



COUNCIL SPECIAL SESSION

Thursday, September 14, 2023

APPROVED MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT

Mayor Rick Scholl
Council President Jessica Chilton
Councilor Mark Gundersen
Councilor Brandon Sundeen

STAFF PRESENT

John Walsh, City Administrator
Kathy Payne, City Recorder
Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder
Brian Greenway, Police Chief

OTHERS

Ginny Carlson	Steve Toschi
Jay Echternach	Diana Wiener
Nicholas Hellmich	Jen Massey
Russell Hubbard	Sabbath Rain Mikelson
Scott Jacobson	David Rosengard
Brady Preheim	TC
Jared Stram	M
Stephen Topaz	

CALL SPECIAL SESSION TO ORDER – 5:17 p.m.

INTERVIEW APPLICANTS FOR CITY COUNCIL APPOINTMENT (10 minutes per interview)

The following questions were provided to the applicants in advance.

1. What knowledge, experience, and skills do you have in the operation of city government and what will you contribute as a team member to help the Council accomplish their mission and goals?
2. Please share with us some of your community involvement other than political or governmental affairs.
3. How familiar are you with the current affairs of the City?
4. Have you ever been a member of a team and disagreed with the direction the team decided to go and if so, how did you handle the situation?
5. Do you have any questions for us?

1. Ginny Carlson

1. Served two terms on City Council, served on the Tourism Committee and multiple boards, and currently serve on the State of Oregon Habitat for Humanity Board and Community Action Team (CAT) Board. Perspective and willing to listen to other people's points of view and find common ground for the better of the community.

2. Habitat for Humanity and CAT boards, advocate for people with disabilities, and advocate for bringing more businesses and people to the community.
3. Continue to follow what is public; including waterfront, parks, and police station. Currently serves on the Planning Commission.
4. She has often disagreed with a decision, but in the end, they stand together on the decision. They come together for the greater good.
5. What is the Council is looking for? Mayor Scholl responded that he is looking for someone to accomplish the mission and goals of the City. Ginny agreed that they need to stand together as a team representing the City.

2. Jay Echternach

1. He talked about his history in the Gresham area, including sports and education, fundraising, sales, etc.
2. He was part of the founding Gresham Barlow Education Foundation Board for 15 years. They raised more than \$5 million in the first ten years to fund supplies and programs. He has an extensive sports background and is knowledgeable of accommodating and serving needs of all kids and parents. He also served on the Gresham School District Budget Committee and Curriculum Committee.
3. He reads and tries to stay up to date on what's happening. He lives on S. 2nd Street, overlooking the Waterfront property. He watched the process and reviewed the plans. The development is exciting. However, the budget concerns him by dipping into reserves. The single largest taxpayer, Cascades, is closing, which will present unique economic challenges. Public safety is number one, managing staff and getting the right people into positions is number two, and then budgeting and revenues. They have done a great job at providing the tools and skills for success.
4. His involvement in school, community sports, and managing a publishing business has taught him to listen first, have a sense of discernment, weigh priorities based on goals, build consensus, and empower the team.
5. No questions. He is very impressed living here and would be honored to be selected.

3. Nicholas Hellmich

1. He attends many City Council and Planning Commission meetings. He also has over 13 years of finance experience in the private sector that has helped him with budget management, people management, teamwork, and strategic planning. He is a Certified Housing Counselor at CAT. He helps people create budgets aligning with their goals, which are skills to help the City achieve goals. He would bring collaboration, leadership skills, and commitment to the community.
2. Working for CAT as a Certified Housing Counselor, he helps people create a budget, repair their credit, and avoid foreclosure. He has also been the Vice President of Credit Union Professionals of Oregon, a nonprofit that organizes fundraisers, professional development, and community involvement.
3. He addressed his familiarity with the Waterfront project, water rate increase, and his communication with community and Council members.
4. While serving on the Board of Young Credit Union Professionals of Oregon, they wanted to lobby for a specific political group. He reached out to the President directly and explained how it potentially puts the nonprofit status in danger. The main goal is to resolve the issue at the lowest level possible and not spread anything around.
5. Are there goals or plans to increase revenue without impacting lower-income citizens? Mayor Scholl responded that the goal is to attract businesses. They are working with Columbia Economic Team and Port of Columbia for that. Council President Chilton added that a goal of the Waterfront redevelopment is to attract business. The Riverfront is for the community to enjoy but they also hope for a return on their investment.

