



COUNCIL WORK SESSION

Wednesday, March 01, 2023

APPROVED MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT

Council President Jessica Chilton
Councilor Patrick Birkle
Councilor Mark Gundersen
Councilor Brandon Sundeen

MEMBERS ABSENT

Mayor Rick Scholl

STAFF PRESENT

John Walsh, City Administrator
Kathy Payne, City Recorder
Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder
Jacob Graichen, City Planner
Jenny Dimsho, Associate Planner

Rachael Barry, Government Affairs Specialist
Suzanne Bishop, Library Director
Jon Ellis, Contract Interim Finance Director
Bill Monahan, Contracted Attorney
Tina Curry, Contracted Event Coordinator

OTHERS

Lacey Tolles	Doug Morten
Arthur Leskovich	Les Watters
Amara Liebelt	Erin Salisbury
Jason Moon	

CALL WORK SESSION TO ORDER – 2:00 pm

VISITOR COMMENTS - *Limited to three (3) minutes per speaker*

- ◆ Doug Morten. Mr. Morten congratulated the new Council, noting they are congenial. He was interested to see how Council President Chilton would lead the meeting. He was excited to watch Council's progression on the Riverfront District, hoping they were open and flexible to developers which would allow creativity.

DISCUSSION TOPICS

1. Annual Report from Main Street Alliance - **Amara Liebelt, Executive Director**

Executive Director Amara Liebelt presented via PowerPoint the Main Street Alliance annual partnership report. A copy is included in the archive packet. Highlights included:

- The missions between national, state, and their Main Street.
- How Main Street works in four categories: economic vitality, design, organization, and promotion.
- An overview of recent program successes.
- She addressed their current activities.
- A review of where they are and where they want to be. One goal is to become accredited.
- Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analysis conducted during their board retreat.

- She reviewed their four active committees and what they are doing. Highlights included:
 - They were working to create a street market which will be their testing market to what could be called a farmers' market. It will be held one day a month in Uptown, bridging the gap between Uptown and Downtown.
 - The Columbia County Cultural Coalition awarded them two grants for the 2023 Scarecrow Project and for the Dia de los muertos event.
 - Looking to the future, plans for each committee.
- The work with their important partnerships.

Questions from Council were addressed:

- Between three and five members serve on each committee with each Board member chairing a committee. They are always trying to grow the membership to prevent burnout.
- The benefits of accreditation include grants, recognition and awards, and a lot more guidance including free assessments. The process to become accredited will start in November and proceed until March.
- Ms. Liebelt will find out more about Scappoose being on the list of connected communities. Clatskanie would like to be added. St. Helens is the only community in the program thus far, to her knowledge.
- The SWOT threat about losing City partnership was not financially related but about forward momentum and being in good standing, which is important to the Main Street Alliance. Ms. Liebelt acknowledged they did not sense any threat from the City's side. Councilor Birkle firmly believed the City made a good investment in the Main Street Alliance and will continue to do so. Even though that source of funding may not continue from the City, he was confident the City will partner in many other ways. Ms. Liebelt emphasized communication and transparency are key.

City Administrator Walsh addressed why the City should invest in Main Street. Further, with Main Street wanting to be supportive of the gateway features, St. Helens has two. He invited her to stay for the gateway feature proposal agenda item.

Ms. Liebelt knows what she wants to see for the community's children in Downtown and Uptown. She believes people only leave the community for adventure, not because of unmet needs.

2. Update from Small Business Development Center (SBDC) - *Jason Moon, Director*

Jason Moon reviewed his report:

- They have about 90 clients and 300 advising hours.
- He thanked partner Main Street, Council, and City staff for referring businesses to him.
- He will be hiring an advisor and an admin soon.
- Seventy-five percent of businesses fail in the first five years. However, when a business seeks business advising and sets up a business plan, there is a 65 percent success rate of making it past the first five years.
- He refers to SBDC as a resource center as well.
- They are the 20th and newest center in Oregon and the only one not affiliated with the community college.
- They offer free one-on-one confidential business advising.
- Another major piece is getting business owners access to loan packaging and access to capital. Right now, not many grants are available.
- They offer marketing plan strategies.
- He addressed the end-of-year reporting with the SBA.
- Last year they launched a partnership with Keep It Local, a marketing for success series which was very successful.
- He appreciated the feedback Council provided through the SBDC's questionnaire.

- He was in the process of assembling an advisory committee.

