

**From:** [Kris Bifulco](#)  
**To:** [CityRecorder](#)  
**Subject:** Comment for Item 5a & Other  
**Date:** Monday, March 25, 2024 2:33:49 PM

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Good evening,

I'm writing as a resident of Ward 1 to voice some concerns about the budget & revenue task force. First, I want to say that I do not envy the position our councilors are in- the COVID pandemic and influx of funds to help people meet basic needs has shown us some of what it takes to ensure we all survive and thrive. To lose emergency funding and have to roll back important and critical services hurts. I hate that you (and our city as a result) are in that position.

I want to voice that my priority for funding includes the library and does not include any increase budget for policing. Of the multiple budget cut options provided at the last meeting, Option 3 leaves me despairing. It is simply unacceptable. I grew up as a library kid and have seen countless of people helped. The library is a necessary community hub- it provides a safe place for people of all ages to go, connects us as a community, helps keep people employed, increases knowledge and empathy, shares culture and diversity, and so much more. We cannot afford to shut down the library.

I understand that some of you prioritize public safety, which you define as policing. Public safety, to me, includes safe and welcoming public spaces like the library, where many of us go to learn, get and share resources, build community, and better ourselves and each other. Without a space like the library, we are in deep trouble.

I also want to voice concern over adding to the policing budget when there are already so many vacancies. Back when the payroll tax was in the news, the Salem Reporter rightfully identified that our police budget has already been outgrown in proportion to the city growth: "Between 2012 and 2022, the population of Salem increased by 14%, while the department's general fund costs increased by 53%, from \$32.96 million to \$50.48 million. In 2022, the department employed 249 people." (Article: [https://www.salemreporter.com/2023/05/10/salem-police-department-seeks-15-new-officers-to-focus-on-property-crime-community-patrols/?utm\\_source=substack&utm\\_medium=email](https://www.salemreporter.com/2023/05/10/salem-police-department-seeks-15-new-officers-to-focus-on-property-crime-community-patrols/?utm_source=substack&utm_medium=email) ). This trend is not sustainable for our city and should be taken into account when determining the right level of funding.

If we must add funds toward policing/safety, we must ensure that the police oversight board is funded and active. While it exists, it is a woefully under-utilized resource. How does that make sense when SPD kills at a rate higher than any other police force in the state? In a report from the Statesman Journal one year from yesterday, we learned that "That equates to a rate of 5.66 shootings per 100,000 residents over a period of 10 years. In comparison, Eugene Police during that same time period had a rate of 2.86.

Portland, Oregon's largest city, which has seen a spike in violent crime in recent years, had fewer police shootings in proportion to its population. Its rate over the past 10 years was 4.29 per 100,000 residents." (<https://www.statesmanjournal.com/story/news/crime/2023/03/24/salem-oregon-police-officer-shooting-deaths-violent-crime-data-statistics/69842370007/>) That problem is not solved with more positions or funding. We need to get to the root of this before adding to an inflated budget.

I hope you listen to the many of us who are concerned about this issue. I appreciate you taking the time to hear comments.

Sincerely,  
Kris Bifulco