

Rachael Gangelhoff

From: Missy Melissa <melissa.elijah@hotmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, July 10, 2025 10:26 AM
To: CityRecorder
Subject: Downtown

Dear Councilmembers,

I hope this message finds you well.

My name is Melissa Gauger and I'm writing to you as a concerned resident of Salem 97302 regarding the ongoing crisis of homelessness in our community. I respectfully ask you to consider the following remarks, which I would also be honored to share in person at an upcoming council meeting.

Public Comment: Homelessness in Our City

We see people living on our streets every day — some are veterans who once served our country, some are single mothers trying to protect their children, and many are individuals who have simply fallen on hard times. These are not just “homeless individuals.” These are our neighbors, and they deserve more than what we're giving them.

Right now, there are countless vacant buildings across our city — offices, schools, and even government-owned properties — sitting unused. Meanwhile, people are sleeping in tents, cars, and dangerous conditions. What if we repurposed even a fraction of those empty spaces into transitional housing or shelters? The buildings already exist. The need is urgent. All that's missing is the coordinated action and support to make it possible.

This goes beyond shelter. Our streets are filled with trash — not because people don't care, but because there are no trash cans, no public services, no basic infrastructure in place where people need them most. Let's bring back public trash bins. Let's support regular clean-up efforts. Let's organize and empower volunteers who want to help but lack resources.

This is not just a policy issue — it's a human one.

Homelessness is not a moral failure. It is a systemic one. And the solution isn't to push people out of sight. It's to bring them into the fold with housing, with dignity, and with real, sustained care.

Let's treat housing as a human right.

Let's repurpose vacant buildings for the good of the community.

Let's clean our streets in ways that serve and uplift all residents — housed or unhoused.

Let's lead with empathy, not judgment.

Because a city is only as strong as how it treats its most vulnerable.

Thank you for your time, your service, and — I hope — your action

On a personal note I helped clean the quarry people want to have clean spaces they want to have dignity a safe spot to put the little they have left so they can shower they can work if able.

Sincerely,
Melissa Gauger

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Rachael Gangelhoff

From: Wings Catch Fire <wingscatchfire@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, July 10, 2025 9:44 AM
To: citycouncil; cityrecorder@cityofsem.net
Subject: Testimony - Downtown Livability

Thank you Mayor Hoyt and City Council Members for all that you do and for considering my written Testimony and suggestions.

I value a healthy and thriving community. A prosperous, safe and clean downtown is central to creating a better quality of life to everyone who resides in Salem.

Providing generous funding to programs like SOS (Salem Outreach) and to include the ROCC (the Recovery Outreach and Community Center) is so important because a community that supports each individual member promotes a healthy, stable and more hopeful future for everyone.

We can't afford to leave anyone out if we are to move forward and create greater safety, hope, comfort and an improved quality of life for all residents of Salem.

Our lives are interconnected.

Opportunities are needed to include everyone in the revitalization process. We can find ways to revive our shared downtown areas while also restoring a sense of belonging and purpose to all members who wish to be included and are willing to join the effort of recovery.

These are hard times and for many vulnerable members of our society. This is especially true for those who struggle with mental health conditions and substance use disorders as the obstacles to wellness are growing with each government spending cut.

As individuals rebuild their lives, they live in greater fear and uncertainty as Medicaid, SNAP and other essential services are being stripped away. We must find a way to restore the health of our downtown areas that can include everyone so that we can all find the hope and stability to thrive together.

I have an idea, It won't solve everything, but it can address a piece of the puzzle and will help In a practical way.

Small volunteer teams of three to four people (including people in recovery) could be funded to provide a paid supervisor position. The team could be funded by the city of Salem to clean and remove trash from the sidewalks. The work could be part-time (as little as a few hours per week) and this would help people with disabilities to volunteer, as they are able.

The presence of these volunteers could help to create a friendly and hospitable downtown environment. In addition to improving the cleanliness of the downtown area, small repairs, like painting over graffiti to tidy things up could improve the attractiveness of our shared spaces. With the help of Salem Livability Teams, our downtown would be more welcoming, cheerful, safe and prosperous.

A paid supervisory position for each small team (of three to four people) could also provide the necessary work experience that many people need to strengthen their resumes as they prepare to re-enter the mainstream workforce.

The work could help restore a sense of purpose, belonging and true community connection while also helping people to meet the new Medicaid work requirements and qualify for essential healthcare.

As each person heals and grows stronger in physical wellness, mental health and professional confidence, the downtown areas can be transformed with loving care. Improved personal health will partner well to restore the vibrancy and prosperity of our downtown center as a meeting place that supports business and positive community engagement.

We can do this together for the benefit of all.

Thank You,
Lisa Rocha-Arana
Salem, OR 97302

From: Carney Incorporated <carney.inc@hotmail.com>

Sent: Monday, July 14, 2025 3:20 PM

To: CityRecorder <CityRecorder@cityofsalem.net>

Subject: more police are needed downtown

Patrick Carney, co-owner of Salem Center Mall, Macy's, Cinnebarre.

We continue to face a growing hostile environment downtown...all the bad actors are emboldened as they know there are zero repercussions for their actions. We are told daily, "what are you going to do about it" from kids and transients alike...it is demoralizing. It is hard enough to try and have a successful "reboot" of Salem without having to chase people around our properties. If you stop and just consider the SMALL number of people creating this uninviting negative connotation of downtown...it is the crowd that hangs around ARCHES, then go next door to destroy the park, a park I used to take my grand kids to and there is just no way to take them now.

We are running out of time, I talk to many business and property owners every day, same sentiment...nothing is improving. Why is it we hear about State laws that limit the ability of police to do their job when many other city's around do not have this same problem? Why can't we call downtown what it is...an emergency. The "no crime zone" SRC 95.750 should be brought back and renamed the "commerce" zone. All the misdemeanors withing the code should be enforced, and people unwilling to follow the law should be banned from "the living room" of Salem. I think ALL people need to be off the streets leaving them safe and passable for the people who live and work downtown. Salem is embarrassing in it's current state' and that can change, but only with some strong leaders who have the guts to say enough is enough. Arches needs to be relocated, the chaos it produces spills over into the park and eventually downtown. We need action now, bike cops back and start letting the walking dead of Salem know that if you break the law or harass people downtown there will be consequences for their actions. These people are becoming more and more aggressive. The young ladies who I know work downtown are all horrified being told daily, "I'll be waiting for you when your off"...and many other offensive remarks I will not put on paper. Something really bad is brewing downtown with no downside to all their boorish behavior. Please give us and everyone else some more police and lets get downtown back to it's vibrant self. Thank you- Patrick Carney

From: Lynelle Wilcox <lynellex@comcast.net>

Sent: Monday, July 14, 2025 2:44 PM

To: CityRecorder <CityRecorder@cityofsalem.net>

Subject: 071424 Agenda item #8: Public comment - SB

My name is Shavannah Bouge, Ward 1. I am sharing part of my story as public testimony for city council's consideration for the upcoming July 21 work session on homelessness, safety, and livability.

