

Communications for LAB meeting 11/4/25 Jim Lauinger asked that I share this with the board.

Dear Mr. Mayor and Council Members:

I was pleased to have my question to the Mayor the first read and answered during the September 9th Town Hall. The question was if the Mayor and Council were aware of the excellent successes so far this year for the library. The Mayor answered that yes, he was aware of this and of the hard work staff had made in creating it.

I wish now to briefly expand on the successes earned the in the message below, and I have tried to keep the data concise and limited. I have attached a short half sheet of pertinent data showing Springfield along with comparative towns of Eugene, Albany, Corvallis, and Salem.

I invite you to visit with the library and review the most recent spring to summer figures, the library having a record-breaking performance, and economically critical to the health of the Main Street economy.

- over 33,000 people have visited the library over the past 4 months, nearly 300 people each day we were open.
- 40 % or Springfield's *households* now have a Library Card. This is the best way to analyze since one household card may be used by multiple family members. As a comparison, King County Libraries in Washington, the largest in the U.S. with 50 small to large sized locations reports a 44% factor for this year.
- All of the Summer Reading Programs had 1745 participants, 15% over the prior year's programs.
- Record sales at the Friends Store, a 78% 12 month increase over the prior 12 months that, in turn, will invest income back into library operations.
- Staff welcomed over 3500 people to a 14-week (Plaza and schools) event attended by artists, community partners, children, and families, supported by City and Library staff, and funded by over \$67,000 generous grants from community partners \$67,000.
- Circulation of books being checked out and returned, wavers from year to year but remains a healthy 293,000 transactions. What is important here is what the Fallow's book, mentioned below, where they explain that the libraries they visited are no longer those of our mother's generation. "The books are still there; the readers are still there; the librarians are still there. But sharing the same space are children busy with all kinds of active sometimes noisy programs, inventors in maker spaces, historians and amateurs researching genealogy, job seekers scouring the internet, others watching movies...." Librarians do more today than check out books. They are emersed daily in working with the public in navigating a new world of electronic data and sources for issues the public is now using the library for, well beyond just checking out books.

There is more circulation detail on the data sheet attached, the bottom line here, is that book circulation has become secondary to the needs of our libraries in today's environment as institutions of knowledge, information, and a place to belong.

Yes, our staff has been stretched to keep our help desks manned, our successful out of the library events staffed, along with the activities of the bullet points above.

As a volunteer, I and my fellow pages, a force of nearly 40, worked tirelessly to keep up with the flow of books to be shelved, shelf reading for shelving accuracy, and generally attending to the overall daily

neatness of the well-used library. I am proud of the work I do and to be part of an organization with excellent staff and leadership.

Once again, I will mention James and Deborah Fallow's national best seller 2018 book, "Our Towns, A 100,000-Mile Journey into the Heart of America," described as a "vivid, surprising portrait of the civic and *economic* reinvention taking place in America, town by town and generally out of view of the national media. A realistically positive and provocative view of the country between its coasts. ..." (Good Reads)

The Fallow's found public libraries and librarians committed to their communities, to reading, learning, public service, and to innovation as they have responded to the challenges facing small towns like Springfield. They would not think of starting a visit to a small town without a stop at the local library. Additionally, they found that towns with established, well-funded libraries, fared far better in coming out of the changing industrial economies America has historically experienced, and recently of the Great Recession.

I have placed a copy of this important book in the Mayor's office for you to peruse and share.

Springfield *has* the type of successful library the Fallow's write about. The library remains a key part of the *economic* success of Main Street, and of Springfield now, and into the future. When you discuss economic development for the city and for Main Street think of the library as a strong, positive factor you already own, but need to invest more into. And, let's not forget that as our State's School Districts grapple with budgets and declining literacy measurements, the Springfield Library is there and open for parents to seek the aid in helping our students succeed.

You and past Councils have helped to make this library a success over the decades, thank you. Please don't be the Council that sets its failure into motion. Thank you for reading this,

Jim Lauinger