4. Russell Hubbard

1. He has served on the Planning Commission for nine years, learning a lot about the City and how government works. He is a developer here and can be valuable in knowing what businesses need here.
2. He has served on the Board of NW Industrial Business Association in NW Portland; Columbia River PUD Board, serving as the St. Helens Subdivision Director, worked with the Rodeo fundraisers, and worked with students at the Benson High School house building program.
3. Serving nine years on the Planning Commission has been an eye opener and a process. Had to learn Roberts Rules of Order. Planning Commission only goes so far but does follow City process online. He has been involved as he can be.
4. Being an owner of a business, he listens to and considers what his employees say. However, in the end it is his decision. With Planning Commission, it is a vote. They talk through every decision made. Through discussion and discovery, they could change minds and be unanimous. Once the decision is made, he supports the majority.
5. No questions.

5. Scott Jacobson

1. Knowledge - studied City Charter, Master Plans, attended seminars offered, etc. Experience - active member of the Parks & Trails Commission, have worked with various staff members, attends a lot of Council meetings, and years of experience as a small business owner in the UK working with the government. Skills - not combative, weigh the issues, come to a balanced solution, and detail oriented. Contributions - collaborative approach and supportive of decisions. He will do his best to defend Council and staff from personal accusations.
2. Parks cleanup, labor for Habitat for Humanity, taught English to immigrants, volunteer work for low-income seniors, taught field methods to volunteers, and done pro bono work.
3. He keeps up with quite a bit. He is active on the Parks & Trails Commission. He believes that the finances are a result of what has happened in the past and the inability to raise property taxes. With Cascade gone, they must find other revenue sources. They have done a great job obtaining grants. They still need consistent and long-term revenue. They also need to educate community members about why the shortfalls exist. There is potential with the Waterfront Development to make St. Helens the envy of the Pacific Northwest. It's also important to remember the past. He would like to re-establish the Arts & Cultural Commission. He would also like to see St. Helens remain a livable and safe community. The Police Department is understaffed.
4. Last winter, there were concerns about the stage siting. He spoke with Planning staff and he was happy to move forward with it. He then heard from more staff and a former Councilor and brought those concerns forward again. He discussed those concerns with the City Administrator and other staff. He eventually withdrew his concerns and did not impede the project going forward.
5. N/A – exceeded time limit

6. Brady Preheim

He does not think 10 minutes is enough time. They should have had a pre-interview. He suggests selecting Ginny Carlson. She has the experience and is an advocate for the City and the vulnerable population. Diana Wiener is not a qualified candidate because she's not living in City limits.

1. If they don't pick Ginny, he will bring transparency to the City that is lacking. He will always say what he thinks is best for the City. He is not afraid to speak up. He was born and raised in St. Helens.
2. He is probably the only candidate who has attended almost every Council meeting, Planning Commission meeting, Budget Committee meeting, Chamber of Commerce meeting, City of Scappoose meeting, Mainstreet meeting prior to them being closed to the public, Columbia 911 meeting, Columbia County meeting, Port of Columbia County meeting, Columbia River Fire & Rescue meeting, and Columbia River PUD meeting. He also hosts a weekly radio talk show that exposes the good and bad of people

throughout the County. He served as a Ford Leadership Community Ambassador and volunteers frequently for Spirit of Halloweentown.

3. Some of the major issues the City is facing is the budget, Waterfront development, and the police station. Last night, the Planning Commission denied the police station permit, which makes it even more complicated.

4. He has been on a team that he has not agreed with many times. They cannot get anything done unless you get at least two people to agree with you. They must treat each other with respect and work as a team. The public hates to see contention on the Council. He will voice his concerns but is prepared to support the decision once it's made. They should disqualify any person who has come before the Council or online and tried to boost their candidacy for the position.

5. When are you going to appoint Ginny?

7. Jared Stram

1. He has experience working with teams and committees to help come to decisions and create consensus. He is the Oregon Regional Manager of Utilization Review for Providence Health and Services. He manages a team of 30 nurses working remotely across the state on insurance reviews. In his work history, he has chaired a counsel of interdisciplinary staff at St. Vincents of about 40 members across nursing. They implemented and developed policies and did education for the entire hospital. They follow high reliability organizations and conscious capitalism for running a business. He graduated with a Master's in Business Administration in 2022, receiving numerous awards, all of which will help him be a good team member and help the City reach its goals.

2. He served as a School Board member and vice president for Columbia County Christian School; blood donor; four children between 9-17 that keeps him involved in various community activities, such as sports and youth leaders club. His son, Hayden, has participated in the "If I Were Mayor..." Student Contest several times. His youngest son has severe autism and is immune compromised. He submitted testimony to the State Legislature for two healthcare bills on his behalf.

