



# COUNCIL WORK SESSION

Wednesday, July 19, 2023

## APPROVED MINUTES

### MEMBERS PRESENT

Mayor Rick Scholl  
Councilor Mark Gundersen  
Councilor Brandon Sundeen

### MEMBERS ABSENT

Council President Jessica Chilton  
Councilor Patrick Birkle

### STAFF PRESENT

John Walsh, City Administrator  
Kathy Payne, City Recorder  
Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder  
Crystal King, Communications Officer  
Mouhamad Zaher, Public Works Director

Rachael Barry, Government Affairs Specialist  
Mike De Roia, Building Official  
Bill Monahan, Contracted City Attorney  
Tina Curry, Contracted Event Coordinator

### OTHERS

Eddie Dunton  
Steve Topaz  
Ron Trommlitz  
Aaron Majors

### CALL WORK SESSION TO ORDER – 2:00 pm

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

- ◆ Ron Trommlitz. Mr. Trommlitz recalled he last attended a Council meeting in November. He requested the Walker report and was denied, being told there was no smoking gun and nothing to discuss. It is untrue that nothing in the report is damaging to the City. He spoke about plans to rehabilitate the reservoir, but the bidders and Kennedy Jenks were never allowed to enter the reservoir to determine its true condition. WPI never entered it until October 1. He learned that City Administrator John Walsh controls the withholding of the Walker report and that having opinions and writing letters and emails has become dangerous to him. The City never determined the source of the leak.
- ◆ Steve Topaz. Mr. Topaz noted the typed copy of his presentation at the last Council meeting is not reflected in the present Council package and that the paraphrased note does not accurately present his thought whereas another person's presentation is accurately recorded. If the present note under his name is approved by the Council it will demonstrate that only a report liked by the administration will be accurately recorded which basically means there is no free speech in St. Helens, only controlled speech. In 2019, he asked Matt Brown for the cost on reservoir repair and received no answer. Sue Nelson was asked to reply, and she did not. The next Council meeting, Matt Brown delivered a multi-page complaint against him for asking the question in public, saying if Mr. Topaz had approached in private, he would have answered.

With John Walsh's okay, Mr. Brown filed an ethics claim against him which was rejected by the Ethics Board. He displayed four charts showing the water level in the water reservoir on different dates which show the location and size of the leak from City data, indicating the Engineering Division at the time was inadequate when such data is available. The City Reservoir has been losing 45,000 gallons of water a day for more than 20 years which is money lost that could have gone to other community needs and has resulted in excessive water payments.

- ◆ Tina Curry, Tourism, reported the 4th of July celebration came together well. She has heard positive comments, and people enjoyed the fireworks. Staff was happy there were no incidents. They are working to get insurance for the boat which is going in the water tomorrow. The Captain will do a rescue test next week, and then it will be good to go. Regarding concerns about ROI, the boat is pretty much 100 percent in compliance with the Coast Guard at this point. It should have the certificate of insurance next week and will be docked at St. Helens Marina. The Sand Island Sandcastle competition and Twilight Festival will be held August 5 and 6. Spirit of Halloweentown activities will be coming up, and tickets were selling well.
- ◆ Aaron Majors. Mr. Majors shared a bit of his background, noting that he was working on listing for sale the Adams family property at Pittsburg Road and Highway 30. The City owns two adjacent pieces of property. He proposed the City put its property on the market at the same time which would entice a developer to buy all three parcels and described the benefits of such a sale.

Mayor Scholl proposed to use the proceeds of the sale to fund the missing Police Officer position for two years and the Makerspace Technician position for two years.

Mr. Majors spoke about the difficulty of selling property with wetlands and how it would not translate into a lot of money.

Mayor Scholl talked about what the wetlands could be used for, estimating the \$600,000 value of City property there plus the Adams property was worth \$1 million, speaking about the possibilities and how the City can vacate a road in a faster process than others.

Mr. Majors said combining the lots would increase the sale cost, to a little under \$1 million.

Mayor Scholl stated the Council will be in contact with Mr. Majors.

## DISCUSSION TOPICS

### 1. Employee Length of Service Recognition - Joel Beehler (10 years)

Mayor Scholl congratulated Utility Worker II Joel Beehler on his 10 years of service, noting he is a hard worker and has a good demeanor. The Council appreciates him.

### 2. Building Division Semi-Annual Report - *Building Official Mike De Roia*

Building Official De Roia reviewed his report of the Division's activities from January to June of 2023. A copy is included in the archive packet for this meeting. Highlights and milestones included:

- Building Inspector Hicks resigned, which means the Division was down an employee. They adjusted the workloads through County agreements and were monitoring the workloads closely in order not to fatigue the agreements.
- He reviewed a summary of permits issued.
- He addressed the Oregon Building Codes Division update.
- He will attend a Specialized Plumbing Inspection Course beginning in August. With the certification, about 80 to 85 percent of their plumbing inspections will be in-house rather than sent to the County.