I had a husband, family, and home for 16 years. We broke up, and we both spiraled down and started using drugs. There was domestic violence, and then a no contact order, so he ended up living in his vehicle while I lived in the house. We both got more deeply with drugs. He was convicted of some crimes, which resulted in him being required to go to a treatment program for a full year.

With the loss of our family's main breadwinner, I was no longer able to afford rent. I was evicted, and bought a trailer to live in. When my husband came out of his rehab program, he was clean, and he took the kids because I was not doing well. I was homeless, stressed, and using.

I had some relationships that were violent; I went deeper into addiction, with ongoing violence in my relationship. Each time my friends and I were swept was more trauma and hardship – to figure out how to get things to a new place, and where can we go? Not having any place to actually be adds to the stress, which often increases drug use, just to cope.

Every place we went was just another situation of being swept again. The trauma and stress of that keeps you in a position of being unsafe, so using meth enabled me to stay awake for my safety. Using and dealing drugs also enabled us to have a little bit of money to buy gas and propane - to stay alive, to try to do things to move forward. But it was just ongoing circles.

I needed to be with my kids again, so I needed to become clean and housed. I went to detox and recovery, and I have now been clean and sober for 4 years. I've been housed again for 2 years. I am providing a clean and stable environment for the kids.

I realize that people who experience homelessness can seem scary to some people. I hope that people might think more deeply about that. At my church, we have a kid who has autism, and he sometimes rocks and waves his hands, and screams loudly. His behavior is very disruptive at those times, and it seems scary, until you recognize that he has autism, and this is part of his intermittent usual behavior.

Similarly, in experiencing homelessness and now working at a shelter for women experiencing homelessness, we sometimes serve women who experience mental illness, and some situations are disruptive and can seem scary. Yet as we learn what is typical for each woman, we see that screaming or cursing, or yelling at people we can't see is very rarely dangerous. When someone is being difficult, it reflects someone having a difficult time. In those situations, kindness may be more important than anything, and kindness can often change the dynamics, as someone feels heard and seen.

Mental illness affects many people – homeless or not. The difference is that we SEE mental illness more visibly when someone has nowhere to be. Homeless or not, mental illness or not, some people will commit violence. Always have your intuition and situational awareness engaged. Yet national statistics show that people experiencing homelessness are more likely to be the victim of

violence than a perpetrator of violence against a stranger. The stabbings at UGM reflect a huge gap in mental health services and supports – NOT a reflection of people experiencing homelessness being dangerous.

When someone is homeless without shelter, they are constantly swept; they are treated as if they are vermin or invisible, and they experience discrimination on an ongoing basis. Survival mode living takes a toll on all, most especially on the people living in survival mode. Self worth and hope often fade, and mental illness or addiction can grow because of the ongoing danger and trauma.

The crimes downtown seem to be mostly livability crimes - feces in doorways, broken windows, camping and fires, trash, petty theft - crimes that are reflections of people having nowhere to sleep, go to the bathroom, eat, or live. Of course, no one should have to deal with those things – not the people with nowhere to live, and not the businesses.

Yet livability crimes are a reflection of people who are not able to have basic human needs met. We have done a lot to increase places for people to live, and to increase shelter beds, and there are still more people than there are places for people to be, and there are still many people who can't meet shelter entry criteria, ie not being able to do activities of daily living independently, so we still will have many people who are unsheltered homeless.

Meanwhile, we have shootings, gang violence, including young gang members who specifically commit violence against people experiencing homelessness. One teenager beat a homeless man to death. As we figure out how to make our city safer, what if we focused on reducing **actual** violence as a priority?

And what if we continue more of the things that are proven to work ie, creating more permanent supported housing, more places for people to be in the meantime, and if we focused on having mental health professional as first responders for people having a mental health crisis. These things reduce livability crimes and increase livability for ALL.

As we profess values of inclusion, community-ness, and belonging, and we do an annual survey that repeatedly shows that people who are homeless often experience discrimination daily, it calls the question of whether those values apply to all people who live or work in Salem, or not?

We're investing so much in clean up, when we could invest in more prevention - if we provided restrooms, trash cans, trash service, cell phone charging stations, water fountains, places for people to sit when they are weary to enable more livability for ALL, livability crimes would decrease, and we'd also be more aligned with Salem's professed values.

Thank you.

Shavannah Bouge

During the covid pandemic, I worked with the homeless people living under the Market Street viaduct. With help from volunteers and donations from the Nextdoor App, I took hot meals twice a week, clothing, sleeping bags, tents, blankets, garbage bags, water, propane and propane heaters, socks, gloves--you name it, I tried to find it. A volunteer started a Go Fund Me to support the people during one of the coldest winters I can remember. I helped to organize trash pickups and hauling to the dump until the state or county finally decided to do it. I probably spent 5 of 7 days working among the unhoused people getting in touch with Social Security and other resources.

Three people died while I was around the camp: Pinky had diabetes and congestive heart failure; she had been taken to the ER on several days and RELEASED several times prior to her death. They found her in her tent one day when she didn't come out for food. Another, whom I didn't know, was found standing against a shopping cart with a blanket draped over her head. She had been under the blanket for five days along with her drug paraphernalia. Nobody even noticed she was missing until they couldn't stand the stench. Another was a disabled nurse, Cindy, who was hit by a car, became disabled from that accident, and was "recovering" from her injuries. She was hit and killed by another driver. Others died under the "bridge", but I wasn't there to see them. Many were maimed from cars hitting them on Market Street.

I stopped working under the bridge after I was attacked by a woman unknown to me. She seemed psychotic to me, so I yelled in my loudest teacher voice for her to get away. My friends came out in mass and surrounded her until the police came. Three squad cars! I wasn't really hurt, but she did get a good swing at me that grazed my face.

Citizens shouldn't be afraid to come out of their homes. Psychotic citizens should have a monitored place to stay until they are stabilized and housed. Sick friends should be treated until they are stabilized and housed. Disabled people should be treated with respect and housed according to their needs. Addicted people should be arrested and placed in rehabilitation centers until they are stabilized and housed. People who choose to live on the streets should be arrested and jailed in a pauper's prison. They can learn a trade and be released only when they have a job and are housed. In all these scenarios, the people can be taught social skills and societal expectations.

Where does the money come from? I don't know, but Salem, and Oregon, need to figure out how big business can help provide the means for funding such a dream.

I'm still friends with a man, William, whom I met under the bridge. I lost track of him for a few months, and when I found him again, he was dying in a ditch on Hyacinth St. He was hanging on because he had a dog. After getting him to the ER in Salem, he was transported to a hospital in Portland where he was brought back to life. He spent several weeks and months in the hospital and a nursing home in Newberg. I had to surrender his dog, Twista Fate, who did find a new home.

