



COUNCIL PUBLIC FORUM

Wednesday, April 21, 2021

APPROVED MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT

Mayor Rick Scholl
Council President Doug Morten
Councilor Patrick Birkle
Councilor Stephen R. Topaz
Councilor Jessica Chilton

STAFF PRESENT

John Walsh, City Administrator
Matt Brown, Assistant City Administrator
Kathy Payne, City Recorder
Jenny Dimsho, Associate Planner
Mouhamad Zaher, Public Works Director
Rachael Barry, Government Affairs & Project Support Specialist

OTHERS

Seth Otto, Maul, Foster, & Alongi	Margaret
Abbi Russell, Maul, Foster, & Alongi	Jeff
Vita Larsen	Drew Miller
Michelle Damis	Art Leskovich
Pat	

OPEN PUBLIC FORUM VIA ZOOM – 6:00 p.m.

TOPIC

1. Update on Waterfront Redevelopment, particularly the Central Waterfront Project

St. Helens resident Michelle Damis was the moderator for the evening. She introduced all of the participants presenting tonight and laid the ground rules for the meeting. A copy of the complete presentation is included in the archive packet for this meeting.

City Administrator John Walsh gave a high-level overview of the Waterfront Redevelopment project. The key properties are the Riverfront District (22-acre former Veneer Mill), the Central Waterfront (50-acre Wastewater Treatment Plant, lagoon, and surrounding property), and St. Helens Industrial Business Park (205-acre heavy industrial zoned land).

Public Works Director Mouhamad Zaher followed with further details on the projects. These projects are beneficial economically and environmentally. The two key projects at this time are the riverwalk and park expansion and the roadways and utility infrastructure.

Walsh pointed out the slide on the screen is a conceptual design. The consultant will submit final proposals based on connectivity. The St. Helens Industrial Business Park can potentially support employment, drive economic development, boost livability, and attractiveness. The Urban Renewal District, Enterprise Zone, and Opportunity Zone also lends to the attractiveness of the property. The

2020 parcelization and infrastructure finance plans have been completed. Zaher added that this is a great time to focus on the economic benefits.

Walsh detailed the four-phase approach to parcelization. Infrastructure is a huge component to making it useable to smaller businesses. Zaher added that the projects are listed by priority and funding. The development will add a great presence to the local community, provide convenience to everyone who lives here, and revitalize job opportunities.

Seth Otto of Maul, Foster, & Alongi reported that they have been working with the City since 2013. He talked about the projects he has been involved in with the City. Tonight, they are focusing on the Central Waterfront. It totals 50 acres; 39 of which is the lagoon. The lagoon was constructed as part of the former Boise Cascade Pulp Mill to process their water byproducts. Cascade Tissue no longer processes their byproducts through the lagoon, so it essentially sits there, except for a small portion to serve the City's municipal needs. A concept was developed to partner with entities performing maintenance dredging of materials that cannot be placed back in the water, making the lagoon an upland disposal facility. Filling the lagoon creates new, usable land. They have conducted studies to understand the conditions. For the most part, it sits on basalt. Up to this point, the project has been funded in partnership with the City and various State departments. The next steps will require additional funding. There are potential sources of federal funding. This project meets a number of the requirements for the American Rescue Plan (ARP). It brings a lot of benefit to the community and the region. The tipping fees would generate a significant financial benefit to the City and future development. He showed a possible conceptual design of the property. It is potentially 50 acres of brand-new land.

Councilor Chilton walked the property with Walsh. She asked if the American Rescue Plan is the only funding source for the project. Seth responded that the ARP is bringing \$2.8 million to St. Helens. He understands there is a list of Capital Improvement projects. A great deal could be done with some of that funding. Walsh added that progress is very contingent on funding. They are looking at multiple funding sources. It benefits the City and the region. Councilor Chilton wants it to be very clear that it is "government stimulus" for our community and they will ask about it.

Councilor Topaz read the report. He found some things disturbing.

