



# COUNCIL WORK SESSION

Wednesday, April 03, 2024

## APPROVED MINUTES

### MEMBERS PRESENT

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

### STAFF PRESENT

John Walsh, City Administrator	Gloria Butsch, Finance Director
Kathy Payne, City Recorder	Crystal King, Communications Officer
Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder	Bill Monahan, Contracted City Attorney
Suzanne Bishop, Library Director	Tina Curry, Contracted Event Coordinator
Mouhamad Zaher, Public Works Director	

### OTHERS

Steve Topaz	Hannah Woods	Howard Blumenthal
Ron Trommlitz	Stephanie Patterson	Brady Preheim
Mason Erickson	Jen Massey	MM
Adam St. Pierre	Steve Toschi	Arthur Leskowich
Willow Bill	Jill Adams	Robyn Toschi
Jenn	Mitz	

### CALL WORK SESSION TO ORDER – 2:00 p.m.

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

- ◆ Ron Trommlitz. Apologized for the disruption after his comment on March 20, 2024. He stated client privilege could be used for anything, which led to suspicion of the City's motives. There was not enough transparency, and he wanted the information from the report that was being held under client privilege to be disclosed. Mr. Trommlitz had been asked by other people for updates about the 2-million-gallon reservoir. Verbal communications could not be used as evidence and people kept from making comments that were witnessed or recorded. The Mayor's comments from November 16, 2022 had stated the City had shared responsibility for the 2-million-gallon water reservoir rehabilitation failure. Mr. Trommlitz had received a threatening message telling him to refrain from pursuing more information about the reservoir or suffer the consequences. When the Mayor and Public Works Director gave interviews about City priorities neither had mentioned the reservoir. He stated the reservoir was not a priority to the City and it had become a casualty.
- ◆ Brady Preheim. Had not seen an official announcement about Project Sprint. The Mayor of Scappoose had announced the withdrawal of Project Sprint at their City Council meeting. There should be an announcement from St. Helens about Project Sprint. Scappoose was happy that the deal with Project Sprint did not go through. Mr. Preheim commended Scappoose City Councilor

Holmes for calling out the Columbia County Transparency and Accountability webpage for hypocrisy and false information. Silence was consent, and not responding was agreeing. The former Finance Director had made an agreement not to talk, but he still had commented on issues. Mr. Preheim said the City should either lend the Flying Eagle canoe to Willow Bill or put it on display.

Mayor Scholl read a letter about the end of Project Sprint. He was thankful for all the time and resources dedicated to the project.

- ◆ Willow Bill. Stated he did not want the Flying Eagle canoe, but no one else was taking care of it. He had been trying for 16 years to protect the canoe, which was a national treasure. Wauna Credit Union was prepared to pay for half of a case to display the canoe. He wanted the canoe to be displayed and taken care of. A log did not need to be certified to be on the river. There was a lot of documentation about the history of the Flying Eagle canoe. He hoped the Council would make a decision about how to address the canoe, but he did not want the canoe declared as surplus property.
- ◆ Howard Blumenthal. Talked about the Flying Eagle canoe. He suggested giving the canoe to Willow Bill since he was willing to take care of it and display it. The condition of the canoe was uncertain after weathering under a tarp. The canoe had not been out much in the last couple years. Mr. Blumenthal hoped construction projects would be kept on track, and he noted the far end of the waterfront property had been blocked off for one and a half years with nothing going on. It would be great to give people a way to access the trail from the other side of town. The path through construction in town seemed to change every day. He hoped the construction would be done soon so citizens could access the waterfront safely.
- ◆ Hannah Woods. Ms. Woods presented a draft proposal from Cascadia Glamping in response to the Council's request for proposals (RFP) for event coordination and management. The proposal discussed re-evaluating and revitalizing signature events in St. Helens. Cascadia Glamping took pride in their unique approach to event planning, and their vision was to create immersive experiences through community events curated to reflect the essence of St. Helens. A detailed comprehensive plan had been written for each event to ensure high quality experiences would be financially sustainable. Cascadia Glamping was committed to community involvement and support, enhancing event experiences, and supporting vendors. All factors would be considered to ensure events would be executed professionally and precisely. They were excited to collaborate with the City and local partners to create memories.
- ◆ Steve Topaz. Gave the definition of a corrupt government and stated that the Council would approve the minutes regardless. He noted there was a huge delay on releasing meeting minutes due to failures of the government. He discussed the emotional attack on the Tourism department, and he stated that not knowing how the money flowed was a sign of corruption. Mr. Topaz said there had never been a public discussion on possibly turning lagoon into a waste dump, and the City Administration should be doing what the people wanted to do. He said the public comment period was too controlled and that limitation of freedom of speech was an indication of a corrupt government. He stated there were several things that did not put a good light on how the government was run in St. Helens. He hoped the City would clean up its act.
- ◆ Steve Toschi. Discussed the possibility that he and his wife, Robyn, would be willing to resolve the legal dispute regarding the prospective location of the new public safety facility. He stated that this was the time for collaboration. The Council should have an accurate understanding of