THANKFULLY, the Newberg nursing home had an excellent director, who found a space for William at the place he is currently living. William is doing so much better living in a shelter community in Oregon City. Not only does he get transported to his medical appointments, but he is also on his

way to getting glasses and dentures. He has a case manager and attends group therapy and camp meetings. His hope is to get into the position to move back to eastern Oregon where he has family. He needs to buy a truck. He's gotten his flagging certification; he is on the list to get his forklift certification.

I had another homeless friend named Russell Mikolas whose life on the streets ended tragically. One afternoon with a few of his punk friends standing by watching, a punk teenager stomped on Russell's head until he had broken his skull and brain matter was splatted on the ground. Russell was my age and was disabled from working on a job. Living on the streets caused a check to be returned to Social Security. I helped him to secure \$25,000 in back pay from when he didn't have an address and didn't know how to get his disability reinstated. Russell's benefits afforded him enough to live in an apartment. He didn't have to live on the streets, he chose to. I'd made other friends, but these stand out the most to me.

What I don't understand is why Salem can't do better. It embarrasses 🙄 🙄 to be a citizen of Salem... she has become.

the city of ghosts, trash, and neglect.

Sincerely,
Jolene Garland
915 Barkstone Ct SE
Salem 97306

From: Lynelle Wilcox <lynellex@comcast.net>
Sent: Monday, July 14, 2025 1:46 PM
To: CityRecorder <CityRecorder@cityofsalem.net>
Subject: 071424 Agenda item #8: Public comment - SR

My name is Scott Russell and I work in Ward 1.

I was homeless from 2013 to 2018. During that time, Salvation Army's Lighthouse Shelter on Front Street offered 24/7 access to their restroom. Homeless people in that area could use that restroom, even if they were not staying at Salvation Army's shelter. Because 24/7 restroom access is so important, I often stayed in that general area.

I was fortunate then, since Salvation Army later discontinued that courtesy after hours. Even fewer restroom facilities exist now downtown after 7pm. It's kind of an unwritten rule that if homeless camp on any business property and storefronts overnight, then you must vacate by 7am latest, and leave no messes behind. When business owners give grace to those on the streets who camp on their property overnight, this is commendable, and appreciated, thank you.

It's sad that businesses are dealing with messes sometimes - no one should need to clean up after others. But please consider the utter lack of restrooms downtown after business hours these days, and please consider the state of mind some people are in.

My state of mind was clear, and I was not drowning in addiction or struggling with mental illness, so I was able to sleep and behave respectfully on others' property. Many others are not as lucky. There are not enough places for unsheltered people to be, sleep, or live with the wrap around services and supports that they need. They still need livability, with basic human needs met. They are still human beings who need help.

As we consider actions to increase livability in Salem, punitive policies, aggressive policing, and sweeping people from place to place adds trauma and hardship and puts people further and further into survival mode and causes more desperation and less less hope. Those practices result in reducing livability for people experiencing homelessness, which reduces livability for all.

We need more resources for people experiencing mental illness and addiction. We need more first responders that include a mental health professional for mental health situations. We need more housing first and permanent supported housing. We need more resources that help people meet basic human needs. These are proven strategies that increase livability for ALL.

Thank you for your time.

Scott Russell

From: Lynelle Wilcox <lynellex@comcast.net>

Sent: Monday, July 14, 2025 1:52 PM

To: CityRecorder <CityRecorder@cityofsalem.net>

Subject: 071424 Agenda item #8: Public comment - BF

Dear Mayor and City Councilors,

Three Sunday mornings a month I do a program for the homeless called Cindy's Room Service. It is a very simple project. I serve coffee and give out a small bag of goodies (candy, tissue and a hand cleaner) out of the back of my car at Marion Square park. We serve about 38 people.

This program started back in 2017 when Arches joined with the business community to get homeless folks sleeping in front of businesses up and moving in the mornings. Then, the program was called Room Service. My wife and I, along with other volunteers, pulled a cart with two carafes of coffee and other items such as gloves, hats, socks, hand warmers, greeting our homeless neighbors. We did this for many years until we had to stop because of COVID. After my wife died in 2022, I started the program up again and named it after her.

In all the years we have done this, we have never had any trouble from these good folks. In fact, just the opposite has happened. We have gotten to know many. They have always appreciated getting a hot cup of coffee in the morning and, most importantly, they know that we do not judge them. Yes, many have mental problems but they have never caused any problem for us. Our approach has been to simply see them as fellow human beings who are going through a particularly difficult time in their lives. We treat them with the dignity and respect every human being deserves.. They treat us the same way.

I believe that by seeing these folks as neighbors and showing compassion, empathy and understanding we can work together to overcome the problems of homelessness. Of course it is difficult, nobody thinks otherwise, but it can be done. We need to work together.

Thank you,
Bob Francis
965 Whitetail Deer St., NW, Salem, Oregon
Ward 1

From: Lynelle Wilcox <lynellex@comcast.net>
Sent: Monday, July 14, 2025 12:06 PM
To: CityRecorder <CityRecorder@cityofsalem.net>
Subject: 071424 Agenda item #8: Public comment - DR

Dear Mayor and City Councilors,

My name is Dianne Rush and I am a full-time volunteer at SafeSleep United – an overnight, low barrier shelter for women, and women with kids, in Ward 1 in Salem.

I am writing to express my feelings about the importance of livability for ALL people in Salem. I have seen, first hand, what the lack of livability has done to the women of our community.

Of the women I serve on a daily basis, lack of livability means some choose to use drugs to be able to stay awake at night so they can be ever watchful and ready to run when danger comes. They sleep under overpasses and bridges and cover themselves with dirt so no one will see them and assault them. They feel they have no choice but to stay with an abusive person for "protection" even though that person will rape them nightly or pass them around to their friends.

Some dress baggy or pee on themselves – to not look girly or pretty; to smell bad, so they might not be raped today. Some hide under spider infested porches, bushes, vehicles or by porta potties to try to catch what most of us take for granted every night - a few peaceful moments of precious sleep.

Who are these women I speak of? Children of God: someone's sister, moms with children (of all ages), grandmothers, aunts, and cousins. They are women fleeing stalkers, domestic violence, abusive family situations.

They are young women who are traumatized by extreme neglect and/or abuse, and aged out of foster care and they don't yet have the skills to heal from trauma and navigate life independently.

They are women who left their own lives to be a caregiver for a loved one. And when the person they cared for died, the women had no place to live because they were never on the lease, and couldn't afford the rent anyway.

They are women who had full "normal" lives and lost it all when an expensive car repair, medical bill, mental illness, dementia, addiction, job loss, identity theft (or other scam), death in the family, or yet another rent increase was more than they could afford. They don't look like the negative stereotypes of homeless women, yet now they are suddenly lacking a safe place to be, sleep, live, go to the bathroom.

They are women who have been poor and homeless for years, or for as far back as they can remember, who lost bootstraps long ago, if they ever even had any.

They are women who are well spoken and eloquent, and they are women who have no voice because they've lost all hope. They are women who have so many voices in their heads, that they talk and scream at people we can't see, just to get a word in edgewise, or to tell their voices to PLEASE shut up!

