



COUNCIL WORK SESSION

Wednesday, March 05, 2025

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
Kathy Payne, City Recorder
Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder
Joe Hogue, Acting Police Chief
Matt Smith, Detective Sergeant
Kolten Edwards, Detective
Mouhamad Zaher, Public Works Director

Shanna Duggan, Recreation Manager
Sharon Darroux, Engineering Manager
Crystal King, Communications Officer
Mike De Roia, Building Official
Ashley Wigod, Contracted City Attorney
Peter Hicks, Contracted City Attorney

OTHERS

Steve Topaz Mitz
Brady Preheim Robyn
Lacey Tolles

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

ANNOUNCE 2024 CITY EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR

City Recorder Payne announced the 2024 Employee of the Year Award. She described the qualities of an exemplary employee and listed the 13 nominations received for six employees. Payne revealed that Communications Officer Crystal King was selected as the 2024 Employee of the Year. She highlighted King's career progression with the City since 2008 and read excerpts from her nomination submissions praising her skills, dedication, and positive impact. King received a certificate, an 8-hour paid day off, and \$100 in gift cards of her choice. Congratulations!

CLEARING CONFUSION AND SETTING THE FACTS STRAIGHT

1. Clarification Memo to Public Comments Received on February 19, 2025

Mayor Massey reviewed a clarification memo addressing public comments received on February 19, 2025. The memo covered three main points:

1. Public Comment During Meetings: Mayor Massey clarified that Oregon law does not require City Councils to provide public comment opportunities during most work sessions or regular sessions. She referenced the City Council Operating Rules regarding visitor comments.

2. Public Meeting Laws and Transcription Accuracy: Councilor Sundeen explained that public meeting laws do not require verbatim transcription. He outlined the minimum requirements for written minutes or recordings of meetings.
3. Public Safety Fee Increase on the City's Utility Bill: Mayor Massey stated that the City Council has not taken action to increase the Public Safety Fee on the City's utility bill at this time, despite previous discussions.

Mayor Massey noted that this information would be uploaded to the City website for public reference.

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

- ◆ Steve Topaz. Expressed concerns regarding the limitations placed on public comments during City meetings. He noted the reduction in opportunities for public input, highlighting a shift to later meetings and less time allowed to speak. Public comments have now moved to the end of regular sessions, which he argued minimized the effectiveness of community feedback since comments made after an issue has already been voted on have no impact. Topaz further emphasized that freedom of speech should allow for all manners of speech, including praise and criticism, to be heard, even if not accepted. He also challenged the legal basis for some State laws, referencing his experience with State and Federal Court decisions. Additionally, Topaz raised questions regarding the Council's criteria for defining a news media outlet, emphasizing that such determinations should not be up to the Council, as it could lead to biases regarding which entities are recognized as legitimate media representatives.
- ◆ Brady Preheim. Criticized Mayor Massey for not apologizing to City Administrator Walsh, highlighting previous remarks she made about not trusting Walsh, accusing him of being overpaid, and even suggesting his removal on her first day. Preheim emphasized the need for an apology to Walsh, adding that despite various mistakes, he never blamed Walsh for not fulfilling Council directions, which he placed responsibility for on the Council members themselves. Preheim also questioned why Councilor Sundeen was not involved in bringing forward the agenda item on the Police Chief vacancy, considering Sundeen's position as the Police Commissioner. Furthermore, Preheim challenged the accuracy of the Council's public statements that they had not taken action on raising utility bills, arguing that recorded meeting discussions revealed a detailed plan to increase the utility bill to \$25. He highlighted the problematic nature of a previous statement where Council members indicated an intention to impose the fee despite any public opposition to the levy, suggesting this as a reason the levy did not pass. He concluded by urging the Council to correct their public records and acknowledge the discussions recorded in previous meetings regarding raising the utility bill.

DISCUSSION TOPICS

2. Recreation Program Semi-Annual Report - *Recreation Manager Shanna Duggan*

Recreation Manager Duggan presented a semi-annual report on the City's Recreation programs. She highlighted key statistics, including 148 registered programs and 83 youth in daily care. Duggan discussed ongoing goals, partnerships, funding sources, and grant opportunities. She emphasized the program's impact on the community and its focus on balancing free and fee-based activities. Council members expressed appreciation for the program's success and asked questions about staffing, volunteerism, and future plans.