3. He has spent time reviewing City Council minutes, goals, strategic workplan, Waterfront project, and Industrial Business Park. He does not come here with an agenda. He wants to help guide decisions on what will advance the City and residents.

4. Many times as a nurse, he has disagreed with a decision of a team he was involved with. It is important that all members speak about their concerns. Not allowing everyone to express their opinions can lead to worse feelings in the future. When he doesn't agree with a team decision, he makes his opinion known respectfully and then abides by the final decision.

5. Do you have a standardized orientation? Mayor Scholl confirmed they do. There is a manual that is reviewed with staff and classes are available as well.

8. Stephen Topaz

1. He has served on City Council and has also been involved with State and Federal governments in the past. He was able to get the County clock working after 20 years. He was on the first transplant team for a kidney transplant at Cleveland Clinic, the first heart transplant team with Johns Hopkins, and on the team that took a two-year medical school to a four-year medical school at Rutgers, which was a State University so collaborated often with the State government. His main specialty is technical. He is a Mechanical Engineer, licensed most of his career in Maryland. Most of the time he is the single person providing technical information. He put together the first paperwork for the FDA to get the artificial heart implanted clinically in people, which included a lot of agency collaboration. His business has been technical and involved.

2. He was on the Girl Scout Counsel in New Jersey, where he led moving a camp from the Adirondacks to New Jersey and organized Camporees on Federal property; Cub Scouts in Massachusetts; and raised funds for the Episcopal Cathedral in Utah. In St. Helens, he helped start the Mainstreet project; involved in the Maritime Festival Committee; and shares food at the Food Bank.

3. He is quite familiar with the City's affairs. He regularly attends Council meetings and talks to people in the community. He is most interested in Maul Foster and DEQ technical reports and how they affect the city. He has been observing the reservoir problems for a long time and makes technical observations that other people don't understand.

4. City Council has had a couple of illegal meetings and he was the only one who stood up and reported them to the Oregon Government Ethics Commission (OGEC). He also speaks up when he hears non-technical responses to technical problems. His business is to get things done and not create friendships. He'll be with them if he agrees but stands firm when he disagrees at a technical level.

5. What are they going to do with the lagoon cooling pond with the closure of the paper mill and the idea of it becoming a waste dump? When will the community be asked what they want? Mayor Scholl said that geological testing on the lagoon still needs to occur before they can do anything. It is just a hypothetical idea at this time. Steve said there was a problem with the marijuana grow facility. It was not presented to the community until 2018, but the decision to sell it was in 2017. How can the Finance Director do that without the Council or community knowing about it? Mayor Scholl said that person is no longer with the City.

9. Steve Toschi

1. He is knowledgeable about the operations of City government, general plan, water and sewer plans, housing needs analysis, Planning and Development laws, Parks and Trails Plan, attends Council meetings, remodeled a house and worked with staff, met with staff about areas of concerns regarding Public Works sewer and water, studied the City's budget, made Public Records Requests concerning the City's budget, seen and analyzed the court orders and pleadings regarding the City litigation concerning the lease and sale of land to the pot farm, familiar with Planning laws, involved with civil litigation matters where a city has been a party, read the City Charter and Municipal Code, receive League of Oregon City (LOC) emails, received training about ethics, and read the decisions of the OGEC in regards to the City Council Executive Session meeting complaints made by Steve Topaz. His skills include being a licensed attorney in Oregon and California with unique experience and qualifications to bring accurate assessments to the Council regarding legal and regulatory issues, skilled in negotiations and presentations, can explain things so people can understand them, recognized as an exceptional attorney by his peers, voted super lawyer multiple years, manage other attorneys, skills to advise Council of whether the attorneys they are using are the best for the job, he is part owner and manages a law firm that employees 25 people, and is computer literate. His contributions would include time and energy spent on issues facing the City, work with people all the time who expect professionalism from the Council, work with the commission he is assigned, work cooperatively with Council, and help the Council accomplish their mission and goals.

2. He attends many social events, member of Elks Lodge, member of Rotary Club, participates on two swim teams and hopes to put on a fundraiser swim event, and attends local music, racing, and car shows. In the past, he has served as Little League coach and on the Board. He fishes a lot, volunteers at swim events, taught swimming lessons, and taught lifeguard classes.