They are women who have been living in trauma, desperation, hopelessness, and survival mode for a long time. And they are the newly homeless, on the thin edge of being able to see what might become of their own hope and survival, if this continues for long.

They are women who no longer have, or never had, easy paths for meeting their basic human needs. Some believe that their presence makes an area less safe, less lively, less thriving, less livable. The reality is a duality – **people experiencing homelessness are not experiencing much livability** because basic human needs are almost impossible to meet.

We need to do more of the things that work: Housing First, Permanent Supported Housing (PSH), truly affordable housing, more mental health, addiction, and recovery services and supports. More mental health professionals as first responders to people experiencing mental health crises. Return of the SOS and bicycle police to serve people experiencing homelessness in a compassionate and trauma informed way. And more things to enable livability along the way - more restrooms, showers, laundry, water, phone charging stations, trash cans and trash service, any place to sit or nap, sleep and live, and any shred of privacy.

I could go on and on about the horrors these women encounter on a daily and nightly basis. Maybe you can relate? I hope not. But if you could put yourself in their situation, even momentarily, maybe you'll realize how important it is to provide livability to all.

Thank you for your consideration.

Dianne Rush

From: Jimmy Jones <Jimmy.Jones@mwvcaa.org>
Sent: Monday, July 14, 2025 9:46 AM
To: CityRecorder <CityRecorder@cityofsalem.net>
Subject: Public Comment for 7/14 Salem City Council Meeting

Please see the attached.

Jimmy

Jimmy Jones

Executive Director

Mid-Willamette Valley Community Action Agency

2475 Center Street NE

Salem, OR 97301

501-827-7547 (Personal Cell)

503-585-6232 (Main Office)



Mid-Willamette Valley
COMMUNITY ACTION
Compassion in Motion



From: Anonymous
Sent: Saturday, July 12, 2025 5:30 PM
To: CityRecorder <CityRecorder@cityofsalem.net>
Subject: Re: EDIT Subject: Public Comment on Camping Ordinance – City Council Meeting July 14

I'd like to add to my previous comment by clearly stating that I support a stricter ban on public camping in Salem. With the recent Supreme Court decision confirming the City's authority to enforce such bans, I believe it's time to take stronger action to protect our neighborhoods, parks, and public spaces. Encampments are affecting safety and quality of life, and the City should not wait for shelter availability to begin enforcement. Thank you for considering this perspective.

On Sat, Jul 12, 2025 at 5:26 PM

Dear Mayor and City Council,

As a resident considering a move to Salem, I'm very concerned about the growing number of homeless encampments in public areas and neighborhoods. While I understand the importance of shelter access, I believe the City must adopt stronger enforcement policies to ensure that public spaces remain safe, clean, and accessible to everyone.

I support an ordinance that allows for the removal of camps when shelter beds are available, and I encourage the City to go further—ensuring consistent enforcement and accountability. Allowing encampments to grow without action creates serious health, safety, and quality-of-life concerns for nearby residents.

Salem should prioritize both compassion and public safety, and that means not allowing camping in parks, sidewalks, or near homes when other options exist.

Thank you for addressing this issue.

I would like to remain anonymous.

Thank you

From: Pamella Watson <ppw30@msn.com>
Sent: Sunday, July 13, 2025 4:57 PM
To: CityRecorder <CityRecorder@cityofsalem.net>
Subject: #8 public input

Dear Mayor and City Councilors,

As we and our City grapple once again on how to have a safe and inviting city and care for our growing unhoused citizens who have few options for housing.

Finding ways to provide livability for our business owners, shoppers and unhoused is complicated.

Since my involvement as a volunteer/advocate beginning in 2014 I have been a part of citizen led grass root ideas.

The Arta Potties, Home Base Shelters of Salem, Room Service, Warming Center, etc.

When Covid hit much of the volunteer driven and staffed services were filled with paid employees. The very active volunteer base dried up.

Recently Lynelle Wilcox has revived an advocate network.

With funding drying up for many of our unsheltered providers I can see a need to draw on volunteers again.

Examples to improve livability,

I would like to see the shower truck at Arches parking lot again with volunteer staff. This will increase shower access to even more of our unsheltered. This may help some of our unhoused with mental health challenges feel safer to use than in a building.

Possibly look into a room service type volunteer teams that would walk the downtown area with water, coffee, minimal supplies.

When I was doing this on a regular basis, relationships and connections were built. It also gives a "pulse" on how things are going for the downtime business owners as we build relationships with them as well.

I never had anything but immense gratitude for a simple cup of coffee but most of all time spent listening.

We see you, the unhoused. We see you the business community.

How can we do this heavy, complicated lifting together without creating "the other."

Thank you for your time.

Respectfully submitted,

Pamella Watson , 97317

Sent from my Verizon, Samsung Galaxy smartphone
Get [Outlook for Android](#)

From: Megan Harper <megan.harper0907@gmail.com>

Sent: Sunday, July 13, 2025 6:44 PM

To: CityRecorder <CityRecorder@cityofsalem.net>

Subject: Comment for 7.14.25 City Council meeting

Good evening,

I am a resident of Ward 4.

I watched the last city council meeting (June 23) in its entirety--albeit remotely. I would like to address something that emerged from that meeting that has been troubling me.

The public comment period opened with Mayor Hoy laying some ground rules for engagement, with the aim of ensuring everyone has the chance to be heard.

The first individual to give public comment was the president of the Salem Main Street association. I was alarmed to hear him mention that some individuals who raised some ethics violations against city council were "no longer welcome in downtown Salem." I was surprised to hear someone with so much social capital in our city make a statement that private citizens would not be allowed in public spaces. While I'm aware this individual was probably trying to simply make a point about how he felt about something, there are some first amendment implications here. It certainly seemed counter to Mayor Hoy's intention of ensuring everyone's voice being heard.

I understand that all of you are volunteers. There are few public decisions or statements you can make which are universally pleasing, and you deal, unpaid, with being the subject of much criticism. I couldn't do it, and I thank you for your service.

At the same time, it takes a lot to get on city council. All of you ran for your positions on purpose, and I hope to Heaven someone told you that you would be in the public hot seat at times.

Private citizens must absolutely be free to question and criticize public officials in a democracy. They must be free to do so without fear of retribution from the government. They must not be barred from public spaces for doing so.

I'm not asking you to curb the free speech of Mr. Sullivan, but I would so appreciate a bold public statement that the right to free speech--including the right to criticize the government--is alive and well in Salem, Oregon, and that no individuals will receive legal sanctions for doing so.

Our nation's president just recently made a social media post suggesting that a celebrity who has moved to Ireland should lose her citizenship over her criticism of him. This is concerning. We must be ever more vigilant about protecting our rights on a local level as the picture becomes murky on the national stage.

