

May 29, 2025

Budget Committee Members,

Hello. My name is Kathy Payne and I'm here to remind you that, as I mentioned in my comments on May 15, Measures 5 and 50 had an enormous negative impact on the City of St. Helens, as did the closures of several major manufacturing businesses in town. Our General Fund has taken a big hit, and as costs continue to rise, it will be harder and harder to balance our budget. We need more action taken through economic development promotion to invite large industrial businesses to locate here in the city limits. We have the land. Our tax rate is extremely low at \$1.90 and it's going to take years to get any big business on the tax rolls with Enterprise Zone incentives, but we have to do it NOW. We can't afford to wait. We must do what it takes to attract those businesses to develop here. We can't sit idly by and expect them to knock on our door. We need to invite them here. I know the City and CET are working on it, but I'd like to see more focus...urgent focus...on St. Helens.

Next, I'd like to talk to you about our employees. We have approximately 75 hard working employees that chose a career in public service. This is not a profession for the faint of heart. Working for the government is challenging in so many ways but can also be very rewarding. In my 40-year career as a public servant, I have had many highs and many lows. Working for the City for the past 24 years, I've seen many of those highs and lows. My greatest joy in these past 24 years is working with some of the best people I've ever known; intelligent, determined, people who care about our town and want the best for it. We don't deserve to have our salaries reduced by requiring furlough days, freezing merit increases, changing our PERS retirement benefit, or any other method by which employees' pay would be negatively impacted. I think foregoing a cost-of-living this coming fiscal year is acceptable but please carefully consider the impacts that inflation and increased tariffs have on our employees and their families, and keep in mind that COLAs should be implemented in future fiscal years. We want to help balance the budget and we are all willing to make cuts in each of our departments and divisions to get to a balanced budget.

Now, as a citizen of St. Helens, I'd like to talk to you about the \$10 Public Safety Fee. I support an increase in this fee because we need the Police in our town. We don't want to end up in a situation where we are competing with other cities for services from the Sheriff's Office or any other department. I support increasing the fee also so that we can build a better facility for our Police Officers and staff. If you haven't visited the current Station, I beg you to take the time to do that. It's disgraceful that we don't have adequate facilities for our first responders. I don't want to see us lose any more officers to other jurisdictions. Let's take care of our officers!!!

I recommend adding an additional \$15 to the \$10 Public Safety Fee making it \$25 for FY25/26 and increasing it incrementally in future fiscal years until we have a 20% reserve in the General Fund. I know this statement won't be widely accepted, but I think that since the taxpayers are only paying \$1.90 per \$1,000 of assessed value, we need to increase the Public Safety Fee to take care of our Police Department since it is one of the biggest budgets in the General Fund and all citizens need their services.

I understand the impact an increase has on some of our most vulnerable citizens who are on fixed incomes and those who live paycheck to paycheck. It's hard but we need to support public safety in our community just as much as we needed the jail levy to pass. We can't go without police because it will lead to more crime and more criminally minded people moving here. I don't want that, and I don't think our citizens want that either.

I would like to recommend that the City start sending funds to Community Action Team to help keep the public assistance for City utilities program for low-income households operating for citizens inside the city limits of St. Helens and implement something like the CRPUD's GLOW program to allow citizens to donate to the assistance fund.

Please do not put the responsibility for balancing the budget on the employees! And please consider the need to balance the budget with the safety and well-being of our employees and citizens of St. Helens.

I appreciate you taking the time to listen to my thoughts on our budget situation.

Kathy Payne

May 23, 2025

Regarding the proposal to add a minimum of \$42.00 per month to the city services/ water bill.

Attn: Mayor Jennifer Massey

Chair Lew Mason

~~Council President Jessica Chilton~~

City Council Members:

Councilor Mark Gundersen

Councilor Brandon Sundeen

Committee Member Ivan Salas

Council President Jessica Chilton

Vice Chair Steve Toschi

Councilor Russel Hubbard

Committee Member Jennifer Gilbert

Staff:

Gloria Butsch, Finance Director - Budget Officer

John Walsh, City Administrator

Jamie Edwards, Accountant III- Budget Committee Secretary

Jennifer Johnson, Accountant III

Ashley Wigod, City Attorney

The city should not be balancing its budget on the backs of the city residents' water bill! This is a TAX on which we are not given a vote. And it continues to set a dangerous precedent, as has been shown only a year or so ago, with a \$10 increase in 'fees' on our water bill, that the city continues to hold our water bills hostage to their attempts to balance its budget. *If we cannot pay, the city can shut off our water.* What part of extortion does this not make? Basic and affordable water is something we should all have access. And our water should not be held hostage.

Adding \$500 - \$600 a year so that we can have access to city water is insane. Many of us cannot afford this. As the train wreck of the federal government continues to cut or massively reduce services to Americans including SNAP, food bank deliveries; millions about to lose Medicaid coverage, who knows what impacts on Medicare and Social Security, the intentional stock market instability, tariffs increasing costs of basic items; these are and will seriously impact the residents of St Helens. We are not a wealthy city. At least most of us are not. Trying to live on social security, maybe a little extra from a pension or investments, or what's left of them, is challenging enough when our health, car and home insurances and property taxes continue to increase every year, and food and basic necessities only climb higher.

