

**From:** [Amy Benedum](#)  
**To:** [CityRecorder](#); [citycouncil](#)  
**Subject:** Library Funding  
**Date:** Saturday, November 23, 2024 10:08:38 PM

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To Salem City Council-

I am writing in support of fully funding our library. A huge part of what makes a community a livable, desirable place to live is our services, including the library. I use the library often, bringing my child to play in the Discovery Room, find new books to enjoy, and attend special events in Loucks Auditorium. The library is a vital service to the people of Salem and must be a priority.

The proposed property tax ballot measure is a good start, but there must also be plans to continue library funding should that ballot measure fail.

For a city the size of Salem to not have a library would be, quite frankly, embarrassing and appalling. I couldn't imagine wanting to move to or invest in a city that can't even manage to keep a library open.

Keep the Library Open!

Concerned-

Amy Benedum, Salem resident and voter

**From:** [Alex Brown](#)  
**To:** [CityRecorder](#)  
**Cc:** [citycouncil](#)  
**Subject:** public comment on item 5.d  
**Date:** Monday, November 25, 2024 9:25:24 AM

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Hi City Council,

I am writing in support of the Salem Public Library and imploring you to find a more fair solution for keeping the library open and thriving. I am in favor of the levy proposal and would be on board with my property taxes increasing ~\$200 per year if it means the library stays open and can expand hours/services. I am writing because I am concerned that such a levy might not pass and that public safety and police funding is not being subjected to the same sacrifices as parks and the library. I support decreasing the public safety budget as a more fair solution that helps parks and the library not require such a big levy. Again, I will vote in favor of even a large tax increase to keep the library going, but please look at the biggest spender at nearly 1/3 of the general fund: police. I know their job is not easy, but we need balance. Anecdotally, I see police driving up and down my neighborhood every single day. Their presence is very noticeable and I want to live in a city with a thriving library more than one with an outsized policing budget.

Thank you  
Alex Brown  
2162 Bruce St NE

**From:** [Bill Dixon](#)  
**To:** [CityRecorder](#)  
**Cc:** [Vanessa Nordyke](#)  
**Subject:** Oppose Agenda Item 5.d., File # 24-474, Consideration of a five-year operating levy to fund the Library, Parks, and Center 50+  
**Date:** Friday, November 22, 2024 9:29:23 AM

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I write to oppose development at this time of a local option property tax measure to fund the library, parks maintenance and Center 50+. Such a measure would unduly burden already hard-pressed taxpayers and bypass much-needed public consideration of ways to reduce general fund expenses. In addition, based on recent public polling and business community input, the measure would face almost certain defeat.

Regarding the tax burden: Salem residents already pay \$4,000 to \$5,000 per year on average in property taxes. This is a significant obligation in a community where personal income and household income lag the state and nation by roughly 15 percent. Burdening residents with another cost (estimated at \$198 to \$245 per year to cover basic or enhanced services) would not be fair to them.

Regarding a public review of options: The Budget Committee has not had a chance to discuss and agree on cost-saving actions that the city should take. What it has done is indicate in broad terms the general fund services it would like to protect. Library services and parks maintenance both received majority support in that exercise. Among the services ranking lower were code enforcement, planning, incentives for affordable housing, youth recreation programs, deferred maintenance, Center 50+, business retention and job creation, and adult recreation. Making higher ranking services subject to the uncertainty of a public vote while keeping lower ranking services in the budget hardly seems logical – at least without a fuller discussion.

Regarding public opinion: There is strong evidence of community opposition to any new tax levy. In August, the Chamber of Commerce and Homebuilders Association of Marion & Polk Counties informed the City Council that they opposed a range of revenue-raising proposals – including a local option property tax – because they would “result in significant harm for our members.” In September, DHM Research reported on broad opposition to new taxes indicated in a survey that it conducted of Salem voters. The report said in part, “Voters oppose levy options for public safety and community livability, with certainty of opposition far outweighing certainty of support.” Given that level of documented opposition, seeking information that could lead to a tax levy (one which would cost more than \$300,000 to put on the ballot) does not seem warranted at this time.

I urge you to vote no on agenda item 5.d., File # 24-474, Consideration of a five-year operating levy to fund the Library, Parks, and Center 50+.

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*Bill Dixon, Ward 7 Resident*  
*608 Salem Heights Ave. S., Salem OR 97302*

**From:** [Jane Cummins](#)  
**To:** [citycouncil](#)  
**Subject:** Levy proposals  
**Date:** Sunday, November 24, 2024 7:27:28 AM

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I urge the City Council to support submitting a livability levy to voters next May. I have been overseas for several months, currently in Antarctica, and have sporadically been able to read news. Library services are essential for a livable community. Our public library today is a community center, serving all ages. For many, especially those with lower incomes who cannot afford expenses above rent and food, it provides information and programs. While I would very much like to have a library open 7 days a week, I am fearful that some in our community will not support a levy which closes all gaps in funding. My hope is that a levy which has a good chance of succeeding is put before voters. My further hope is that the decision is a unanimous one for the current council and incoming council. Strong support and leadership from all is necessary, as I suspect there will be efforts to defeat any levy.