Sincerely,

Megan Harper

From: amber McClelland <ambergmanning@hotmail.com>

Sent: Monday, July 14, 2025 5:41 AM

To: CityRecorder <CityRecorder@cityofsalem.net>

Subject: Written Testimony for city council

Agenda item #8 Public Comment

Submitted by Amber McClelland

1670 Juniper Butte Ave SE, Salem Oregon

Why I serve the houseless population.

Years ago I believed a person just needed to find a job and be a contributor to society. Until, I was invited to serve breakfast downtown under the Marion bridge. I began to see faces and hear stories of people who had as unimaginable trauma and lack of natural supports. Then I met Dana. Dana was a vet who served in Vietnam, same as my dad. As I grew to know Dana I found a friend and learned he had a mom and a daughter. Both loved and missed him so much. Our group walked alongside Dana and he was able to go to South Dakota and see his daughter graduate and move to Florida to be with his mom in her last years. Dana was a hard worker, amazing cook and from him I learned that people need support and resources to do well.

I continued to serve and I met Karen. Karen changed me into a better person. Karen suffered from a medical condition of substance use disorder. Karen loved her kids, she loved her sister and her nephew and she loved me. Karen called herself a “junky” and fought her disease the best she knew how. She was not safe in the houseless camps and the impacts of trauma continued to build. Karen was generous with the very little she had and showed concern for those around her. Karen passed away 4 years ago due to her disease, the unsafe environment and the lack of access to resources.

There are more names I can share who are moms, dads, brothers, sisters, sons and daughters, and friend. Unfortunately, they are also without safety, shelter and resources to bring healing from trauma and disease. As a community it is essential we consider the need for people to have paths to supports, access to resources, and ability for their basic human needs being met, including places to sleep safely and live. When we move towards these things we build a community with greater livability for ALL.

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Mayor Hoy and Council Members:

My name is Lindsay Bigelow, and I live in Ward 4. I began serving with the Kindness Closet back in 2017 and began to learn people's stories. I've learned over and over that each person is a human being that has value and is here for a reason.

Many folks in our community are very caught up in the "mess", the eye sore, the inconvenience, each decreasing the livability and vitality of our city.

Look beyond that and you will see a person whose worldly belongings are at their feet. Look for the person who is a mother who is suffering from a mental illness that has been untreated for so long most people only see a woman talking to herself covered in filth.

Look for the person who is a son who is developmentally or intellectually delayed and doesn't recognize how unsafe he is or that there is help for him.

Look for the veteran who is experiencing such intense PTSD that he shoots up to unsee things that can never be unseen; who left his family not to

desert them, but to save them from the peripheral damage of his own trauma.

Look for the daughter engaging in substance use to forget the childhood trauma of abuse she endured only to age out of the foster care system with

no support or skills to be independent.

These are all real people. They are people who the system has failed and are now being discarded by their community as trash. They are people who

their community sees as an inconvenience, an eye sore, vermin, or invisible. The reality is they are living in trauma, desperation, and survival mode because there are more people in need of housing than there are beds. Enabling people to have a place to live where basic human needs can be met increases livability for ALL.

There is a great need for a more robust mental/behavioral health system that provides the services needed for ALL of our community members to get the help they need to stabilize and be healthy. As with those who are housed, the vast majority of the community are not dangerous or violent, but when one of our unhoused neighbors behaves

violently it becomes the narrative.

We have to combat this and approach the ongoing issue of homelessness with facts and the willingness to go to our state government and fight for what our community needs. We need a reform of our mental health system, not the false sense of security of increasing our police presence in the downtown corridor. We need to restore our SOS Team to full capacity and fund a CAHOOTS model of mental health professionals being first responders to situations where someone is having a mental health crisis.

Please consider facts and what has proven to work. Also consider a volunteer-based team that could support out-of-the-box ideas on what could work to address some of these concerns. I for one would volunteer my time in this capacity if the opportunity presented itself.

Thank you for your time.

Lindsay Bigelow



12 July 2025

Dear Mayor Hoy, and Members of the Council,

My name is Jimmy Jones, and I am the Executive Director of the **Mid-Willamette Valley Community Action Agency (MWVCAA)** in Salem, Oregon, where we serve more than 60,000 Oregonians in poverty each year across 11 counties. I also serve as the Vice President of Legislative Affairs at the **Community Action Partnership of Oregon**, and have the honor of helping shape housing and homeless policy across the state as a member of various task forces, work groups, and commissions. Previously, I have been the Vice Chair of the **Oregon Task Force on Homelessness and Racial Disparities**, Chair of the **Joint Task Force on Hospital Discharge**, and a committee chair of the **Governor's Statewide Shelter Workgroup**. I currently serve on the housing subcommittee of the **Governor's Racial Justice Council**, which advocates for progressive policy reform on behalf of vulnerable populations and communities of color across Oregon. As a Community Action Agency, part of our obligation is to inform public policy makers of the consequences of their public policy decisions, and advocate for the needs of low-income families in our community.

Over the past several months, concerns have been expressed to this government about who is welcome in our community and who is not. I am disappointed that the Council has not taken the opportunity to clarify to the public that everyone—rich or poor, housed or homeless, black, white, or brown—is welcome not only in the downtown but throughout all of Salem. Over the past year, there has been significant pressure to push homeless services and residents out of the downtown area. People living in poverty, regardless of how severe that poverty is, are ultimately residents of Oregon and American citizens. They have the same rights to life, liberty, and justice as the rest of us.

This conversation is fundamentally about who matters—whose lives are valuable, deserving of human dignity and compassion, and who is not. Our Agency's vision statement, adopted a decade ago, states that "All people are respected for their infinite worth and supported to envision and reach a positive future." Essentially, we believe in the limitless potential and inherent value of every individual, regardless of poverty, race, or creed. In November 1961, **Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.**, whom Salem recently honored by renaming the Salem Parkway as the MLK Parkway in 2022, spoke at Portland State, where he said, "If democracy is to live, segregation must die. Segregation is a cancer in the body of democracy that must be removed if the health of the nation is to survive." "We must learn to live together as brothers," he said, or we will surely "perish as fools." Many vulnerable populations living among the homeless are disproportionately Black, Brown, Native, and disabled. They are the very old and the very young. Many are profoundly sick. And driving them out in the name of economic necessity is not only profoundly unjust but also unnecessary.

We **want** the City of Salem to thrive economically. We **want** the recently announced development projects in the downtown to move forward. We **support** expanding the City of Salem police budget so that everyone, rich and poor, can be safe in the downtown. However, believing that justice and dignity for the poor must come at the expense of peace and prosperity, or that prosperity is only possible if the poor are driven out, is a fiction that cannot withstand scrutiny nor the demands of logic, reason, and righteousness.