Questions and feedback from Council were addressed:

- SBDC is currently in the Columbia Learning Center with plans to move to the John Gumm building when that is remodeled. He works in the office, his home, and mostly in the field which is where it works best for businesses.
- A business can get involved with SBDC by calling or emailing Mr. Moon. They have a website.
- Councilor Birkle liked that Mr. Moon is accessible in the community which creates synergy with Main Street, Keep It Local, and the Chamber. Mr. Moon hoped to do more of that sort of outreach.

Mr. Walsh pointed out that before the local SBDC, the closest office was Lloyd Center.

3. Fiscal Year 2022/23 2nd Quarter Budget Report - *Jon Ellis*

Contract Interim Finance Director Ellis reviewed his report via PowerPoint. A copy is included in the archive packet for this meeting. He noted the third line under Public Works, which was Engineering, was dropped from the table when copied, but the subtotals were correct. Supplement 3 was all the requested adjustments to the budget that will be rolled into the proposed public hearing for the March 15th meeting. The presentation of the budget analysis included:

- A mid-year budget review of revenues, expenditures, and exceptions by fund types: General Fund, Special Revenue Funds, SDC Funds, Enterprise Funds, and Internal Service Funds.
 - He noted \$32,000 was moved and recorded from the Opioid Settlement money into the General Fund to offset the additional expenditures in the police department for the K-9.
 - Street funds were on the tighter side. But the monies from Motor Vehicle are meeting the budget and will increase next year. Other projects will be delayed until the expenditures incurred for the Columbia Boulevard sidewalks are fully reimbursed.
- An overview of proposed budget adjustments including the overall impacts to the funds and the Supplemental Budget process.
- The status of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds.
- The proposed Budget Calendar for 2023/24 with the first Budget Committee meeting on April 14 and the second on May 4 where hopefully they will approve the Budget.

Questions from Council were addressed:

- Regarding the projected budget for 23/24 looking significantly higher than where the City is right now, Mr. Ellis spoke about total system charges being projected at a seven percent increase, adding the proper calculation of the EDU and UUDs that go into Water, Sewer, and Storm was delayed and probably even a low estimate which was probably the reason 23/24 was in top shape on revenues. The Public Works reserves had dipped down to \$100,000, which is unacceptable. So, there was a need to reallocate some of those funds to shore up the reserves and still meet maintenance needs. In terms of funds, the City is secure in the current year. But projecting out based on the five-year CIP, they will know better. The City should not raise rates until absolutely necessary.
- Mr. Ellis started thinking about the biannual review for the Urban Renewal Agency Board budget, but he had not gotten a chance yet. One Councilor noted Urban Renewal is in an accumulation phase.
- Mr. Ellis can report back with his concerns and areas of focus and how Council can support him. He spoke about some matters on which he could not find a lot of documentation.

4. Discussion regarding Renaming Mill Street in the Riverfront District - *Jacob Graichen, City Planner*

City Planner Graichen addressed his memorandum on renaming "Mill Street." A copy is included in the archive packet. St. Helens already has a Mill Street in town. A unique name is wanted for each street

for emergency response purposes. The statute sets out a process which he described. The street under discussion is just past Grace's Antiques. Staff recommended using "Way" as the naming convention. He talked about how the street behind the bowling alley was renamed "Bowling Alley."

Les Watters from the Columbia County Museum Association spoke about the history of the area in order to help brainstorm what the street should be called. They would like Council to consider an historic name, and he highlighted some considerations. He recommended Wapama Way after the famous ship built in St. Helens and used for years to transport people between St. Helens and San Francisco. The *Wapama* was on exhibit for years at a museum in San Francisco before it fell into disrepair and was dismantled.

He addressed clarifying questions from Council on some of the historic names.

Mr. Graichen appreciated the partnership with the Museum Association; their information will give the City a lot to think about. The Engineering team recommended a cinematic history-inspired name such as Pumpkin Way. He spoke about what prompted the process to rename the street.

Councilor Chilton liked McCormick Way; others were concerned about that already being a street name.

Councilor Birkle liked the idea of a name that recognizes the Indigenous population, specifically Wapato Way.

The matter will go to the Planning Commission for recommendation, and then a public hearing will be scheduled with Council for public input.

5. Gateway Feature Proposals - *John Walsh, City Administrator*

Mr. Walsh addressed the two local proposals from AKAAN and Lower Columbia Engineering received for the gateway feature project. A copy is included in the archive packet. Staff was looking for Council input.

Associate Planner Dimsho pointed out the location at S. First Street and St. Helens Street. The City will guide the design process and work with partners such as Main Street Alliance and the Museum Association. The project will have to go before the Planning Commission for compliance with the Riverfront District architectural guidelines. AKAAN has a background in working on gateway features. Lower Columbia has been a staple in the community for architectural and design services.

