

From: [Ellen Jacobson](#)
To: [Jamie Edwards](#)
Cc: [Suzanne Bishop](#)
Subject: [External] Budget Committee - Public Comment in Support of the Library
Date: Wednesday, May 6, 2026 11:56:38 AM

Budget Committee Meeting - May 6, 2026

Public Comment

I am writing to you regarding the proposed cuts to staff and service reductions to the St. Helens Public Library.

As a St Helens Library Board and library volunteer, I've seen firsthand the staff's professionalism and dedication to serving our community and how the services the library provides enhances our community's livability, supports entrepreneurs and small businesses, provides safe development and socialization opportunities for children and teens, supports individual development, and fosters connections across our community, among other things.

I'm concerned people do not understand the considerable value the library provides to the community and the significant return on investment we get from their services. Eliminating library staff and / or reducing their hours through furloughs will have a huge detrimental impact on our city. We will see programs eliminated, hinder our ability to provide a cooling center, reduce auditorium and meeting room availability (and associated rental revenue), and there will be fewer items available for patrons to check out.

On a related note, people have suggested that the library just needs more volunteers or even that it can be run solely on a volunteer basis. As dedicated as volunteers are, their service can't be expected to be consistent. It's not their job, and life gets in the way at times.

Additionally, if the library were to be operated solely by volunteers, we would no longer be considered a public library by Oregon statute and, therefore, would not have access to funding including state-funded databases, our summer reading program, teen internships, and the extensive support and expertise of the State Library of Oregon staff.

There's a reason why communities like ours have professional library staff – the specialized training and knowledge they bring to bear is invaluable.

I urge you to take into consideration the important and critical role the library and its staff play in our community as you deliberate budget cuts.

I do appreciate the difficult and challenging decisions the Budget Committee and City Council must make to address the budgetary shortfall. Thank you for your service to the community and the hard work you do on behalf of all of us.

Kind regards,

Ellen Jacobson

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Ellen Jacobson

From: [Shannon Kishpaugh](#)
To: [Jamie Edwards](#)
Subject: [External] Library cuts
Date: Wednesday, May 6, 2026 9:37:57 PM

Hello,

I am a 14 year resident of Deer Island. I am distressed to hear of the further cuts planned for the St Helens Library. Since I do not live in St Helens, I happily pay to use the library each year. Although I am an avid reader, the library has meant so much more than books. When my children were young, we attended story time and participated in the summer reading program each year. My kids looked forward to our weekly trips to the library, especially during the summer, when in addition to choosing new books, there were engaging weekly activities for them to participate in. As a transplant to the county with few personal connections, the library also provided an opportunity for my children to interact with their peers.

As they grew older, their needs changed and their library use looked different. It became a place to meet fellow students to work on school projects. For my oldest child, it was a safe place to do homework independently while waiting for her sibling to finish sports practice so she could drive them home. I also used the library for these same purposes when I went back to college 8 years ago.

I know this is barely scratching the surface of all that the library provides. Not to mention the tremendous staff facilitating it all.

Other families should have the opportunity to use the library and its programs like my family has.

Sincerely,
Shannon Kishpaugh

Comments regarding the proposed Library budget.

Submitted by Lynne Pettit, Library Board, St. Helens Public Library

May 7, 2026

Dear members of the Budget Committee,

Under the St Helens proposed budget our library services would be drastically cut, with loss of 3 out of 7 staff that worked with over 38,000 visitors last year, and the numbers are growing. We are fortunate here in St Helens to have a Library that offers so much to our community. It serves as the center for many activities that enrich the lives of adults and children and fosters a healthy intellectual and cultural life. It is the “living room of our community”.

To start, I will mention Makerspace first, as it’s a place for kids, teens, and adults to conduct hands-on projects using problem solving, creativity and at the library’s initiative, to bring science, technology, engineering, art, and math (STEAM) to the community. The Lab contains a 3-D printer, laser cutter, computers, tablets, and other tools, for all ages.

Additionally, other projects, but not all, are the Summer Library Challenge (450+ last year) for Children and Adults, Winter Reading, Toddler/Preschool Storytime, and “Library of Things” where you can learn how to make pasta from a machine, learn about rain clouds, learn navigation constellations through a telescope, play with math and coding, or check out wi-fi hotspots.

The library provides many learning opportunities for families in our area that would otherwise be unaffordable. The library provides the internet for students and adults, and a safe place to study. There has been an increased use by small business owners, also for patrons navigating court documents, city transactions, health care paperwork, school support (middle school through Grad school) and more. Other resources include genealogy research, preschool resources, online media resources, and access to libraries throughout the state, and much more.

Please let our St. Helens City Council know that the proposed cuts to the library would drastically impact the many services the library provides that enrich our community.

Please protect this essential service and the resources that reflect the community in which we live. A safe place and welcoming to all.

Thank you for considering my comments.