- He reviewed their work on projects throughout St. Helens: the high school renovation, Broadleaf Arbor Apartments, John Gumm School renovations, Crooked Creek Brewery, 12<sup>th</sup> Street Apartments, Burger King, Columbia Hills Retirement, and Sand Island.
- He clarified with a project like the high school, he was probably out there two, three times a week for inspection. The County also goes out there for inspections.
- He confirmed new walls were going into the old school. It is a big project with some structural and seismic retrofitting done in the building to bring it up to code. His understanding was they are renovating the entire building with portions of the basement area that will remain unoccupied for future use.

Mayor Scholl congratulated Mr. De Roia on his five years of service and continuing to go above and beyond, noting he is appreciated.

### **3. Review of Library Board 5-Year Strategic Plan - *Library Director Suzanne Bishop***

This item was postponed.

### **4. Public Works National Accreditation - *Public Works Director Mouhamad Zaher***

Public Works Director Zaher presented his department's initiative to apply for the Public Works National Accreditation, providing an overview (included in the meeting packet) of the accreditation, its purpose, the process, roadmap, and benefits and noting only four Public Works agencies in Oregon are accredited: Eugene, Beaverton, Salem, and West Linn. They have received the official letter to move forward with a deadline of July 2024 to certify. It will be a three-year process.

Mayor Scholl pointed out the accreditation would be an asset for grant applications.

Mr. Zaher added the accreditation would reflect the excellence of the City as a whole, clarifying the accreditation is good for three or four years and then the department would reapply to renew it.

### **5. Selection of McKinstry Essention, LLC for Microgrid Planning and Preliminary Design of Public Safety Building - *City Administrator John Walsh***

City Administrator Walsh spoke about Ameresco, the company who upgraded the City's streetlights from conventional to LED, and how one of their people went to McKinstry which brought the City an opportunity to seek a planning grant of about \$94,000 for solar energy for the police station (supporting materials are included in the archive packet for this meeting). The grant would set up an opportunity to go after another \$1 million in energy solar panels next year and would maximize the amount of funding to go into the police station project. The building is required to have solar energy. He recommended the Council approve the selection of McKinstry at tonight's regular meeting.

### **6. Update on Agreement with Mackenzie for Public Safety Building Design - *City Administrator John Walsh***

City Administrator Walsh stated updates on the design were needed when downsizing from a public safety facility to a police station out of the necessity to make the building more affordable, noting a lot of the same components would be used. He asked Mackenzie to come back with an updated services agreement (included in the meeting packet along with supplemental materials). The project was going well, and the final design was just a few weeks out. It will then move into construction drawings which will wrap up in November with an anticipated February/March construction start. The updated agreement was on tonight's agenda for the Council's approval.

### **7. Report from City Administrator John Walsh**

- This week is Wastewater Utility Appreciation Week. St. Helens is one of the 21 communities in Oregon submitting wastewater samples for Covid testing and has been part of the process for several years now.
- The boat did have a certificate of inspection from Florida and will be recertified for the Northwest region.

- The Walker report is a confidential document under attorney-client privilege. The City is on the path now to replace the reservoir.
- He, Police Chief Greenway, and a few others visited the Lake Oswego Police Department which Mackenzie and their partners worked on. They were looking at using Oregon Correctional Facility to do the furniture. They build nice custom furniture at good prices.
- Riverwalk Phase I was wrapping up. The construction documents were 99.5 percent complete. The project will go to bid in a couple weeks. He appreciated Associate Planner/Community Development Project Manager Jenny Dimsho's assistance.
- The Gateway design was at 90% drawings. He was working with Lower Columbia Engineering on a cost estimate before considering bids.
- Port of Kalama has transformed their whole waterfront which many have admired. He reached out to the director of the Port and will go down to meet with him next week to discuss their work.
- He has been working with Finance Director Gloria Butsch on the City finances. John Ellis has nearly completed the Tourism audit and said everything seems to be checking out. The City had to use the reserves to balance the budget this year, about \$500,000, which is still a hole that needs to be figured out. Staff was monitoring it closely. The City would not want to compound the problem next year. Staff was working on the revenue options the Council requested. Balance must be found for next year in order not to drive down the reserves any more.
- This is Fair week.
- Today was the first day of the OMA Conference in Pendleton. He would like to leave after the work session to head there.

Mayor Scholl wondered if the map should be shown in the public meeting for the proposed sale of the City property adjoining the Adams property. The City would have to move fast on the vacating of the street. He directed Mr. Walsh to get some information for the next meeting on the item, find out the due process, and how fast the City could do it.

**ADJOURN – 3:15 pm**

**EXECUTIVE SESSION - None**

Respectfully submitted by Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder.

ATTEST:

/s/ Kathy Payne  
Kathy Payne, City Recorder

/s/ Rick Scholl  
Rick Scholl, Mayor