We operate a homeless day center at 615 Commercial Street, and have since 2017. This facility was designed to be a low-barrier, walk-up facility for folks who cannot receive services elsewhere. That operation is part of a broader partnership with the City of Salem that dates back decades, which includes our support for **Salem Housing Authority** operations at **Yaquina Hall**, **Redwoods**, and **Sequoia Crossing**, in addition to emergency warming and cooling. We serve an average of 145 unique homeless persons each day in that location. In June alone, there were 3,056 (duplicated) visits, as people in need seek showers, laundry, and access to mail, meals, and programs. In June alone, we provided 8,762 basic and supportive services. In June alone, we served 7,234 meals. These numbers are simply fractions of our overall impact. In the last fiscal year, for example, our five adult shelters and two youth shelters served 610 people in 582 households with 165,822 service engagements.

The day center activity in the downtown is the most vital link in the chain from unsheltered life to housing. It also keeps people alive in extreme weather. Just yesterday, as temperatures soared into the high 90s, we assisted 150 unique clients at that location with 177 meals, three clothing vouchers, nine loads of laundry, five hygiene kits, four pet food vouchers, and twelve showers. We also provided 48 gallons of water in jugs, in addition to 82 bottles of water and 15 gallons of Gatorade, and 12 pairs of dog shoes to save paws from the heat.

But for our work, where would these Salem residents go? Can they access bathrooms in businesses in the downtown? Who will let them launder their clothes, or provide them with a mailbox to receive documents and medicines? Who will keep them warm and dry in the winter, and cool in the summer? Who will feed them? All of the livability matters that concern the business community the most would be categorically and exponentially worse, by order of magnitude, but for the services we provide in that location.

Salem is a typical medium-sized city in America, especially considering West Coast property values and homelessness. What is happening here is happening almost everywhere in the West. The solutions proposed this summer are not new, nor are they immune to the legacy of failure those methods have produced in the past, both in Oregon and across America. Those efforts have not succeeded in Grants Pass. Nor will they in Salem. Our emotional response in Salem is generally driven by fear of what a small number of people in deep poverty are doing to the rest of us. That fear might lead us to ineffective or overly harsh solutions (or both), where the cure is worse than the disease. Do we really want “**Broken Windows Policing**” in the downtown? Do we want a highly aggressive **Kansas City Model** of targeted enforcement that has troubling links to racial profiling and discrimination?

There is a clear connection between the two main concerns expressed by the public at Salem City Council meetings this year. Some fear that their local government has aligned itself with federal immigration officials, either in name or spirit, while others worry about the exclusion of the homeless from the downtown. These fears are **linked** by a common thread: concern for human dignity, justice, and equal treatment under the law. Our biggest worry, however, should be our fear of each other. It is not downtown crime that drives that fear, but our lack of civility towards one another. That is the real issue. Even if we had enough money to have one police officer for every person in the downtown, residents would only feel safe when they feel connected to the shared goals and values of the community at large. Right now, they do not.

None of us find comfort in witnessing the poverty of others. That discomfort makes us examine what causes the homeless condition and leads us to the idea that someone must be to blame. It is much easier to blame the poor, the disabled, the marginalized, the excluded, and the homeless for their suffering. We assume they did something wrong to end up in poverty and failed to do something else to escape it. In

either case, the blame falls on the victim. The rest of us are just witnesses. But if we step back and realize that most homeless people are homeless simply because of bad luck, bad timing, or forces beyond their control, that understanding changes everything. It shifts the blame from the poor to the system we all live in, and from them to us. Knowing that this is **our** problem—not just theirs—means we all share the responsibility of solving homelessness, and are compelled to act.

My advice, for what it is worth, is for the Council to pause and look with great seriousness at the choices in front of you in the year ahead. I hope we can also turn down the temperature on these public fights and find some common ground to move forward with common sense policy, informed by data and reason, not driven by fear. As community leaders, we all share the responsibility for the impact of our words on the community. Up and down the West Coast, and in Salem, the homeless have been the target of hate crimes. Between 1999 and 2022, the **National Coalition for the Homeless** documented nearly 2,000 violent incidents that targeted homeless Americans, just for being homeless. There were at least 588 deaths in those assaults. We have seen that kind of violence here in Salem. In 2023, Russell Mikolas, a 64-year-old homeless Salem resident, was beaten to death on Sunnyview Road. Allowing this conversation to boil over, runs the risk of inflaming the public and producing more violence against our vulnerable populations.

To make progress, we have to believe that everyone counts. That every life has infinite worth to our community. The homeless are not burdens nor villains, but part of the rich tapestry of Oregon, struggling with an economic tragedy that we can correct. They are, in the final analysis, our brothers and sisters, both Oregonians and Americans. We must learn to live together in a way that serves us all, or, as Dr. King said, we will certainly perish as fools.

Respectfully,



Jimmy Jones
Executive Director

From: [Jim Scheppke](#)
To: [CityRecorder](#)
Cc: [citycouncil](#)
Subject: Public Comment for the 7/21 Work Session
Date: Tuesday, July 15, 2025 10:03:45 PM
Attachments: [Downtown Public Safety.docx](#)

Dear City Recorder:

Please accept my public comment for the 7/21 Council work session on Downtown Public Safety.

Thank you,

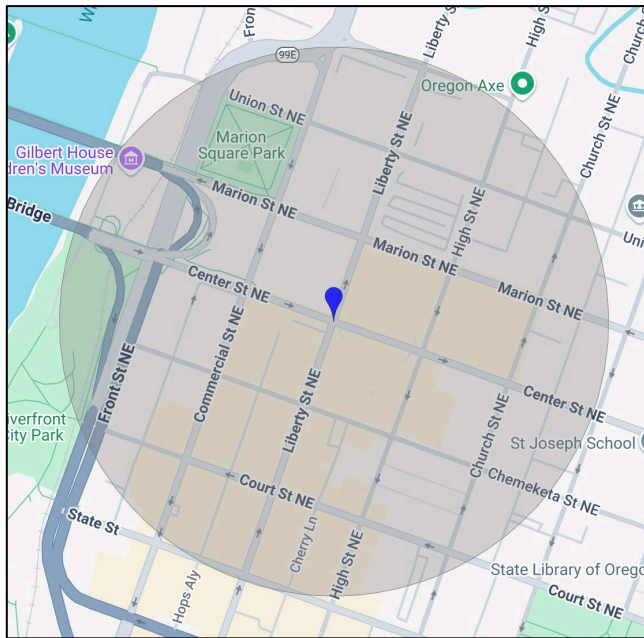
Jim Scheppke, Ward 2
jscheppke@comcast.net

Does Downtown Salem Need More Policing?