- Appendix H. Maul, Foster, & Alongi recommended that no fill be above the level because the ability to build a stable foundation did not exist.
- He talked about the temperature being higher in the bottom of the core holes. There is a huge amount of heat being generated.
- There were a couple spots they only hit dirt and not basalt. The DOGAMI maps show there is a landslide problem in that area.
- There was a cave-in when the holes were being drilled. There was a significant amount of groundwater around the stormwater pipe.
- There is a disaster map or pollution map that shows the Multnomah Channel coming out of the Portland Harbor to the Frogmore Slough. It shows a pollution problem.
- The ground along the riverfront is unstable. The Army Corps will fill it in for free. Who pays for the unloading and dewatering equipment?
- The picture did not show a Wastewater Treatment Plant. Where is the sewer plant?
- He has real problems with the fact that the ground underneath is unstable. The membrane was placed in the 1960's. What has been in the cooling pond and the sewer plant has been polluting whatever is underneath there. The cores did not go underneath the lagoon. There is a problem underneath the ground. How do they propose to handle that?

Seth is unable to answer all of those questions tonight. He requested Councilor Topaz submit a letter or email for them to address those concerns. Councilor Topaz said he has already sent a critique to DEQ. He will send Seth a copy.

Seth agreed that there are questions about what is underlaying the lagoon. There are areas that they did not hit bedrock. That is why additional studies need to be made. What they have looked at so far does not appear to be a fatal flaw.

Councilor Topaz asked if they realized the levy once failed. Seth was not aware of that. Councilor Topaz said he spoke to people who put it back together. It was breached because of heavy stormwater.

In response to Councilor Topaz's question about the Wastewater Treatment Plant not shown on the conceptual plan, Seth said that is assuming it would be relocated.

Councilor Birkle:

- Clarified that the timeline speaks about the final conceptual design for filling the property, and not what will be placed on top.
- He hears residents asking if the material being brought in is toxic waste. He understands that City has been doing its diligence to make sure that whatever is brought is not toxic waste. Can they explain the nature of the fill?

Seth said they have identified the primary sources of fill coming from maintenance dredging of the Columbia River, Multnomah Channel, and Lower Willamette River. Some of what comes from the Willamette may have been impacted by industrial uses. Anything deemed hazardous is collected separately and sent to a controlled landfill in Arlington.

Public Comments

- ◆ Arthur Leskowich. Reviewed his concerns.
 - It will always be a landfill and liability.
 - There was discussion of funding. It will be a minimum of 20 years to have use of the property.
 - He would like to see the alternatives they have looked at for that property and how to clean it up. He suggested using the space for marinas and floating homes.
 - There is a liability with a toxic waste landfill. It needs to go into a lined landfill a mile upstream of our drinking water intake.
 - The reports are biased with an end result in mind.
 - One of the biggest benefits is to the State of Oregon and City of Portland. A lot of the money funding this project is coming from them.
 - There is no guarantee of what is going to happen.
 - The waste is contaminated.
 - A year ago, the City was excited about a new company coming to town to make use of the Waterfront. They were unaware that the moorage area was right in the middle of the most contaminated sediments on St. Helens waterfront. He informed City personnel of what was happening, and nothing occurred. There is a fish advisory from the Portland Harbor to the edge of the Island. There has been no notice to the public about contaminated fish.
 - There are a lot of fatal flaws and a lack of transparency. He is not comfortable with the path and pace this project is taking.

Seth appreciates Art's perspective. It is an unbiased report, scientifically prepared. A lot of the funding did come from the State. As a result, there was a very involved working group that included DEQ, Department of Fish & Wildlife, and DSL.

Arthur would like the City to provide all the alternatives studied, cost benefits, and levels of those types of clean-up. He talked about the benefits versus the liability involved.

Government Affairs & Project Support Specialist Rachael Barry directed viewers to the City website for more information www.sthelensoregon.gov.

CLOSE PUBLIC FORUM – 6:59 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder.

ATTEST:

/s/ Kathy Payne

Kathy Payne, City Recorder

/s/ Rick Scholl

Rick Scholl, Mayor