

City Manager's Update — July 22, 2020

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

At Your Service

COVID Small Business Grant Program provided assistance for businesses with fewer than 40 employees operating within the Salem City limits. \$188,000 was distributed to 61 Salem businesses in amounts up to \$5,000 each. This funding was distributed in early July and follow-up with recipients will take place in early August. Here's what one grantee had to say about what the grant funds mean to her.

-Coffee House Owner

"Thank you so much for awarding my business a grant! I'm so excited and honored that the City of Salem and Willamette Workforce Partnership selected my business to assist! I can't tell you how much this means to me – we were hurt so badly, and business has been very slow since the reopening.

To Urban Development,

Just a note to say thank you for everything you are doing to help those of us who are Salem small business owners as we try to stay afloat in these extremely difficult times. Your emails listing aid opportunities have been a lifeline.

To Chief Moore,

I wanted to be sure you received this message because I think it is important you know. Given the environment right now I think people need to know how amazing Police Officers are out there.

Last Friday one of your officers, Officer Walker, went above and beyond to help. He responded to a call for help from a couple whose dog had been hit by a train, still alive, and suffering. He picked this dog up and took him and the couple to our hospital so we could help end his suffering. I know many people will not immediately understand why his actions were so remarkable.

Officer Walker, simply put, was one of the most compassionate, kind, and remarkable officers I have had the pleasure of meeting. I will not be able to unsee the damage done to that dog or forget how amazing animals actually are. The dog's name was Cooper, and as Dr. Sarah and I are

crying as we are moving him into the hospital, he was trying to make us feel better by licking us and wagging his tail.

I can only imagine that Officer Walker had other calls to be responding to, but he treated not only the grieving couple but Cooper, me and Dr. Sarah with such kindness and true compassion.

I made a post to Facebook about Officer Walkers amazing act of kindness because it is important to me that he knows what a difference he made that day to all involved in that horrible incident. Thank you for all you and your officers do every single day.

COVID-19

Governor Brown has stated her direction to law enforcement and regulatory agencies is to not cite unmasked people. She has requested voluntary compliance with social distancing and mask wearing and education and information rather than enforcement. The City is messaging the importance of wearing masks and social distancing through our website and social media. [Here's the message this City provided regarding this issue.](#)

We are preparing for in-person City Council meetings when it is safe to do so. Council chambers limits our ability to have all councilors present and provide in-person testimony. Our best fit is no more than five members present. We are looking at different spaces that could accommodate larger gatherings.

As of mid-July, there are 1,310 (1,246 residential) active water accounts eligible for shutoff for non-payment, with a current delinquency of \$431,000. Staff are preparing a staff report for an August council meeting.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

The Salem Library will be hosting three community conversations on Zoom "Exploring Together: Race and Racism." The conversations will be from 6:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. on July 28, August 25, and September 22. The community invitation:

Talking about race and racism is often uncomfortable, sometimes confusing, and almost always difficult. Salem Public Library invites you to get uncomfortable with us as we provide an opportunity for community members to do the important work of exploring race and racism in America. In this series of community conversations, staff will act as facilitators and work to establish a respectful and supportive space for everyone to contribute their thoughts, share questions, and explore the ideas from the readings and videos. Each of the three discussions will have its own focus:

- Session 1: Systemic Racism and White Privilege (July 28)
- Session 2: Race and the Criminal Justice System (August 25)
- Session 3: The History of Racism in America and Oregon (September 22)

We ask that you prepare for these discussions by reading or watching at least one entry from the suggested resources list. [The resource list is available here.](#)

Economic Development

Public Works is progressing with the design and construction of a new sewer main that will serve the Department of Corrections (DOC). This work will allow for a portion of the old existing DOC private sewer that runs through Mill Creek Corporate Center to be abandoned. Abandonment will allow for further development at Mill Creek. Staff are coordinating this effort with a prospective developer to avoid conflicts with potential building improvements. Construction is anticipated to begin in August.

Housing and Shelter

On the July 27 council agenda will be a budget transfer to fund vehicle camping sites. The City contracts with the Salem Leadership Foundation to locate, incent, and coordinate sites. Current registered locations are Church at the Park, 2410 Turner Road S; Salem Mission Faith Ministries, 4308 Hillrose Street SE; Capitol Futbol Club, 5201 State Street; Salem Indoor, 4701 Portland Road NE; West Salem United Methodist, 1219 3rd Street NW. If the City and region have adequate vehicle camping capacity, the City would be more able to enforce on no-vehicle camping at Cascades Gateway and Wallace Marine parks. Vehicle camping is conflicting with park users at Cascades Gateway.

Management

The current estimate for fiscal year 2020 General Fund year-end financial performance has been provided to City Council's Finance Committee. The financial results are not final until the end of December when the City's audit is published. The information is preliminary and subject to change. The preliminary estimate is the City will add \$2.5M to the General Fund fund balance as a result of its FY 2020 operating performance. This surplus is primarily due to the City receiving a \$2.3M CARES Act reimbursement for its Covid-19 related activities at the end of the fiscal year, the Operations Fee that began in January of 2020, and the less-than-forecasted wage and benefits due to vacancies going unfilled during the pandemic. This information is only an estimate. If interested in the memo provided by the CFO to council's finance committee, please let Bob Barron or me know.

Parks

The City has received a demand from the Pacific Justice Institute on behalf of Salem Awakening 2020, an organization of local churches. Salem Awakening obtained a permit from the City to host religious services for 78 dates in Riverfront Park. I revoked the permit when the City's host responsibilities under Governor Brown and the Oregon Health Authority's reopening guidelines became clear. The demand is that the permit be restored. The City Attorney is reviewing the demand letter.

The park ranger will be monitoring sound levels at Riverfront Park for compliance with *Salem Revised Code*. Chapter 93 (SRC 93.020 (a) prohibits the use of any sound amplifying device such that the noise is "plainly audible" on "public property . . . 150 feet or more from such device, except as specifically authorized in writing by the city, county, state or federal government that owns or controls such property. "Plainly audible" is defined in SRC 93 to mean that the listener can clearly hear the sound produced by a sound source with unaided hearing faculties.

While we are no longer taking reservations for park spaces, we are allowing drop in use of our park facilities, which could be considered first come first serve. Without a reservation process in place I realize that some conflicts could occur between groups and hopefully everyone will remain civil and courteous as we work through this pandemic together.

Policing

As indicated in my statement to City Council on July 13, there will be reviews of Police Department policies in conjunction with the performance audit. Some policies, such as use of force, are too important to wait for completion of the audit. Other topics are of pressing interest to the community, such as body cameras. The initial reviews are not intended to be comprehensive or exhaustive, but a check-in to ensure the department's policies are up-to-date and to determine if changes should be considered, or reconsidered, based on current circumstances. For example, the City has considered body cameras in the past. The City decided not to proceed because of cost, including the storage and retrieval of the data for public records requests. The current estimated cost to equip 190 officers with cameras is \$225,000 per year plus an additional position for public records requests.

The scope of work for the performance audit is being finalized per the direction provided by City Council. Mayor and councilors will receive a copy.

Stormwater

Salem's 2020 Stormwater Master Plan update is underway. [A Virtual Stormwater Master Plan Open House is online.](#)

The Stormwater Master Plan will guide how the Salem community addresses the many challenges associated with urban stormwater runoff. The online open house will be available until August 7.

Thanks for reading,
Steve