Jane Cummins  
Resident of Salem for 60 years

[Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPhone](#)

**From:** [Jane Somerville](#)  
**To:** [CityRecorder](#)  
**Subject:** Public Comment - Council Meeting 11.25.24  
**Date:** Monday, November 25, 2024 10:44:16 AM

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To the Salem City Council,

I write to urge all councilors to vote in favor of putting a 5 year operating levy for the library, parks, and Center 50+ on the ballot. Those services are absolutely vital to creating a welcoming, healthy, and most importantly safe city. With the homelessness and cost of living crisis worsening, Salem is in no position to be cutting services.

I acknowledge that voters reacted badly to the payroll tax, and that some councilors may feel hesitant to put another tax in front of the electorate. However, I believe that many voters, like myself, that voted no to the payroll tax would vote in favor of this levy. The payroll tax was regressive - it would have been disproportionately burdensome on the working poor. This levy is on property, which means that those with higher assessed value will have to pay more, which is much more fair.

Most importantly, the payroll tax was sold to voters as a tax to pay for increased police services. I do not want an increased police presence in Salem. I, and many other voters as the last few months have illustrated, do want to pay for parks and library services.

I would enthusiastically vote yes on this levy. I hope that the council gives the people of Salem the opportunity to have our voices heard on this issue.

Thank you,

Jane Miramontes-Somerville

**From:** [Jim Scheppke](#)  
**To:** [CityRecorder](#)  
**Cc:** [citycouncil](#)  
**Subject:** Public Comment on Agenda Item 5.d.  
**Date:** Saturday, November 23, 2024 12:15:07 PM

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Dear Mayor and City Council:

Thank you for your consideration of a local option levy measure on the May 2025 ballot. I support the staff recommendation to hold a Council work session on January 21st to consider a “scenario” for a local option levy measure. Perhaps more than one scenario should be considered.

I do however have concerns about the staff report you have received, as follows:

1. The “current service” budget for the library in Table 2 of the staff report of \$5,308,800 is low. The adopted budget this year is \$5,583,380. I hope you will ask the staff about this.
2. The “enhanced services” budget of an additional \$1.2 million is certainly not enough to bring back 7-day and evening service at the main library and more days and an evening or two at the West Salem Branch. We have been estimating that would take about a \$10 million budget. The City Librarian said as much in a meeting we had with the City Manager awhile back. I hope you will ask the staff what “enhanced services” means.
3. Looking at Table 2, it appears the majority of the levy might go to parks instead of to the library which has the more serious underfunding problem. This might be hard for library supporters to get behind.
4. Again looking at Table 2, if the levy were to raise the entire \$15,139,317, that would take care of 86% of the entire projected General Fund shortfall of \$17.7 million. This puts these livability services at risk if the levy fails, and holds harmless, to a large extent, “public safety” and other city departments. Was this the staff’s intention?
5. The DHM survey of likely voters found that 43% would support a livability levy at 75¢ per \$1,000 with 8% undecided. What is the likelihood that we could get to majority support for something like \$1 per \$1,000 to raise the \$15.1 million needed to fund all of library, parks maintenance and recreation and Center 50+? It seems very doubtful.

For your information, if our library were to achieve the so-called “enhanced budget” of \$6,308,800 in the staff report, here is how that would compare to the actual expenditures of three of our peer libraries in FY24:

Beaverton City Library: \$11,571,131

Eugene Public Library: \$14,006,227

Hillsboro Public Library: \$12,321,069

*Source: State Library of Oregon (preliminary)*

In general, I would caution the Council that it would be hard to get library supporters to go to work to pass a levy measure that would only perpetuate substandard library service in Salem for the next five years.

Again, my thanks for your deliberations on this important issue.

