

Prepared for Mayor and Councilors. Please contact Steve Powers, City Manager, for additional information.

At Your Service

From a grateful organization,

I've been meaning to write to you to express our appreciation to you and all City of Salem officials for your response to our recent issues with the homeless population near The Salvation Army Kroc Center. Your communication and the actions of the city, including the Salem Police Department, were excellent and compassionate. We understand that this is a complicated and growing issue in our community with no easy solutions. We appreciate the work you are all doing in this regard.

By the way, we have had no thefts, vehicle damage, trespassing, nor complaints from Kroc Center members, staff and parents of our preschoolers since December 9 when those camping around the Kroc Center were moved along by the police department. So, once again, thank you!

Of course, The Salvation Army continues to view the homeless issue with concern. We continue to operate our Lighthouse Shelter on Front Street, providing physical, emotional and spiritual assistance for those attempting to achieve self-sufficiency. We have many success stories. In addition, we continue to provide daily meals to all micro-shelters throughout Salem through an agreement with Church at the Park. Our role will continue to grow as the numbers increase.

And,

A big thank you to Officer Whitaker and the nice lady on the non-emergency dispatch line. He handled our welfare check call about a special needs individual with professionalism and compassion. It's nice to know that police are being trained to deal with people with intellectual disabilities. Thank you.

One more,

I am writing to share with you the outstanding service your public works department provides.

My water usage when my irrigation system is not on is never more than 1 unit. I became suspicious when the past two bills have been for 2 units. I called the Public Works department after work hours late Friday; left a message regarding the issue; and today Kevin & Darrell of the Public Works department diagnosed a leak in the meter shut and quickly repaired the leak.

By the time that I called utility billing to request an adjustment of my past bills, they were already aware of the repair and had put in an order for adjustment.

Sadly, we live in an era when public service is not always appreciated. My experience confirms that we have very good public service, and, for that, I am very grateful.

Finally, I have a strong belief that when someone provides good service, they should be recognized. If you could share this with Kevin & Darrell's supervisor, I would appreciate it.

Bond

Current efforts include council steering committee meetings, a series of Neighborhood Association briefings and feedback from residents on specific priorities, stakeholder interviews, and a poll. The work will help shape the bond measure and message for the best possible outcome. The bond measure will take shape over the next month or two.

Building Activity

The number of building permits issued from July 2021 through December 2021 was 846, the lowest number for the same six-month period since 2014.

Casino

From U.S. Senator Merkley, the federal Bureau of Indian Affairs has extended the public comment period for the Confederated Tribe of Siletz Indians Salem Casino environmental assessment from February 7 to April 8, 2022.

City Manager

Heather Ganz plans on having the city manager recruitment profile ready for City Council consideration for the February 14 meeting.

COVID-19

As of February 1, the City has 179 employees out on COVID leave.

We are having some staffing challenges. Municipal Court has adjusted hours from 7am until 5pm. Municipal Court is now open at 7:30am. There is very limited foot traffic from 7-7:30.

COVID is having a large impact on police patrol operations. Due to this we have had to temporarily re-assign the entire Community Action Unit to patrol for the next three weeks.

Homelessness

The Marion County Board of Commissioners has awarded the City \$3 million for the renovation of the navigation center. Open as a temporary warming shelter this season, the Navigation Center should be open on or about September 2022, barring unforeseen supply chain issues.

Camping outreach continues daily. Staff have been impacted by COVID-19. As we move into February, our response to cleaning needs in public spaces may be delayed. If we have staffing needed to support clean-ups, our tentative schedule is:

- February 10: Claggett Creek Natural Area
- February 17: Geer Park
- February 24: Marion Square Park
- March: Cascades Gateway and Wallace Marine Parks

Housing

Work on Yaquina Hall is underway. Salem Housing Authority's \$18,634,000 project will bring another 52 units of affordable housing with on-site services to our region. These units will be available in March 2023.

Library

The City, through the Salem Public Library, has an agreement with the Willamette Heritage Center for WHC to curate the City's collection of local images (old photos, mostly). The Salem Public Library maintains the originals and provides copies (mostly in digital form) to the WHC. In return, the WHC provides an online access point for the public and has the ability to license these images to willing purchasers. We maintain ownership but the licensing allows the WHC to defray maintenance costs over time. Prior to now, these images had been stored on a now-defunct website that we can no longer support (security and technology reasons). This is being funded through the Library Advisory Board's trust and agency account. They have committed \$10,000 to the project. Money will be issued on a reimbursement basis. We think we have a lasting solution that we think can keep these historic resources intact for a very long time.

Natural Environment Stewardship

Salem has been selected as Tree City for 47 continuous years, the longest tenure of any Oregon city. More will be shared with City Council and the community to celebrate the 2022 selection and think about what else the City and community can do this year.

Neighborhoods

The City has applied for a \$5,000 state grant to fund educational products for the Highland Neighborhood relating to the Salem Heritage Neighborhood program. The City has had success with the program from other neighborhoods, so our confidence is high that the application will be successful. This money will be utilized to fund hiring a consultant (professional historian) to develop a historic context and complete work relating to projects such as development of an architectural guidebook, installation of ten sign toppers, installation of two historic wraps, and installation of one historic interpretive panel. The grant does not require a monetary match. Instead, the matching funds are staff time included in the Planning Division budget. The grant's objectives are consistent with the City policy. Educating neighborhoods about their local history and the development of interpretive signage were both identified in the Historic Preservation plan as priorities. The project will be managed by planning staff.

Partnerships

The City is part of the Mid-Willamette Valley Health Equity Coalition. MWVHEC was created for individuals to come together and support our community to reach their highest level of health and wellness. Members of the coalition include Salem Health, PacificSource, Marion County, non-profit service providers, and community subject matter experts.

Police

We are actively investigating and responding to some recent shooting activity in northeast and north central Salem and redirecting some resources into the neighborhoods. Follow-up investigations into these incidents continue and there will be an increased presence of both uniform and non-uniformed patrols in affected areas. Officers will also be conducting a neighborhood canvass to speak with residents.

Projects

Public Works has spread gravel at the Minto Brown Island Park dog park parking lot. Minto-Brown Island Park accessibility improvement are in the Capital Improvement Plan for fiscal year 2024.

The Salem Parks Foundation has graciously stepped up to coordinate a community fundraising effort for the Eco Earth Ball. Staff will be recommending City Council consider a cash match of \$112,000 for the restoration work as part of the budget approval process. The funding will pay for engineering and project management services. In addition, the City will also provide in-kind services for the project for public outreach and project planning.

State

Per the direction of City Council's Legislative Committee, funding requests were submitted to the legislature for renovation of the navigation center, restoration of Peace Plaza, and completion of Yaquina Hall project funding. The City is participating with Representative Hoy on use of State property for shelter or temporary housing and with Senator Patterson on funding to maintain affordable housing that would otherwise move to market-rate housing.

Upcoming Issues

On the February 14 council meeting agenda will be a proposed fee waiver policy. City staff and councilors receive requests for the City to waive fees for facility rental. City staff does not have the authority to waive fees. Waivers have been approved by City Council on an ad hoc basis. Without a policy to guide consideration, the City is at risk of making arbitrary waiver decisions. The decisions could lead to claims of unequal treatment, and the possibility of the City being required to waive fees regardless of the character or nature of an event. The proposed City Council fee waiver policy establishes a process for a fee waiver and guidelines for City Council's consideration.

Thanks for reading,
Steve