



# **COUNCIL PUBLIC HEARING**

Wednesday, May 07, 2025

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## **APPROVED MINUTES**

### **MEMBERS PRESENT**

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

### **MEMBERS ABSENT**

Councilor Mark Gundersen

### **STAFF PRESENT**

John Walsh, City Administrator  
Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder  
Crystal King, Communications Officer  
Joe Hogue, Interim Police Chief  
Jacob Graichen, City Planner  
Sharon Darroux, Engineering Manager

### **OTHERS**

Dave Lintz, OTAK	Jennifer Shoemaker
Scott	Brady Preheim
Paul Carroll	Jenni Gilbert
Jane Garcia	Kit Gardes
Nicholas Hellmich	Lynne Pettit

### **OPEN PUBLIC HEARING – 6:44 p.m.**

#### **TOPIC**

- 1. Zone Map Amendment (ZA.1.25) to change portion of property at 1771 Columbia Blvd. from General Commercial (GC) to Houlton Business District (HBD), make entire property HBD (City)**

City Planner Jacob Graichen introduced the Zone Map Amendment request to change part of the property at 1771 Columbia Blvd. from General Commercial (GC) to Houlton Business District (HBD), aiming to convert the entire property into HBD. This hearing was legislative, with the applicant being the City of St. Helens.

Mayor Massey disclosed a potential conflict of interest as her husband works as a City of St. Helens police officer. She affirmed her confidence in remaining unbiased and fair in the decision-making process, emphasizing that accusations did not equate to facts or evidence and due process remained crucial.

Graichen asked if anyone in the audience objects to the Council's ability to make a fair decision. Brady Preheim objected, citing Mayor Massey's involvement in a lawsuit alongside her husband and acting police chief, questioning the entire Council's ability to make an unbiased decision. He expressed concerns that the decision to rezone seemed predetermined, especially with conversations alluding to intentions

of placing a police station on the premises. Jenni Gilbert echoed these concerns, criticizing the perceived dishonesty and deception in the City's process regarding the rezoning.

Council responded to the objections.

Mayor Massey reiterated that being accused of something doesn't result in an assumption of guilt and stated that zoning was beneficial to the City and independent of both financial concerns and personal bias. She questioned the logic presented by the objectors, suggesting it was more of a personal attack.

Councilor Sundeen backed Mayor Massey, stating the planned rezoning was justified with or without the proposed police station project, urging the focus remain on resolving the spot zone issue and enhancing land utility.

Council President Chilton agreed, highlighting the importance of addressing zoning irregularities for cohesive community planning.

Councilor Hubbard acknowledged the concerns but emphasized the need to focus on the zoning correction.

Graichen added that, previously, a portion of the property was retained as GC due to the owner's interest in multifamily development, with the 2015 Ordinance update already removing barriers to ground-level residential there. His overarching emphasis remained on eliminating past "spot zones."

Maps illustrating current zoning, comprehensive plans, and historical contexts were presented by Graichen. He introduced the Zone Map Amendment with a focus on changing part of the property from GC to HBD, with the primary goal of eliminating a "spot zone" that had been a historical issue, rather than just facilitating the construction of a police station. Graichen shared a detailed backstory, mentioning past uses of the site by Portland General Electric and addressing why a portion of the property remained as GC due to the owner's interest in multifamily development. The prohibition of ground-level residential had been removed in 2015, an update which corrected a previous imbalance in zoning restrictions, making the future development of the area more flexible.

Graichen emphasized that the purpose of the amendment was to create uniformity and improve the utility of the land, by matching the zoning to reflect the Comprehensive Plan and, essentially, cleaning up "the quintessential spot zone." He described the Planning Commission's initial concerns regarding the spot zone and their eventual understanding of its elimination as beneficial for the overall plan. He asserted that the zoning changes would apply independently of whether a police station was ultimately constructed there. While presenting the maps, Graichen explained that the changes were consistent with the strategic planning similar to what was done with the Riverfront District, incorporating aspects like parking requirements and utilization constraints tailored to Houlton's developed district.

During this process, the Council responded to the information and agreed that the rezoning efforts were justified. Each Council member seemed comfortable with continuing the plan without any newly addressed conflicts, affirming the shared understanding of both the need for reform and the neutral benefits of the proposed zoning adjustment. The emphasis remained on historical precedents and avoiding blight while enhancing the neighborhood's commercial and residential cohesion.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

**In Favor - None**

**In Neutral - None**

**In Opposition**

- ◆ Brady Preheim. Expressed opposition to the zone change, stating that he believed it was a "sham" and that the City had already made a decision to put a police station on the property. He objected to what he perceived as dishonesty and deception in the process.
- ◆ Nicholas Hellmich. Voiced opposition to the situation, stating that he felt public comments didn't have much impact. He mentioned that he believed there were better options available but did not elaborate further.

**Rebuttal - None**

No questions from Council.

**CLOSE PUBLIC HEARING – 7:04 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