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April 30, 2008  
Agenda item: 5.i.

Mayor Janet Taylor  
Salem Oregon  
[jtaylor@cityofsalem.net](mailto:jtaylor@cityofsalem.net)  
City Manager  
[manager@cityofsalem.net](mailto:manager@cityofsalem.net)  
Salem City Council  
[citycouncil@cityofsalem.net](mailto:citycouncil@cityofsalem.net)

April 23, 2008

Madame Mayor,

I understand that the City of Salem is considering closing Walker and Olinger Pools on September 1<sup>st</sup> of this year. This is appalling news. I would strongly urge you and the City Council to reconsider.

I am a member of the Competitive Aquatics Community here in Salem. I support the Water Polo programs at West Salem, South Salem and Sprague High Schools. I am President of the Sprague Water Polo Club and my wife is one of the coaches. We also spend time sponsoring and coaching the Willamette Valley Water Polo club. Through those organizations we have also worked to bring the Kroc Center to Salem. Finally, I am a board member of the MidValley IPA, a major contributor to the Kroc Center building fund.

The Kroc Center, with it's competitive pool, is a fine addition to our community. I would emphasize, however, that it is an addition to our current meager number of pools and not a replacement. Local community pools are very important to the health of a town. Most cities have pools at their high schools, and additional facilities (often out doors) to meet the needs of their citizens. These pools provide entertainment and act as centers for swim instruction. Families from all economic strata have year round access to the pool without having to pay for membership. Learning to swim is especially important in a state full of rivers and lakes. Swim Centers provide employment opportunities for young people and offer a venue for competition. Pools bring competitors and their families to the city, increasing business revenue. I have spent weekends at high school pools in Cottage Grove, Redmond, Newberg and even Lebanon. We know the restaurants and coffee shops, and where the best motels are located.

The Kroc Center will not be able to meet the needs of the entire City of Salem. Children and families in South Salem and West Salem need neighborhood pools. Imagine how different life would be here in Salem if we had built (and maintained) pools at Sprague, McKay and West Salem High Schools. The Kroc Center is wonderful, but it barely begins to address Salem's aquatics shortcomings. Salem has six high schools. All have swim programs. Those programs struggle to find pool time for training and for swim meets. Olinger pool is extremely important to the success of those programs. When it opens in 2009 the Kroc Center pool will not be big enough to accommodate all of those

teams. Closing Olinger pool this year will effectively cancel the 2008 swim season for our local schools.

Three high schools have water polo teams, and McNary High School would have one if they had a practice facility. West Salem uses Walker pool for training and games. South Salem High School has used the pool at Salem Swim and Tennis but that venue is now closed to them. They were planning on sharing Walker pool with the West Salem team. Closing Walker pool this year will effectively cancel the 2008 season for those two teams.

These are difficult economic times and city budgets are tight. However, I ask that you not close Walker and Olinger pools this year. Closing these two pools would destroy the Salem High School Aquatics teams. In the long term it would have terrible consequences for everyone in Salem.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Peter Bernardo". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "P" and a stylized "B".

Peter Bernardo, M.D.