I am 68, retired on a modest, at best, income of social security, a small pension I inherited from my Mom, and tanking investments. I do not purchase alcohol, tobacco, junk or convenience food, or soft drinks. I don't get tattoos or do drugs. I buy my clothes used from Top Notch. I grow a large amount of my own vegetables and fruit, trade with neighbors and friends, and donate a portion of what I grow to the Food Bank. I do a lot of canning, but need assistance via the Food Bank in the winter months and until my summer harvest comes in.

I have never carried a credit card balance: if I can't afford it, I don't purchase it. My house and 17 year old Honda are paid off. I have no debt. I don't take vacations, go to movies or concerts. I garden, with plants donated and traded with my gardener friends. I have rain barrels and even haul my toilet water from them every day to save a few dollars a month.

Yet I struggle when the inevitable unexpected bills come up: the last several years these have included thousands in unexpected vet and dental bills, car repairs, hot water tank and water pipes under the house replaced, etc. The city adds another \$500 - \$600 a year to a bill I will HAVE to pay if I want some basic water to drink and shower with..... where is that supposed to come from?

The Budget Committee is appointed by the City Council and serves in an advisory capacity. So ultimately the 'BUCK' stops with the City Council and the Mayor. But all of you are responsible. If you can spend millions to make the water front pretty but can't afford to budget for enough police so that we had to have a month of NO evening/overnight coverage, or have to hold the resident's hostage to be able to access city water, then you are NOT doing your job.

We should all have access to city water. Our water bill should NOT be held hostage to attempts to balance the budget. Please be considerate and respectful of the residents of St Helens. That is all of your jobs.

Thank you for your consideration.

Catherine Ross

114 May Ave, St Helens, Oregon 97051

Home owner and resident since 2015

From: [Sarah Rychart](#)
To: [Jamie Edwards](#)
Subject: [External] Regarding the budget & possible cuts to the library
Date: Thursday, May 15, 2025 7:29:27 PM

Budget Committee members

I want to express how much the library and its services mean to me. It's not just a place where you can check out materials such as books and movies, it's also a place that offers community. My children and I have greatly benefited from the programs and classes at the library- such as the Summer Reading program, the library book club and Adults and Crafts, to name a few. Since I am currently a stay at home parent, the classes and activities the library provides allows me the opportunity to interact and connect with other members of this community, something that would be difficult to do if I had to come up those activities on my own.

The library is an important Third Space, where families with young children can attend weekly Story times, people can access the internet if they don't have internet access in their homes and use the Makerspace to work on projects involving sewing machines, 3D printers and Cricuts, for example. People of all ages benefit from access to the library, whether it's young children, teenagers, stay at home parents, people who work outside their homes and retired people. The library also serves as a cooling center on those hottest of days during the summer for many vulnerable people who don't have access to air conditioning, proper ventilation or fans so they can stay safe and not succumb to heat stroke. Our community benefits from having a fully functional library with services and activities that the public wants and a robust library staff that can help patrons find the materials, resources and information that they need.

Sincerely,

Sarah Rychart
St Helens resident of 12 years

From: [Breezy Smith](#)
To: [Jamie Edwards](#)
Cc: [Shanna Duggan](#)
Subject: [External] S.H.A.R.P. After-school Program Funding
Date: Wednesday, May 28, 2025 1:11:38 PM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)
Importance: High

Good afternoon,

I hope this email finds you well. I am reaching out on behalf of myself and my children in support of the SHARP after-school care program. My son has attended this after-school program for the last four years, and my daughter is finishing her first year in the program. SHARP has been a consistent source of care and support for my family over the years. I trust that my children are not only in a clean and safe environment, but they are also well taken care of. As a parent, I have found there is nothing comparable in St Helens for providing these care needs. Not to mention, the staff are invested in my children by providing them with one-on-one support, fun, and educational activities daily! If there is anything I can do to show my support for maintaining funds for this program, please feel free to reach out to me directly at 503.501.0925.

Thank you,

Breezy Smith

971.412.8549

Breezy@telluric-ent.us

www.telluric-ent.us



From: [Jillian Sederburg](#)
To: [Jamie Edwards](#)
Subject: [External] SHARP program
Date: Tuesday, May 27, 2025 1:36:58 PM
Attachments: [SHARP letter.pdf](#)

Good afternoon

I hope this message finds you well. I am writing to share my strong support for the SHARP Afterschool Program and to express how much it has meant to both my child and our family.

As the future of the program is being considered, I wanted to take a moment to personally highlight the positive impact it has had on my kindergartner's growth, learning, and sense of belonging. I've attached a letter that outlines our experience in more detail and why we believe SHARP is such a valuable part of the community.

I truly hope you will consider the voices of families like ours when making any decisions about the program's future. Eliminating SHARP would not only affect the dedicated staff and working families who rely on it, but would also be a significant loss for the children who thrive in its safe, enriching environment.

Thank you for your time, consideration, and all the work you do to support our children.

