

From: [Ann Scheppke](#)
To: [citycouncil](#); [CityRecorder](#)
Subject: Testimony on Agenda Item 5b.
Date: Sunday, February 21, 2021 7:45:04 PM

In September 2018, I retired after 30 years of service at Salem Public Library. As an Adult Services Librarian, my job duties were varied, but one of my most fulfilling and simultaneously most frustrating challenges was planning and implementing programs for adults.

Why fulfilling? Salem Public Library is fortunate to have spaces for programs that are the envy of many libraries. The meeting rooms and Loucks Auditorium provide venues for everything from cooking demonstrations, writing workshops, and book groups, to concerts, movies, and lectures. In addition to space, Library programming benefits from the financial support of the Salem Public Library Foundation and funds administered through the Library Advisory Board.

Why frustrating? Parking. Many patrons expressed interest in attending programs but told staff they were unable or unwilling to participate because of the cost of parking. Or they would show up for a program, then leave before it was over to feed the meter. Or gleefully tell us how they had found a distant "secret spot" where parking was unmetered, only to endure a slog through weather and over busy intersections, often laden with library materials, to attend an event.

Saturday afternoon programs were especially problematic. For example, Loucks Auditorium is the perfect venue for film screenings, but most movies clock in at two hours or more. Collaborations with the Oregon Arts Council for their annual day-long [Poetry Out Loud](#) competition and with the Salem Poetry Project for their [Salem Poetry Festival](#) were successful, but also fraught with worries about parking; and even a [Hamilton themed event](#) was enthusiastically anticipated, immensely enjoyed, but under-attended.

Libraries strive to provide opportunities for people to gather to exchange ideas, learn new things, and to simply be in the company of fellow humans. It serves as a "[third place](#)", that non-home, non-work locale where one can safely pursue interests and fulfill needs. The seismic retrofit project gives the City an opportunity to examine how the Library's goals jibe with parking needs. On the one hand, some limits are necessary, otherwise downtown and government employees might come to regard the Library structure as their own "secret spot". On the other, it's important that the Library be used for its best purpose. What's the point of building anything while simultaneously erecting barriers to its use?

I would enthusiastically support providing 90 minutes of free parking for Library patrons 8am-6pm Monday-Friday, with free parking on **evenings, Saturdays, and Sundays**. This would make enforcement of parking structure meters and nearby street meters consistent, and give staff the capacity to plan programs without time constraints. If free parking cannot be extended to Saturdays, I recommend the 3-hour option endorsed by the Library Advisory Board and the Library Seismic Retrofit

Project Committee.

Thank you for your consideration.

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