Jim Scheppke, Ward 2  
jscheppke@comcast.net

**From:** [Karen Sjogren](#)  
**To:** [CityRecorder](#)  
**Cc:** [citycouncil](#)  
**Subject:** Proposed livability levy for May 2025 ballot  
**Date:** Friday, November 22, 2024 7:49:10 PM

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I'm glad that the city is considering placing a 5 year levy on the May ballot to support the library, parks and senior center. I have commented previously on the absolute necessity of Salem supporting both the main and west Salem branch libraries, with or without a successful levy, and repeat that comment here. Jim Scheppke has emailed us with information on the proposed use of levy money of various degrees and the overall budget. I would simply like to reiterate his concerns, as he knows much more about library operations than I do. (1) The current library budget in Table 2 is too low; it should be 5.7 million rather than 5.3 million. (2) The enhanced services budget of 1.2 million for the library is not enough to bring back 7 day plus evening services at the main library plus more days at the west Salem branch library. The total budget should be 10 million for both libraries. (3) in Table 2, considerably more money goes to parks and recreation than the library system. I think a greater portion should go to the library. I have worked and volunteered for parks and the working conditions, facilities, and equipment have been upgraded considerably since 2005 (when I was a seasonal). That's as it should be, but I can see where maintenance can be economized to get library services up to a respectable level. In the alternative, a larger levy could be proposed to accommodate a larger library budget. (4) Library services should not be put at risk if the levy fails. Fire and police budgets are not inviolate, and have been quite generous in recent years relative to the library. Thank you for considering my input.



**From:** [Linda Miller](#)  
**To:** [citycouncil](#)  
**Subject:** Levy you are considering for the May 2025 ballot  
**Date:** Sunday, November 24, 2024 1:16:00 PM

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As much as I value our library and parks, I will not support such a levy. The council, with your contacts, should be able to get sponsors to help cover activities at the library and new acquisitions. You could raise fees for library cards for those not within the city limits. You also could promote businesses and organizations adopting local parks and park activities. I am sure you all are looking forward to the Marionberry baseball team made up of college baseball players coming to Bush Park after the college baseball season ends.

I would support a public safety levy. You all realized how understaffed our police department is and the fact that they have to triage calls. I read the summary from the police department posts about calls they respond to. I also follow a page that talks about calls the police are responding in real time. It should also include reinstatement of the Behavioral Health unit and the expansion of the SOS team. It should be specific in ways to deal with the out of control unsheltered situation. I have not been out on Lancaster, but I understand that situation is out of control. There are rumors other states are busing homeless to Salem - true or false. Tax paying citizens are tired of the homeless getting away with things tax paying citizens cannot get away with. I realize there are mental health issues and addiction issues. What percentage of the unsheltered are dealing with those issues??? Time for some tough love. Money to keep people in their current houses. Money for more housing and shelters. You would need to be specific about how the money would be spent.

Respectfully,  
Linda Miller  
Ward 7  
4520 Matthews Loop S

**From:** [Norm Baxter](#)  
**To:** [CityRecorder](#)  
**Subject:** Agenda Item 5.d.  
**Date:** Friday, November 22, 2024 8:39:10 AM

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Attention: Salem City Council

Taxpayers must be allowed to vote on the proposed five year levy.

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[Norm Baxter](#)

**From:** [Peggy L.Shippen](#)  
**To:** [CityRecorder](#)  
**Cc:** [Claudia Carmichael](#)  
**Subject:** Letter for Library Levy in May  
**Date:** Monday, November 25, 2024 11:24:13 AM

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Salem City Council, Councilwoman Micki Varney and Councilwoman Vanessa Nordyke,

On behalf of the 78-member AAUW Salem Branch, I am writing to express our strong support to put a five-year operating levy to fund the public library, parks and Center 50+ to voters on the ballot in May 2025. For over 100 years, AAUW Salem Branch has supported educational opportunities for women and girls and their families in our community. This includes having access to our public libraries.

We URGE you to vote to put a five-year operating levy to fund our libraries up for a vote of the people in the May election.

Sincerely,  
Peggy Shippen, Public Policy Chair  
AAUW Salem Branch

cc: Claudia Carmichael

**From:** [Rachael Atchison](#)  
**To:** [CityRecorder](#)  
**Subject:** Public Comment, Item 5.d  
**Date:** Sunday, November 24, 2024 11:16:42 AM

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I am writing because I have concerns about the proposed livability tax. Seeing as how a public safety levy polled slightly higher, it would make sense to just decide to have a livable city, fully fund that, and put a safety levy on the ballot instead. I think a failure of a library/parks levy would be seen as a public mandate to close them whereas were a public safety levy to fail I doubt the same would be true. I encourage the council and budget committee to be both creative and courageous and make decisions that will keep Salem a place where people want to live.

Thank you for your consideration,

Rachael Atchison  
Ward 3

**From:** [Ray Quisenberry](#)  
**To:** [CityRecorder](#)  
**Subject:** Comments on agenda item 5.d  
**Date:** Monday, November 25, 2024 11:55:58 AM

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Mayor Hoy and Council

As you direct the staff to prepare a levy proposal for the May '25 election, please consider an amount to not only maintain the current service levels at the library, but also to enhance the hours of operation at the main location and West Salem branch. I know putting this before the public for a vote can be a heavy lift, so we might as well take full advantage of the efforts that will be needed. I don't know what polling shows about community support, but I do know that there is a very engaged and vocal group of supporters to help in the efforts. As a former member of the Revenue Task Force, I want to thank the council for moving forward on this task force recommendation, and I'll do what I can to build support.