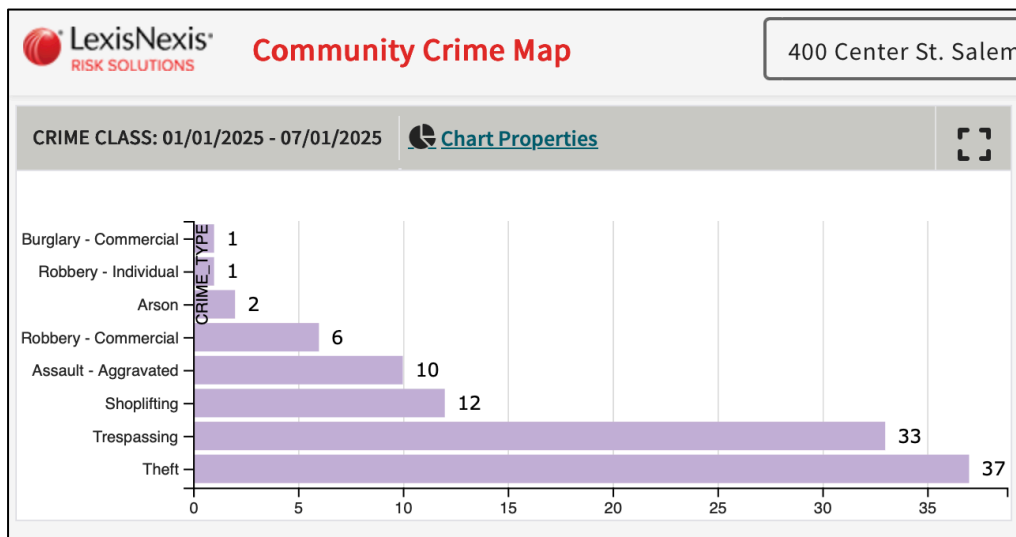
Jim Schepke, Ward 2

Some members of the business community are calling for more policing downtown, such as a return of bicycle patrols, as a response to a perceived surge in crime. But what does the data tell us about this? The Salem Police Department website includes a very useful tool called the LexisNexis Community Crime Map that can shed light on the need for more policing downtown. The map can plot an area with a radius of a quarter mile and detail all of the crime that was reported to the SPD in the area.

I plotted this core area of downtown to discover data on crime in the *first half of 2025*:



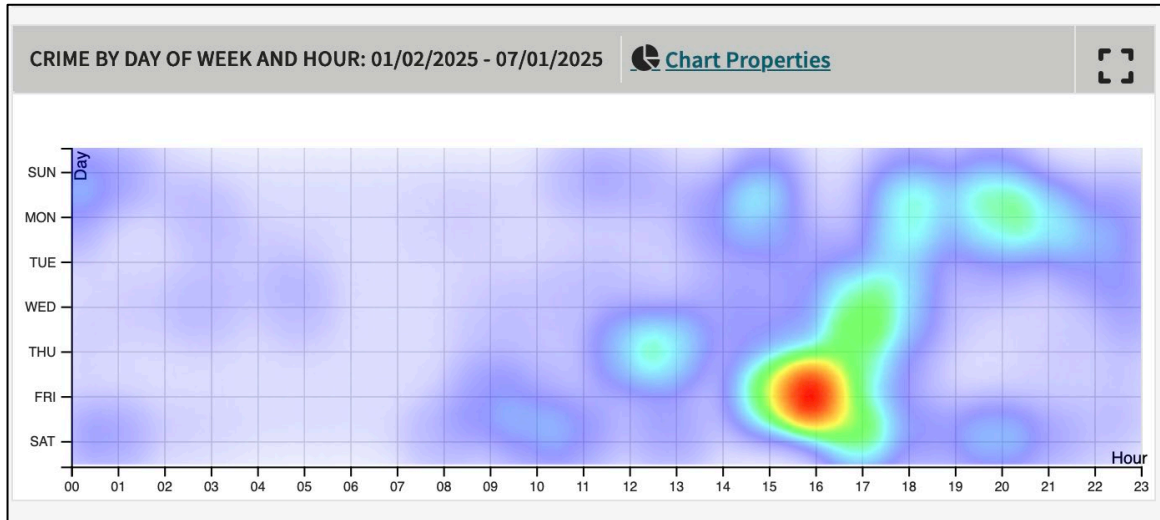
Here is what the Community Crime Map tells us about crime in the first half of 2025:



I would note that there were no reported homicides, sexual assaults, weapons violations or drug violations according to the Community Crime Map. In a typical month in 2025 there were six reported thefts, six reported trespassing incidents, two reported shoplifting incidents and one robbery.

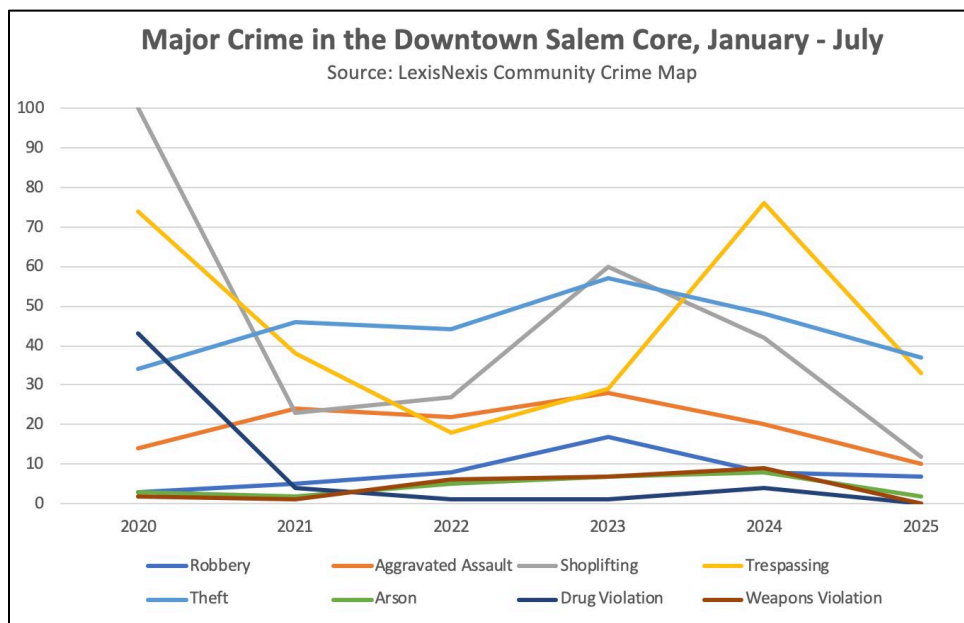
Others may judge whether this represents a serious crime problem in the core of downtown, but for me it does not. I'm sure there are many cities in the U.S. that would love to see this fairly low level of reported crime.

Another useful feature of the Community Crime Map is its ability to map the days and times that reported crime occurs or is reported. Here is a heat map that plots the data in the chart above:



Interestingly, much of the crime occurs or is reported between 3 pm and 7 pm, with a hot spot occurring on Thursday, Friday and Saturday. This might suggest that having bicycle patrols during the hours before 3 pm might not be cost-effective.

We are still left with the question of whether there has been a surge in reported crime recently, and thankfully the Community Crime Map includes historic data that can shed light on this question. Here is data taken from the Community Crime Map for the *first half* of 2020 to 2025:



I use the term “major crime” in the title because I excluded any crime that had fewer than five instances in any year, to make the chart easier to read. This chart shows that crime in the downtown core was considerably

greater in 2020. Then it dipped, probably because of COVID, went back up and now is at the lowest level in the past five years.

