Joint Statement from the City of Salem, Salem-Keizer NAACP and Salem Police Department in Support of Peaceful Assembly

We are people and organizations in Salem who strive for true justice, real freedom and equality. The City of Salem, Salem Police Department, the Salem Keizer NAACP, and all people of good will see and hear your concerns and feel your pain. Why? Because it’s our pain as well.

To each person in our community lifting their voices right now, we hear you. We hear your urgent call for a free and fair life for each person here.

We acknowledge the very long way we have come and the very long way we must go in the work for true equity. We see and recognize the pain and the burden of historical and present injustices facing people of color in the United States and here in Salem. With anguish, we recognize the passing of Mr. George Floyd as the most recent example, but not the only example of the devastating loss of life that drives the need for action.

The senseless loss of life of Mr. Floyd of Minneapolis, Minnesota brings us to this time and place. We know the circumstances. It’s those circumstances that brings us to the streets yesterday, today, and into the future. Protest is appropriate. Demands can be legitimate. Let’s take them to the next logical place, a serious and ongoing dialogue.

We must continue to look for ways to make our community better. We examine systems to look for racial – all – inequity and when we find them lacking, we correct them. Collectively, we have much to do.

We lose ground when we must repair a broken shop window or when a person’s business is vandalized. Violence slows our progress. Some speak of dismantling institutions – but true dismantling of oppression and injustice occurs not with a brick but with caring people - not with a thrown explosive but with an impassioned plea – not with a fight but with a vote. We are already at attention.
In this unique moment in history where we are dealing with COVID-19 and its continuing deadly impact on our community – communities of color especially. To tear-up, burn down and destroy the very places we need to continue to get through this Pandemic is not wise.

Speak with us about ideas, problems and solutions. Join with us to take concrete actions to improve the lives of those needing it most. Help us honor the memory of George Floyd and all others who have come before him, not with violence but with compassionate positive action for change. We progress faster toward these ideals when we enlist our talents together. It takes all of us, unified today, to achieve the community we want to be.

Those in charge must be told face to face the status quo is not acceptable. Black lives matter not just on paper. But in life. Our lives should not be at risk simply because they are Black.

Recent violence in our community is not the answer.

In the words of Dr. Martin Luther King, *Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that.*