



COUNCIL WORK SESSION

Wednesday, November 05, 2025

APPROVED MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT

Mayor Jennifer Massey
Council President Jessica Chilton
Councilor Mark Gundersen
Councilor Russell Hubbard
Councilor Brandon Sundeen

STAFF PRESENT

John Walsh, City Administrator
Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder
Crystal King, Communications Officer
Doug Treat, Police Lieutenant
Ashley Wigod, Contracted City Attorney

OTHERS

Howard Blumenthal	Brady Preheim
Rob Hamilton	Jim Coleman
Eddie Dunton	Steve Topaz
Adam St. Pierre	

CALL WORK SESSION TO ORDER – 3:00 p.m.

CLEARING CONFUSION AND SETTING THE FACTS STRAIGHT

1. Response to October 15 Visitor Comments

Mayor Massey noted there were no responses to the October 15 visitor comments.

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

- ◆ Howard Blumenthal. Provided an update on the work party held at Nob Hill Nature Park over the weekend. He reported that 13 people participated, contributing approximately 30 hours of volunteer time pulling weeds, ivy, and blackberries, and planting new vegetation. He mentioned that gravel had been delivered for the next bench to be placed along the S. 5th Street right-of-way trail, which would be the Lions Club's 100th bench. He also expressed concerns about Spirit of Halloweentown parking issues in his neighborhood. While he appreciated the "No Event Parking" signs provided by the City, he reported that some residents on the hill were charging \$20 for parking in their yards, with cars extending into the public right-of-way, around corners, and near fire hydrants. He requested the City take a more proactive approach to control parking in public rights-of-way during the event.
- ◆ Brady Preheim. Criticized Mayor Massey for allegedly using "a dead girl" to help with her election and questioned if the Mayor had donated money as promised. He also expressed disapproval about the Mayor's name being added to a waterfront plaque instead of former Mayor Rick Scholl's name, and questioned what happened to a plaque for "Joe's father" that had been removed from

the waterfront. Preheim further questioned Mayor Massey, Council President Chilton, and City Administrator Walsh about approaching the School Board regarding not selling property without prior Council discussion or decision.

- ◆ Steve Topaz. Shared concerns regarding accuracy in the minutes of the last council meeting, noting that important points he had made were either mistranslated or missed. He also questioned the process by which the Council developed responses to previous visitor comments, suggesting this might involve improper meetings or procedures that weren't being properly documented.
- ◆ Adam St. Pierre. Expressed frustration about what he characterized as continuous attacks against Mayor Massey. He suggested these attacks were made by individuals trying to establish their relevance rather than working productively with the Council and City employees.

DISCUSSION TOPICS

2. Quarterly Reports from City Departments/Divisions - Finance and Municipal Court (Informational)

Mayor Massey and Council reviewed the Finance Division's quarterly report. The Mayor commended Finance Director Butsch for the thoroughness of the report, particularly appreciating the information provided about tourism funds in response to public questions. Mayor Massey also noted that utility funds were performing well, with expenditures at or under 25% of budget.

No discussion occurred regarding the Municipal Court report.

3. Review Amendment with Otak for Police Station Project - *City Administration John Walsh*

City Administrator Walsh presented the fifth amendment to the agreement with Otak for owner's representative services for the police station project. He explained that most previous amendments had been time extensions due to the project's lengthy timeline and changes in site location. This amendment would cover services for the Columbia Blvd. site through the duration of the project and was already included in the project's \$12.6 million budget.

Councilor Hubbard commented that additional costs were incurred due to the City exploring different potential sites, noting that now they had settled on a solid site to work with.

4. Review request for Leak Adjustment at 2375 Columbia Blvd. - *City Administrator John Walsh*

City Administrator Walsh and Finance Director Butsch explained that the leak adjustment request exceeded \$1,000, which is why it was coming before the Council. Finance Director Butsch noted that the City typically approves leak adjustment requests for up to two months, and the cost is usually shared between the City and the customer based on their average usage. This request was unusual as it covered three months and asked for a full adjustment without cost sharing.