3. Review Draft Staff Monthly Report Template and Draft Staff Report (Item Specific) Template - *City Administrator John Walsh and City Recorder Kathy Payne*

City Administrator Walsh and City Recorder Payne presented draft templates for staff monthly reports and item specific staff reports. The Council discussed the proposed formats and suggested additions such as including information on grants, funding opportunities, key issues, challenges, and completed projects. They agreed to revisit the topic at a future meeting after getting staff input and refining the templates.

4. Schedule Special Session Date to Finalize Road Map and Council Governing Policy - *Mayor Massey*

Mayor Massey proposed scheduling a special session to finalize the Council roadmap and Governing Policy. After discussion, the Council tentatively agreed to hold the roadmap session on March 18 at 3:00 p.m. They decided to address the Governing Policy separately due to scheduling conflicts with the contracted city attorney.

5. Report from City Administrator John Walsh

- The retirement of Public Works Construction Inspector Tim Underwood
- The Reservoir Site Selection Study RFP
- An upcoming update on the Central Waterfront project
- Extension agreements with Arcadia
- Plans for 13 Nights on the River
- Progress on the police station site
- Dock Repairs RFP
- Business promotion campaign for the downtown area
- Infrastructure funding request to senators
- Plans for the grand reopening of the Riverwalk and Streets and Utilities Project
- Exploration of timber insurance for the Salmonberry property
- The upcoming Chamber banquet

RECESS – 4:08 p.m.

EXECUTIVE SESSION – 4:31 p.m.

- Consider Employment of an Employee, under ORS 192.660(2)(a)
- Real Property Transactions, under ORS 192.660(2)(e)
- Consult with Counsel/Potential Litigation, under ORS 192.660(2)(h)

RECONVENE – 5:15 p.m.

Upon returning to the work session, Mayor Massey clarified that the Council did not discuss the consideration of employment of employees under ORS 192.660(2)(a) in executive session as originally planned.

DISCUSSION TOPICS – CONTINUED

1. Discussion of Police Chief Vacancy - *Councilor Gundersen*

Mayor Massey declared a potential conflict of interest regarding the police chief vacancy discussion due to her husband being a St. Helens Police Officer.

Contracted City Attorney Hicks joined the meeting remotely to provide guidance on the process for appointing a new police chief. He recommended offering an interim contract to Acting Chief Hogue for a six-month period, allowing for a comprehensive evaluation and vetting process. Hicks emphasized the importance of having an interim contract to outline the expectations during this period and to set the stage for a formal decision regarding Hogue's permanent appointment. The Council discussed the merits

of this approach, considering the need to address foundational issues in the Governing Policy and evaluation procedures. It was highlighted that an interim period would also allow time for implementing necessary changes in the evaluation process and governing policies to ensure consistency in future appointments.

Councilor Gundersen expressed confidence in Hogue, noting his leadership and longstanding service to the community and described his past actions in stepping up to fill leadership gaps even before stepping into the interim chief role. Council members discussed the intricacies of the interim contract, such as ensuring it was clear about the performance and feedback mechanisms in place, including a potential 360-degree review to fully assess Hogue's effectiveness and fit for the role. Additionally, they considered how a consistent process could be applied for future appointments, aiming to correct any past procedural flaws. There was consensus that a non-rushed, methodical process would provide the necessary transparency and accuracy in assessing if Hogue's role could transition from interim to permanent.

The Council also deliberated on whether a public job posting would be required if they proceeded directly to an appointment without the interim stage. Walsh indicated that typically, internal recruitments do not require external postings unless the procedure for this position differs. The Council sought further legal advice on this point to ensure compliance with any required processes. A motion was proposed: To appoint Joe Hogue as the interim chief of police subject to the terms and conditions of a mutually agreeable employment agreement.

This motion was introduced with the understanding that it would be refined according to additional legal counsel and insights before being formally enacted at the evening meeting. The intention was to guarantee that the employment agreement aligns with both legal guidelines and the City's strategic needs, while also reflecting Hogue's commitment to the community and his qualifications for the chief's position.

ADJOURN – 5:46 p.m.

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

ATTEST:

/s/ Kathy Payne
Kathy Payne, City Recorder

/s/ Jennifer Massey
Jennifer Massey, Mayor