

## Shelby Guizar

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**From:** Marissa Theve <marissatheve@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, May 16, 2023 1:00 PM  
**To:** Shelby Guizar  
**Cc:** citycouncil  
**Subject:** Hearing Notice - Case No. CA23-03 for Sign Code Amendment

Greetings,

I would like to provide testimony for Case No. CA23-03 for Sign Code Amendment. I am specifically interested in the definition E: General Illumination Standards and Electronic Display Signs as well as G. Outdoor Advertising Signs. My name is Marissa Theve and I have spoken at four neighborhood associations about the issue of light pollution in Salem. I've included a link to my presentation here for the record:

[https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1NbmKdQHUrE27hibDBddIO9-R9pdXXRWX/edit?usp=share\\_link&ouid=108731850009161187341&rtpof=true&sd=true](https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1NbmKdQHUrE27hibDBddIO9-R9pdXXRWX/edit?usp=share_link&ouid=108731850009161187341&rtpof=true&sd=true)

If this topic interests you, I highly recommend viewing the recent presentation by Portland Audubon's Mary Coolidge last month at the Salem Audubon Society meeting here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pa8x-z6wwfY>

My favorite moment is when she dispels the myths around outdoor lighting and public safety, at 38:00 minutes in. More lighting does not equal more safety.

In the case of outdoor signage, more lighting might actually mean less safety. I believe that light pollution, along with noise pollution, are two of the easiest environmental problems that a municipality can solve, and that work applied toward this goal ultimately leaves our city in a more livable state. Efforts to help stave off the effects of climate change have resulted in some great new code updates both from the state level (HB 2001) and within-city efforts (Our Salem and the Climate Action Plan). At every turn there seems to be something that Salem can do better for our planet but in general, it does mean living more densely to reduce our cumulative footprint. This is where lighting code becomes important: to embrace having more of our neighbors closer together than ever before, things like noise and light matter. If you watch Mary Coolidge's talk, you'll find that smart, modern lighting code takes light pollution seriously, which ultimately results in energy savings, and a more liveable place for humans and critters alike.

The environmental justice pattern that we see in most pollution issues holds true here: poorer people are disproportionately affected by light pollution (see the end of my PowerPoint presentation for some maps which illustrate this pattern in Salem). For human beings this has shown to ultimately result in shorter lives due to chronic stress from lack of sleep. We are still uncovering the damages to our natural world, but we know that light pollution negatively affects trees, birds, reptiles, and more. A 2013 Canadian study on large outdoor LED signs showed potential human effects includes:

- Photosensitive Epilepsy
- Retinal Damage
- Stress and Annoyance
- Circadian Rhythm and Sleep Disruption

<https://ncceh.ca/documents/field-inquiry/health-effects-large-led-screens-local-residents>

The basic conclusion is that nearby residents should be involved in the process and taken seriously when lighting is found to be a nuisance. All this to say that Salem should seriously consider the ramifications of unshielded lit signs, outdoor electronic signs, and uplighting before it updates this code. I believe these are distracting and dangerous in a world full of already lethally distracted driving, a waste of energy, and frankly quite tacky. Remember the City has committed to [Vision Zero](#), and other states and municipalities do just fine without these lighting types. Vermont just celebrated its 55th anniversary of banning billboards statewide, and Portland wisely does not allow any outdoor electronic signs.

While the outdoor advertising sign curfew is a good start, it is my opinion that Salem can do without billboards or billboard lighting at all, and would be a safer, more aesthetic place as a result. See how this fits into the first section of "purpose" of this code stated in the Summary and Background section. "The purpose of the sign code is to **protect the health, safety, property, and welfare of the public; ...**"

Please consider some language from Multnomah County's dark sky Ordinance:

C. Signs. Outdoor lighting for all new signs, including outdoor advertising (billboards), business signs and roof and freestanding signs, installed after the effective date of this Ordinance shall be as follows: 1. Any externally-mounted light fixtures shall be mounted to the top of the sign and shall be oriented downward; 2. The lights shall be fully shielded; and 3. Externally-mounted bulbs or lighting tubes that are not filled with neon, argon or krypton shall not be visible from any portion of an adjacent public right-of-way or adjoining property.

Please also consider the International Dark Skies' recommendations on electronic signs: <https://www.darksky.org/ida-announces-lighting-guidelines-for-electronic-messaging-centers/>

Thank you for your careful consideration in how this community-wide code update affects us all.

Marissa Theve,

Grant Neighborhood, Ward 1, 97301

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Marissa Theve

Pronouns: she/her/hers