Council discussed the nature of the leak, which was identified as a failed fill valve in a toilet at an apartment complex. Mayor Massey and Councilor Hubbard expressed concern that a maintenance person should have caught such an issue earlier, especially in an apartment building, and questioned the substantial amount of the bill for what appeared to be a relatively minor repair of approximately \$495.

City Administrator Walsh noted that another similar leak adjustment request from a different company would be coming to a future meeting, but in that case the repair was more significant.

5. Request for Donation to Merchants' Toy N Joy Auction

City Administrator Walsh explained that for several years the City has donated utility bill credits for the Merchants' Toy N Joy Auction. Deputy City Recorder Scholl added that they typically offer two \$100 utility credits, which have been popular auction items.

6. Report from City Administrator John Walsh

- The Streets and Utility Project was awarded Project of the Year by the American Public Works Association in the \$5-25 million category for a transportation project. The City also received an award for the Riverwalk Project from the Oregon Recreation and Parks Association. These recognitions help with future phases, grant applications, and attracting investors.
- Columbia County Board of Realtors has invited City staff to give a presentation on the waterfront development project on November 20.
- The police station project is progressing with pre-application meetings and weekly progress meetings. Construction is expected to begin in April/May with a move-in target of September 15, 2027, though it could potentially be earlier. In response to Council requests, Administrator Walsh agreed to provide monthly schedule and budget updates for public transparency.
 - Councilor Hubbard, as the liaison for the police station project, reported on design meetings where valuable engineering opportunities were identified, including relocating planned EV chargers and addressing sewer line concerns. He mentioned his suggestion to incorporate Columbia River basalt on the building facade to enhance its appearance.
- Spirit of Halloweentown wrapped up despite rainy weekends. The notice of intent to renew the event has been issued, and Treadway will give a presentation at the December 3 meeting.
- Christmas decorations will begin being installed on November 19 in preparation for the Christmas Ships event, with adjustments made to avoid creating muddy conditions in the Plaza.
- City staff met with PGE regarding the substation project at the mill, working to clarify roles and responsibilities for the \$2.3 million grant that will fund the station pad and environmental work.
- Meetings are planned with Maul Foster regarding the wastewater treatment project proposal and to discuss waterfront development options using federal appropriation funds.
- Next week, staff will meet with Romano to kick off the 180-day exclusive negotiating period for development projects.
 - Councilor Gundersen volunteered to serve as Council liaison for the remodel projects, similar to Councilor Hubbard's role with the police station project.
- Walsh, Mayor Massey, and Council President Chilton attended a School Board meeting to encourage reconsideration of selling the Ross Road property. Mayor Massey noted this property is central to the vision for a ballpark, as the school's 10 acres are situated between City-owned parcels. She emphasized that a sports complex on this site could generate revenue for the City while enhancing quality of life for residents.
- Work continues on the Sand Island campground lease agreement, with a meeting planned with the operator to address public access and safety concerns. Walsh committed to providing an update by the December 17 meeting.
- Attended the Joint City Council and Parks & Trails Commission meeting. The Parks & Trails Commission would like more involvement in planning for future park improvements and master planning.
- Walsh reported on his attendance at the International City Managers Association Conference, where he learned about common challenges facing municipalities including employee burnout, staffing challenges (with 52% of municipal employees considering leaving their positions and only 7% of employees under 30), and the potential impact of artificial intelligence on government operations. He also highlighted presentations on community development, conflict resolution, and citizen engagement programs like citizen academies.

Mayor Massey expressed interest in exploring a Youth Councilor position similar to what the School Board has implemented. She suggested this could be considered for the 2026 goals, noting that other cities like Happy Valley have successful programs.

ADJOURN – 3:44 p.m.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

- Labor Negotiations, under ORS 192.660(2)(d)
- Real Property Transactions, under ORS 192.660(2)(e)
- Exempt Records/Confidential Attorney-Client Privileged Memo, under ORS 192.660(2)(f)
- Consult with Counsel/Potential Litigation, under ORS 192.660(2)(h)

Respectfully transcribed by ClerkMinutes and submitted by Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder.

ATTEST:

/s/ Lisa Scholl

Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder

/s/ Jennifer Massey

Jennifer Massey, Mayor