After staff presented options including putting a selection committee together or deciding by Council consensus, the Council discussed the two candidates.

Questions from Council were addressed:

- Stakeholders, including Council, will provide feedback throughout the whole process. The project will be done at the same time as the street intersection construction.
- The City is under contract to do the intersection, which is moving forward, but staff would not feel comfortable giving an estimate of a timeline for the gateway project. The two-year contract started in November.
- The gateway in the Houlton District would not happen at the same time because it currently has no funding source and needs separate funding.
- Staff agreed the purpose of the signage is not to welcome people to St. Helens because it is not an appropriate spot at all. It will be determined by the stakeholder group whether it highlights a welcome to, for example, the Riverfront District or Historic District.
- The fees proposed were for the firms involved in construction and for the same scope of services.

Council President Chilton stated with Lower Columbia showing community involvement in working on the Veterans Plaza she would like to move forward with them, noting both candidates are great.

Councilor Sundeen felt good about both.

Councilor Birkle recommended the decision be made by staff. Council President Chilton thought Council should make the decision.

Councilor Birkle recommended AKAAN since Lower Columbia is doing a current project.

Councilor Gundersen noticed a lot of the work AKAAN has done is similar to what the City wants and therefore recommended them.

Council's consensus was to use Lower Columbia Engineering. Staff will bring a personal services agreement to the March 15 meeting.

6. 3:40 pm - Report from City Administrator John Walsh

- Mr. Walsh provided an update on the Columbia View Park improvements including the stage layout. Community members have expressed concern to the Parks Commission and Planning Commission that the City will get the stage correct. He suggested making a 3-D model of what it will look like when one is in the space, adding the cost to do so is incidental and there will be a bit of a delay but enough contingency in the schedule to pause to do the rendering. Staff clarified they have not heard much feedback about moving the playground except when it was first brought to the Parks Commission, such as ensuring visibility for parents to see their children. The playground will be moved towards Cowlitz Street.
- Heading into the budget season, the first Budget Committee meeting will be held April 15.
- The auditors are currently working at the City.
- The new Finance Director is looking to relocate to St. Helens.
- Staff would like to kick off a new program, Take Your Child to Work Day on April 27th. In the past, they had not planned many activities. Communications Officer Crystal King and Deputy City Recorder Lisa Scholl, and others have put together a full program that could make it happen. Council was supportive of the idea.
- He reviewed the purpose of the Central Waterfront Open House being held tomorrow and April 6.
- The Joint Council/Planning Commission meeting will be held March 8 in order to discuss HB3115 on camping and houselessness. Attorney Aaron Hisel, who was involved in the Grants Pass case, will come talk to Council.
- He and Tina have been discussing tourism parking and looking for space to have a portable building for a parking/shuttle outpost, trying to be mindful and prevent negative impacts when people do not want to park at a distance, risking angry neighbors whose driveways are blocked.
- He thanked Councilor Sundeen for doing the weekly calls with him on the Public Facility. The building space had been cut in half but will still be a nice, useable building. The officers seemed very supportive of it. He confirmed they do not have to worry about the flood plain in part because the building will be farther away from the wetlands.
- Government Affairs Specialist Rachael Barry met with Senator Weber pitching the City's interest in infrastructure and early learning which helps with recreation programs and funding workforce space. Senator Weber intends to champion the St. Helens infrastructure project which would go a long way toward replacing the reservoir on Pittsburg Road
- The Chamber of Commerce requested the Council sponsor table(s) at their banquet. Council has purchased a table/sponsorship package in the past, the Champion at \$1,000 and a second table for \$400. Staff believed the purchase came from Council funds in the past and confirmed all the seats were filled. After grants Council put out, around \$4000 remained in Council funds. They discussed who would attend. Council's consensus was to do the same \$1000 table and additional \$400 table this year.
- March 28 will be the City-County meeting, which is the first one since COVID.
- The "If I Were Mayor..." Student Contest will close on Friday. St. Helens has been very successful with state winners.

- The American Public Works Association magazine featured an article that painted the City in a positive, proactive, and forward-looking light about the Wastewater Treatment Plan, highlighting Water Quality Manager Aaron Kunder's pumps project.
- Engineering Manager Sharon Darroux and Public Works Supervisor Dave Elder gave a presentation at a recent conference on the master planning process with their Water and Wastewater Master Plans. Construction Inspector Tim Underwood got additional certifications for infrastructure.

ADJOURN – 4:46 pm**EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Respectfully submitted by Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder.

ATTEST:

/s/ Kathy Payne

Kathy Payne, City Recorder

/s/ Jessica Chilton

Jessica Chilton, Council President