I also want to mention that another of the recommendations from the task force is to flesh out a progressive income tax for the city of Salem, to be placed before the voters before the 5 year library levy expires. As you heard when the Revenue Task Force presented to the council, the progressive income tax needs to be sufficient enough to allow the city to let this levy expire at the end of 5 years, and also large enough to remove non progressive fees such as the Operation and Streetlight fees. We could lower taxes for people currently struggling, and add a small percentage tax on people that have done well. A much more equitable system than we currently have.

I know this is beyond the scope of tonight's meeting, but it is something I'd like the city to come back to once we deal with the immediate shortfall.

Thank you

Ray Quisenberry  
Ward 1

Sent from my iPad

**From:** [Stephania Fregosi](#)  
**To:** [citycouncil](#)  
**Subject:** Public Comment on Item 5.d.  
**Date:** Saturday, November 23, 2024 9:36:24 PM

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To the City Council,

I appreciate that the City staff is proposing to move ahead to plan for a local option levy on the May 2025 ballot; however I'm concerned that the proposed levy will not be large enough to bring about the full staffing levels required for the library, parks and center 50+ as shown in the staffing report.

I hope the City will propose a levy that will enable us to fund our libraries at the level our children need to be literate and to provide space for our citizens to have free access to information.

Stephania Fregosi  
Salem, OR 97301

**From:** [Shirley Blush Siefarth](#)  
**To:** [CityRecorder](#)  
**Subject:** Salem Public Library possible closing  
**Date:** Monday, November 25, 2024 12:15:20 PM

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I've lived in Salem since 1950. I didn't learn to read until I was in the sixth grade because we moved often until that year.

I'm 87 years old. I own my home; I pay over \$3700 in property taxes. I live in West Salem and come to town to grocery shop once a week.

I always stop at the library located on Liberty. I use the women's restroom and find two or three books that are large print. The young people who attend the desks are so helpful. If you close the libraries, Salem will be one more step at being a second class city.

Without the Library, my mind will stagnate. The City Library is everything for me. There always are mothers with children there. They learn their love of books and respect at the library. Please make your cuts somewhere else.

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Shirley Siefarth  
3353 Sandalwood Ln NW  
Salem OR 97304

**From:** [budgetoffice](#)  
**To:** [CityRecorder](#)  
**Subject:** FW: TAXES  
**Date:** Monday, November 25, 2024 7:02:41 AM

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**From:** Sally White <sallysworms@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, November 24, 2024 1:18 PM  
**To:** budgetoffice <Budgetoffice@cityofsalem.net>  
**Subject:** TAXES

Hello all,

It seems like we are once again trying to figure out how to pay for the City's expenses by raising or applying taxes. Presently, one of the sneaky ways is to just raise the City's Utility rates as it seems that doesn't take a vote of the people, just the Council??? Below are some alternative ways to possibly raise the monies needed in a different way.

Instead of taxing every homeowner, why not tax those developers that are insistent on building out of the city's present boundaries when there are plenty of empty buildings sitting vacant and there are lots of people who are wanting to live within walking distance from shops, nature walks, etc?

If not that approach, raise property taxes on only those making above whatever the present "affordable" income is. Notice that "affordable" is in quotes and that is for a reason because there are many who do not come close to how that is calculated. So exactly how is that calculated? Are you dealing with mean, median or mode? That makes a huge difference in the outcome of the calculation.

And, above all, the transparency promised by incoming mayor, Julie Hoy, is a must and one of the reasons so many revenue creating ideas get shot down by the voters. Transparency must include (and be easy for access) who is being paid, how the money is spent, why that is necessary - you know, we want to see the invoice. And we want to find it easily....

Hopefully,  
**Sally A White**



**From:** [Valorie Freeman](#)  
**To:** [CityRecorder](#)  
**Subject:** Levy for Library/Parks/50+  
**Date:** Monday, November 25, 2024 8:54:20 AM

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Thank you for approaching the proposal for a levy to support livability infrastructure in our City budget.

**I support the concept and budgetary stability** for each of these services with the following recommendations:

- Do not begin the discussion at the "current service level". These levels are lower than the expectation of citizens for continuation of services.
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- Specific to the library, I am certain that the current service level does not provide what the community deserves and expects. I believe this likely true of the Parks and 50+ services as well. Return the library to 7-day/week and evening service.
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- Reconsider the allocations in the original staff report to provide program equity - Parks are forecast to take nearly 50% of the levy does not support the Library adequately.

Thank you for your service and continued commitment to provision of critical City infrastructure for a vibrant Salem.

Valorie Freeman  
295 Church St. SE #301  
Salem, OR 97301  
503-510-6463