

Salem Human Rights Commission statement concerning the potential lease of property owned by the Salem Alliance Church for the temporary relocation of the Salem Public Library.

The Salem Human Rights Commission (Commission) is deeply concerned about the proposed lease of the property owned by the Salem Alliance Church for the temporary location of the Salem Public Library. The Commission values having a library that they can reasonably expect all persons will access, to be consistent with the purpose and intent of the City's Human Rights Code. The Commission believes that some members of the community, including some in LGBTQ communities, will not be comfortable accessing the space.

The purpose of the Commission is to promote harmonious relations within the city, examine sources of tension, practices of discrimination and act of prejudice in the city, and make recommendations concerning solutions to specific problems of prejudice or discrimination. The Commission will continue to be available for reports of discrimination in the community.

The Commission fully understands and supports freedom of religion and expression for all people, including faith based organizations. One of the Commission's roles is to actively assist persons who experience discrimination based upon religion.

This commitment to freedom of religion, however, does not allow for the Commission to be in support of this business transaction. It is offensive to some members of the Salem community for the City to enter into a contract with, and pay money to, an entity that may be experienced as unwelcoming to members of the LGBTQ community.

The Commission strongly supports and appreciates the mission and programming of the Salem Public Library, The Library plays a critical role in providing a welcoming and supportive environment for all members of the community, particularly members of the community that are vulnerable, our youth, and those of limited means. Locating the Library at the proposed site will result in a Library that some members of the community, not only the LGBTQ, will not be willing to visit, and will negatively impact the Library's mission.

The Commission has been informed that this location is the only adequate property available for the Library relocation, and that if the City does not use this space, only the west Salem library branch will be open during the renovation.

The Commission respectfully requests that the City review the available properties for other potential options, and select another location, even if that location is not as ideal in cost or operations. In the event that the City must use this location, the Commission recommends that the City Council publicly proclaim the City's support and adherence to the purpose and intent of the City's Human Rights Code, particularly as applied to the LGBTQ community, and urge all of the city's residents to support and encourage a city free of discriminatory barriers. Further, the City should affirm that the City, particularly the Library, is open and welcoming to all members of the Community, and that the City is committed to ensuring that the Library will remain so during its relocation. The Commission and the LBGTQ Task Force is committed to working with

the Salem Public Library to develop options to make the Library's temporary space accessible, welcoming and inclusive to all.

Approved by the Human Rights Commission July 2, 2019

Danielle Meyer, Chair,
on behalf of the Human Rights Commission