Warm regards,

Jillian Sederburg



Jillian Sederburg
484 S 11th St.
Saint Helens, OR 97051
971-203-6352
jillian.ps06@gmail.com

May 27, 2025

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to express my heartfelt appreciation for the SHARP Afterschool Program and the incredibly positive impact it has had on both my kindergartner and our family.

From the very beginning, the program has provided a safe, nurturing environment where my daughter feels welcomed, supported, and engaged. As working parents, it brings us tremendous peace of mind knowing she is in a trusted and enriching space while we complete our workdays. The dedication and compassion of the staff are truly unmatched.

Our daughter has flourished socially and academically through the variety of learning opportunities, creative activities, and meaningful friendships she has developed. The presence of engaging guest speakers and enriching experiences has sparked her curiosity and deepened her love of learning in ways we could not have imagined.

It's clear to us that SHARP is more than just an afterschool program, it's a vital part of our community. The potential loss of this program would be deeply felt. It would not only negatively affect the families who rely on it and the devoted staff who make it possible, but most importantly, it would impact the children who benefit from the structure, safety, and inspiration it provides every day.

We are sincerely grateful for everything SHARP has offered, and we hope this essential program continues to serve our community for years to come.

With heartfelt thanks,

Jillian Sederburg

To the City of St. Helens Budget Committee:

I respectfully request that the city of St. Helens fully fund and staff the St. Helens Public Library for the next fiscal budget.

The library provides essential services and resources for the community in which we live.

- Makerspace providing opportunities for acquiring employment skills and education
- Access to valuable information and educational materials and programs
- Meeting space for vulnerable community members, tutoring, CCMH, WorkSource, mentoring and teen meetings.
- A meeting space and auditorium for organizations and businesses, that also provides library income.
- Cooling/warming center for vulnerable population

It will be difficult to retain staff if there is a reduction in pay and employee benefits. The cost of hiring and training new employees and the loss of a cohesive work environment would be detrimental for operations.

I personally do not live in St. Helens, but I purchase a St. Helens Public Library card because it is important to me.

Thank you, Teresa Knight
Coordinator for Art Happens @ the Library
Member of the Columbia Arts Guild
1700 1st Street, Columbia City, Oregon 97018

From: [Gloria Butsch](#)
To: [Jamie Edwards](#)
Subject: FW: [External] Library concerns
Date: Thursday, May 15, 2025 5:16:40 PM

Gloria
Gloria Butsch, CPFO
Finance Director
City of St Helens
503-366-8227

“Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much” – Helen Keller

-----Original Message-----

From: Katie Marsh <katie.luttrell@me.com>
Sent: Thursday, May 15, 2025 5:15 PM
To: John Walsh <jwalsh@sthelensoregon.gov>; Gloria Butsch <gbutsch@sthelensoregon.gov>
Subject: [External] Library concerns

To whom it may concern,

I am reaching out about the possible budget cuts to the library. I have been going to the St Helen's library off and on , since I was a child, as of last year, my children and I go to check out books weekly. It's something we look forward to as a family and since we have been going, my son who is 6 reads 54 words per min and my daughter who is 8 now reads 228 words per min. We enjoy picking out books, utilizing the sensory activities in the children's space and then the occasional Lego nights. These are just a few things that our family participates with among the MANY other benefits the library has to offer. Cutting the budget to the library would be a huge detriment to our community. The library is a safe place to many and without the plethora of books for us to choose from, we would not be able to afford to buy the amount of books we check out which would be a hindrance to my children's and many others, growth.

Please reconsider cutting the library's budget as this is one of the last free, safe places for people of all walks to learn, to grow and to have a sense of community, especially with the current state of the world, this should be the last thing we consider skimping on.

Warmly,
Katie Marsh
Two Flowers Farm LLC

5/27/25

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing as a single parent to share how deeply the SHARP Afterschool Program has impacted my life and the well-being of my child. In my situation, where I am the sole provider and also caring for an ailing mother, SHARP has been nothing short of a lifeline.

Raising a young child while balancing work and caregiving responsibilities is incredibly difficult, especially without a support system. Knowing that my child has a safe, structured, and supportive place to go after school has lifted a tremendous burden from my shoulders. SHARP allows me to meet the demands of my job and care for my mother, all while feeling confident that my child is learning, socializing, and growing in a positive environment.

My child has truly thrived through this program. The learning opportunities, engaging guest speakers, and friendships formed have sparked a joy and curiosity that I might not have been able to provide on my own under these circumstances. The kindness and dedication of the staff have made my child feel seen, safe, and valued.

The potential loss of the SHARP Program would be devastating—not only for my family, but for countless others who rely on it. It would affect the children who benefit from its care, the working parents who depend on its support, and the committed staff who give so much of themselves to our community.

Please consider the real and lasting impact SHARP has on families like mine. It is more than an afterschool program—it is a vital source of stability, learning, and hope.

With deepest gratitude,

Lindsay Burke

Sped Teacher

SHMS

May 23, 2025

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Thank you for your consideration.

Catherine Ross

114 May Ave, St Helens, Oregon 97051

Home owner and resident since 2015