3. He is quite familiar with public affairs. He served on the Planning Commission and continues to follow issues. He is aware of many legal issues, has studied the budget and budget report, read the Urban Renewal materials, and has seen how City government works and when it does not. It does not appear that City finances have been mapped out well for long-term planning. He is very concerned about suppression of speech and Resolution 1986, which he believes to be unconstitutional and will lead to litigation. The City has a lot of potential. He hopes they can work together to improve.

4. Very few decisions he has been involved with have been his. He works in a collaborative environment. Decisions of the Council and Planning Commission are made as a group. They are not individual decisions. He will advocate and listen to the views of others. His mind is always open. Once a decision is made, he will live with it. No one should form a decision prior to the meeting. He hopes they can work together as a team.

5. When will a decision be made? Mayor Scholl said they will discuss it and make a decision after this.

10. Diana Wiener

1. She has 30 years of work life, from being a waitress and maid, experience in higher education and law, to now being a tech executive. She has experience with managing people, working with government regulations and compliance, security response, and change management. In 2019, her company sold for \$1.2 billion and is now a \$3 billion company. It has grown from 400 employees to over 1,000. She has 20 direct reports, of which three live in Columbia County. She created all the processes around communications and operations that her team is responsible for. She communicates daily with customers and representatives of Fortune 500 companies. Her skills are communications, business development, operations, education administration, and law. She is also very familiar with Roberts Rules of Order and has helped with finances at her company. As far as government experience, she has worked for both Multnomah County and Oregon State Department of Justice. She has read the City Charter and Municipal Code and has extensive familiarity with the Oregon Revised Statutes. She is very involved and invested in both Oregon and St. Helens. She moved here five years ago and loves the community. She volunteers with the Library Board and Mainstreet.

2. She is the Mainstreet board secretary, a member of her college's philanthropy board, served on a nonprofit fundraising committee raising thousands of dollars, and volunteered with the Volunteers of America Home Free Board for two years, helping people obtain restraining and protective orders. She also has 15 years as a victim advocate for survivors of domestic violence and assault.

3. She is very familiar with current affairs. She subscribes to the newspaper, watches Council meetings on YouTube, is involved in Mainstreet, follows the Waterfront Development Project, and worked with Associate Planner Dimsho on City Planning things. Serving with Mainstreet, she was part of the Grant Committee and met with a lot of local business owners. She is also familiar with the police station siting.

4. Handling emergency communications, she must work with multiple departments to determine what matters to the end user. Like City Council, they need to be proactive at having answers readily available. The City does a lot of work but it's not always visible to community members. She would like to improve communications.

Mayor Scholl asked Diana to explain the status of her residence. Diana explained that her house was hit with a firework and caught fire on July 4, 2022. She has one residence, which is in St. Helens, where she is also registered to vote. She does not pay rent anywhere else. All her mail is forwarded. She is staying at a friend's house in Scappoose while construction is completed at her house. She would be in that house if they could be.

5. What are they looking for in a Council member? She understands they are all volunteers and have a responsibility to be good role models. Mayor Scholl said it would be someone in the community, very respectful, and listening to what the community wants and needs.

Mayor Scholl thanked all the applicants for being involved. St. Helens is a better place with them.

Break - 6:46 p.m.

DELIBERATIONS AND VOTE

Council's top choices:

- Councilor Sundeen - Russell Hubbard
- Councilor Gundersen - Russell Hubbard
- Council President Chilton - Jay Echternach and Russell Hubbard
- Mayor Scholl - Ginny Carlson, Russell Hubbard, and Jay Echternach

Council talked about Russell Hubbard and his nine-year commitment to the Planning Commission, ability to ask good questions, treats people fairly, ability to agree to disagree and move on, is insightful, and calm demeanor.

Council President Chilton was impressed with all the interviewees and their bravery. She encouraged them to stay involved.

Councilor Sundeen was happy to see people who loved the community and wants what's best for it. It was a pleasure getting to know them.

Mayor Scholl asked everyone to stay involved. They are welcome to reach out anytime.

Russell Hubbard accepted the nomination.

Motion: Motion made by Councilor Gundersen and seconded by Council President Chilton to appoint Russell Hubbard to the City Council. **Vote:** Yea: Mayor Scholl, Council President Chilton, Councilor Gundersen, Councilor Sundeen

There will be a swearing-in ceremony at City Hall on Friday, September 15, at 11:00 a.m.

Russell informed everyone there is now an opening on the Planning Commission. He encouraged them to apply.

City Administrator Walsh shared his congratulations. There is a robust onboarding process.

ADJOURN – 7:02 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder.

ATTEST:

/s/ Kathy Payne
Kathy Payne, City Recorder

/s/ Rick Scholl
Rick Scholl, Mayor