

March 7, 2008

City Budget Committee
555 Liberty Street SE
Salem, OR 97304

Re: Walker Pool, Olinger Pool, and West Salem Library

Dear Budget Committee,

West Salem's City Council member, Dan Clem, has urged us to write you in support of our pool and branch library if we are unable to attend the April budget hearings. Please enter this letter into the public record for those hearings.

The West Salem branch library, for which I am a "founder", is a wonderful asset for those of us who live in the apartment/Pioneer Village community grouped around Roth's. Many of these residents are elderly, disabled and/or low income and do not drive. The library is within easy walking distance even for those in their 80's, and is a welcome convenience and amenity. Many apartment dwellers visit the library for a pleasant change of scenery, as well as the obvious purpose of checking out books. Although the library stock is limited, the staff can quickly obtain any book on request which is part of the main library collection. This is a fantastic convenience, as it obviates the need to cross the bridge, deal with Salem downtown traffic, and pay for parking at the library in order to check out a book. I am sure that many of my more limited neighbors, especially the elderly, would not use the library system at all were it not for the West Salem branch. The staff, by the way, is wonderful--always cheerful, always helpful.

With respect to Walker Pool, I am a dedicated lap swimmer and a "regular" (twice a week) user of Olinger Pool. Especially during winter months, lap swimming contributes greatly to my mental as well as physical health, and provides me with an opportunity to socialize as well. Swimming is also my "health insurance"; at \$1.50/swim (over 55) it is far more economical than health insurance (\$900/month, prohibitively expensive).

As a West Salem resident, I switch over to using Walker Pool during the limited season that it is open to the public. I prefer swimming in an outside pool, and for some reason Walker Pool is easier on my skin. Again, I appreciate the convenience

of not having to cross the bridge or driving some distance in order to swim. If Walker were open more months of the year, and available for lap swimming more hours of the day, I would of course use it rather than Olinger Pool.

Walker Pool is of particular importance to West Salem youth, especially those who live in the surrounding moderate-to-low income neighborhood. For these children, a parent is not necessarily available to drive them places; the pool is easily within biking or walking distance. Thus, Walker Pool provides these young people with inexpensive, healthful, and enjoyable recreation during the summer months when they might otherwise have "nothing to do."

In this time of sky-rocketing gas prices, it is important for the City of Salem to adequately fund facilities which can be accessed other than by car. It is also important for the City to fund West Salem facilities which obviate the need to use the bridge to reach duplicative facilities on the other side of the river. The West Salem branch library and Walker Pool are two such facilities, and I urge the Budget Committee to adequately fund them. Apart from the obvious services these facilities provide, they also "pay for themselves" by reducing traffic, improving physical and mental health, and contributing to the development of children and adolescents.

Although this letter is devoted to West Salem facilities, please consider it also as strong support for continued funding of Olinger Pool. This well-run facility contributes greatly to the health and safety of all age segments of the Salem population. It offers swim lessons to children, recreational swims (both very popular), and a site for "pool parties". Olinger Pool offers water exercise classes through Chemeketa, as well as the opportunity to engage in this activity informally. It is still the only pool available for high school use and swim meets. Olinger Pool deserves and needs at least its current level of funding.

Thank you for considering my viewpoint as you prepare the City's budget.

Sincerely,

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