



COUNCIL PUBLIC HEARING

Wednesday, January 21, 2026

APPROVED MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT

Mayor Jennifer Massey
Councilor Mark Gundersen
Councilor Russell Hubbard
Councilor Brandon Sundeen

MEMBERS ABSENT

Council President Jessica Chilton

STAFF PRESENT

John Walsh, City Administrator
Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder
Crystal King, Communications Officer
Jacob Graichen, City Planner

OTHERS

Steve LeSollen	Phyllis Rice	Mark Griffin
Jeff Heller	Reed Hjort	Doug Morten
Nick Flory	Brady Preheim	Tammy Maygra
Patrick Birkle	Nick Hellmich	Robyn Toschi
Susan Stutzman	Claire Catt	Jane Williams
Jeffrey Macdonald	Joe	Judy Thompson
Steve Toschi	Ced	

OPEN PUBLIC HEARING – 6:40 p.m.

TOPIC

1. Annexation of Approximately 6.57 Acres of Property Located South of Sykes Road about 300 feet West of where the BPA Lines Intersect with Sykes Road, and North of the Morten Lane Terminus next to 58990 Morten Lane (Stutzman)

City Planner Jacob Graichen covered preliminary matters. There were no potential or actual conflicts of interest, bias in this matter, ex-parte communications, or site visits. There were no objections from the audience for the Council to make a fair decision. Graichen went on to review the staff report. There is no development proposal for the subject property at this time but the owner feels that there would be more value to the property being annexed.

The Planning Commission recommended approval of the application with a recommendation of R-7 zoning.

One letter of opposition was received from neighbors at 34385 Southview Drive. Graichen created an exhibit showing that this property is located outside the urban growth boundary, approximately 475 feet from it. The closest City property between that residence and the subject property has been within city limits for longer than Graichen's 18-year tenure with the City.

Applicant

- ◆ Susan Stutzman, via Zoom. She and her sister, who lives in Amsterdam, Netherlands, inherited the land in 2021 from their mother, Mary Heumann Adams, who grew up in St. Helens. Stutzman expressed support for annexing the property from Columbia County to the City of St. Helens. The property has been in the County's R-10 vacant forest deferral program. She suggested R-7 zoning to match surrounding properties. Stutzman stated that annexation would benefit the City in terms of future development by avoiding a County property island within City property. She emphasized the importance of being in unison with the City and compatible with surrounding properties. The benefits they seek include police protection and sewer and water services. Annexation would provide flexibility for what they could do with the property while remaining complementary to City planning standards. She clarified they are currently only exploring options for potential use and thanked the Council for consideration.

PUBLIC COMMENT**In Favor**

- ◆ Doug Morten, speaking on behalf of his cousin, Susie Stutzman. He provided extensive family history about the property. His grandfather, Eric Morten, left Sweden around 1882-1883 at age 20 to avoid Russian pressure on Sweden. As a woodsman in Sweden, he came to America following his dream. He got off the train at Warren, Oregon, after meeting people interested in property in the area. The property at one time encompassed approximately 400 acres from Sykes Road up to near Asbury Acres. His grandfather partnered with someone who fronted money to buy and log the property, which consisted largely of old growth fir. A railroad line, which became Sykes Road, came up to the property for logging operations. His grandfather, Eric Morten, ultimately settled on 75 acres after logging revenues and transactions. He was partnered with another person named Wikstrom, who settled in the Warren area. They horse-logged the area, with logs going directly to a landing area on Sykes Road and then to the mill. Eric sent for his wife Mary from Sweden, which took six years. She cooked along the way from New York to Oregon, including at the Klondike in St. Helens, where Eric would bring her by horse and buggy. They had three children: Edwin, who inherited the farmhouse and property extending to Sykes Road; Helma, who married Heinie Heumann and owned the piece now being discussed, from Bachelor Flat Road to Sykes Road; and Arch Morten, Doug's father, an all-state football player who married Doug's mother, a Columbia County Rose Festival queen. Doug and his brother developed the Art Morten section and part of the Edwin Morten section, creating a housing development with mixed 2-acre and 5-acre parcels. Given this heritage, Morten spoke very favorably for Susie, who inherited the property from Helma. He emphasized that Stutzman wants to do the right thing and desires flexibility. He noted that without annexation, the property would become an island, as City properties including the Heller's property and the Bonneville substation surround it.
- ◆ Jeff Heller. The property has been in their family for almost 130-140 years. He and his brother own property to the west, which is in City limits. His grandfather was mayor of St. Helens and always looked to the City's future, having developed St. Helens Street to create a complete circle through the City. Heller stated it doesn't make sense to leave the property in the County and believes it would be a great asset to the City. He asked the Council to consider Stutzman's testimony and her briefing on the aspects of bringing the property into the City.
- ◆ Nick Flory. His house is adjacent to the property on the map. He supported the annexation partly for his own well-being, as there have been break-ins and car prowlers in the neighborhood. He believed developing the land would increase police presence in the area and prevent crime. He

also considered economic factors, noting the paper mill reopening and anticipating more large businesses in the City. While current housing criteria are met, he thought having more opportunity for residential housing on that side of the highway would be good for the City. Currently an open field, he acknowledged people behind it enjoy their view, but he thinks it would be good for the City.

Neutral

- ◆ Phyllis Rice. Asked a clarifying question about whether 6.57 acres zoned R-7 would be allowed to build, questioning if seven acres were required. Graichen clarified that R-7 means the minimum lot size for a single-family dwelling is 7,000 square feet, not seven acres. It is not like zoning designations requiring 80 acres or similar.

Opposition – None

CLOSE PUBLIC HEARING – 7:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder.

ATTEST:

/s/ Lisa Scholl
Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder

/s/ Jennifer Massey
Jennifer Massey, Mayor