this year regaining some trust and doing some creative problem solving.

Sincerely,
Jessie Preis
Ward 1