So do we have a surging crime problem in the core of downtown Salem? Data from the Community Crime Map says we do not. Could we still do more to make downtown Salem a more pleasant and welcoming and friendly place for residents and for visitors? I think we can. The surge we *are* seeing in downtown Salem is in apartments that will soon bring many more residents to downtown. That will be a great improvement, and if you recall the lessons of the great urbanist Jane Jacobs, she believed that “eyes on the street” — the presence of people in a public space — was more effective than policing in maintaining public safety. The presence of people at all hours of the day, as in her home in New York City, was more constant, casual, and less likely to be perceived as threatening or hostile.

Another way to make our downtown more friendly and welcoming and to reduce crime might be to emulate cities like Anacortes, Cheyenne, and Daytona Beach that all have established volunteer citizen patrols for their downtowns. These are uniformed groups of volunteers, without weapons, trained by police to walk in the downtown and be the “eyes and ears” of the police. Anacortes, with a population of only a little over 18,000, has recruited 60 volunteers to do this work. In Cheyenne the Citizens on Patrol perform downtown walking patrols and report suspicious activity, vandalism, tagging, parking violations and abandoned motor vehicles. A volunteer crime patrol downtown could also welcome tourists and provide directions, suggestions and other assistance.



Conclusion

Data from the Salem Police Departments Community Crime Map does not support the contention that we have a terrible crime problem in the core of the downtown business district that would justify the expenditure of scarce General Fund dollars to ramp up policing there. Not only is the current level of downtown crime fairly low according to the Community Crime Map, it appears to be on the decline in the past two years. The surge in residential development in the downtown that will happen over the next several years is likely to drive the crime rate down even further. If there were a needed response to crime, it could come from a well-trained core of dedicated volunteers recruited and trained by the Salem Police Department who might even be more effective than police, and at a much lower cost.

From: [Megan Harper](#)
To: [CityRecorder](#)
Cc: [Julie Hoy](#); [Paul Tigan](#); [Linda Nishioka](#); [Shane Matthews](#); [Deanna Gwyn](#); [Dr. Irvin M Brown](#); [Mai Vang](#); [Vanessa Nordyke](#); [Micki Varney](#)
Subject: written testimony for work session on 7.21.25
Date: Tuesday, July 15, 2025 9:56:31 PM

Dear Mayor Hoy and members of the City Council,
I am a resident of Ward 4.

In 1941, Japan attacked Pearl Harbor and solidified US participation in World War II.

What we as a nation did next was shameful, and it was a reaction based on fear.

It makes sense that when a horrible thing happens, we seek to prevent future similar horrible things from happening. Thinking ahead, performing root cause analysis, and putting structures of safety into place shows wisdom and responsibility.

Responding directly to that fear, however, can lead to mistakes that render our plans ineffective, and in the worst case, destructive.

Author Sharon McMahan has written a wonderful book titled *The Small And The Mighty*. The book follows twelve different Americans who looked around them and realized nobody was coming to save us, and decided to use the resources they had to do what they could. (It's a great book and it's at our public library! At least, it will be once I return it; it might be a great read for someone who said "I can get up and volunteer massive amounts of time to serve my city.") In a section chronicling two excluded Japanese Americans who did bold things for our country, she writes this about measures our government took to exclude Japanese Americans:

"Why? Fear is the simple and all-encompassing answer.

Fear of people who didn't look European.

Fear of people who spoke an unrecognizable language.

Fear of people whose traditional dress was different.

Fear of people who had different religious practices.

Fear of people taking their jobs.

Fear that someone else's success threatened their own.

Fear of not being "American enough."

It's so easy to pin that kind of reaction on a different time and say that version of American leadership was evil for putting Japanese Americans into concentration camps. And to be sure, these actions constituted a great evil and can never be excused or forgotten.

And fear of the "other" always has existed. For justice to prevail, we must refuse to act on

that fear.

Fear of people who don't look like they've bathed in a while.

Fear of people who speak in a way that is sometimes unrecognizable.

Fear of people who have had different life experiences, and thus have made different choices to survive.

Fear of people who we think should get jobs. (Many of them have jobs.)

Fear of people whose survival we see as an impediment to the kind of downtown we want to have.

It is not that I want violence to happen downtown. I want a safe downtown.

I want it safe for everybody. Having to sleep on the sidewalk is not safe. And it is nobody's first choice.

It is more important that people have their basic needs met than it is that the middle class run a business without having struggles. And to be clear, I believe both can be accomplished.

I spent 10 years as a social worker at Oregon State Hospital working with people who had used the Guilty Except Insanity plea. I was once badly injured on the job, and if the person who caused the injury had access to a stabbing weapon, I probably would not be writing you this testimony. Hearing about the incident at UGM not only made me grieve deeply for those injured whose relationship to UGM had fundamentally changed, it absolutely brought up my own trauma. I say this not for pity—none of us makes it through this life unscathed. (I deeply loved that work and don't regret at all the years I spent doing it.) I share this to demonstrate that I am not reacting to the threat of violence in a cavalier and impersonal way.

However, it is precisely my experience at the State Hospital (whose opinion I am not here to represent) that has taught me how people in crisis respond to heavy authority. While I was injured once on the job, there were absolutely countless other times I successfully de-escalated a tense situation without it becoming violent. One thing I would never do in the middle of that kind of negotiation is bring in security. If the person is talking with me, and we are working through something, seeing someone who looks like a cop is going to throw everything off. The propensity to put me in even more danger is enormous.

I am not trying to disparage any of our officers or say that they don't have compassion. I'm saying that their office and their function is not the most effective choice for de-escalating an individual in crisis.

Unhoused individuals are missing fundamental basic safety needs. These folks exist. They are actual human beings equal in dignity to you, to me, to my children, to all of the people I

hold most dear. If we don't like what is happening downtown when these human beings do not have their basic needs met, we can either decide they have a problem and work with them to solve it, or we can decide they are the problem, and that their existence is too big a cost. That their safety isn't worth protecting. That we are going to accept that in Salem, a business owner can proclaim to a city-wide publication that he throws feces, vomit, and garbage on people who are sleeping. Is that not assault?

Human dignity first.

I am in favor of a response to downtown. I am against the automatic response being an increase in law enforcement.

One more statement: I was in favor of the Livability Levy. I talked to a whole bunch of people in my community about how important it was. I talked about the committee that reviewed the budget and found that Salem was doing more with less and that there just wasn't more fat to cut. I highlighted how having third places like libraries and parks and the senior center creates community and is inherently public safety and how these things were worth investing in, and how the only way forward was for us to pay more in taxes. And I was happy to do it. I cried happy tears when the levy passed. I tried to wake up my daughter, and she just sleep talked at me, but we got celebratory treats on the way to school next door.

So if we needed the levy to pass to keep having a library, to keep having splash pads, to keep the lawns watered in our parks, where is the money for this extra police presence coming? Given the way I advocated that the city was being transparent and there just wasn't more money, I would appreciate some budgetary transparency with this proposal.

Sincerely,

Megan Harper