the cost of building the new public safety facility in each prospective location, and the information could only come from reliable sources. Mr. Toschi asked the Council to prioritize the Urban Renewal Plan goal to invest in revitalizing the Houlton district. He stated that the legal settlement discussion would include ensuring that mistakes were not made again and examining how the mistakes had occurred. The Council should be provided with reliable recommendations, and Mr. Toschi was concerned that information about the possibility of building the public safety facility at the Houlton site was missing from the discussion tonight. Mr. Toschi recommended exploring all the options during the discussion. Mr. Toschi and his wife wanted to ensure the public safety facility project was not killed and he hoped they could pull together and do it right.

- ◆ Robyn Toschi. Was a native of St. Helens who had returned in 2019. She described St. Helens as a beautiful, small town. She talked about her memories of the busy shops and restaurants that used to line Houlton, and she recommended putting the new public safety facility in that area. The site in the industrial area would not offer community interaction or commerce. She hoped the industrial area would not become another district. The Houlton District deserved more strategic planning using Urban Renewal funds and Main Street grants. Ms. Toschi hoped the option of using the location in Houlton to build the public safety facility would be explored.
- ◆ Tina Curry. Read a letter written by a visitor to St. Helens who had a good experience at Halloweentown and had been very pleased with their visit. The visitor was from Austin, TX, and was a board member of Visit Austin. Ms. Curry detailed other credentials of the letter's author, noting that they had enjoyed 13 Nights on the River and watching the witches dance.
- ◆ Adam St. Pierre. Congratulated Terry Massey on reaching five years in the Police Department. He gave credit to the Council for reading emails, and he noted that sometimes silence was the best response. Mr. St. Pierre's organization provided transparency and information, although not everyone agreed with it. He stated the Council was expected to do their own research on provided information. He believed there was no reason to have an emergency extension on the Tourism contract, which had been procrastinated.

#### **DISCUSSION TOPICS** - *The Council will take a break around 4:00PM*

##### **1. Employee Length of Service Recognition - Terry Massey - 5 Years**

Mayor Scholl thanked Officer Terry Massey and presented him with a five-year award for his service.

##### **2. Review "If I Were Mayor..." Student Contest Entries**

The Council reviewed the submitted posters. Winners would be announced at the meeting tonight.

##### **3. Water Leak Adjustment Request for 404 N. 12th Street - *City Administrator John Walsh***

City Administrator Walsh reviewed the water leak adjustment request. A copy was included in the archive packet for this meeting. The leak had been repaired. A decision would be made at the meeting tonight.

##### **4. Water Leak Adjustment Request for 695 N. Columbia River Hwy - *City Administrator John Walsh***

City Administrator Walsh reviewed the water leak adjustment request. A copy was included in the archive packet for this meeting. The leak had been repaired. A decision would be made at the meeting tonight.

##### **5. Discuss 13 Nights on the River Venue During Construction - *Council & E2C Corp.***

Event Coordinator Tina Curry reviewed a map of downtown and showed areas for Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and regular parking available and she discussed where the stage and vendors could be located if 13 Nights on the River was held at the Plaza.

Mayor Scholl showed on the map where five construction projects would be occurring in the downtown area during the event. They were not trying to take support from downtown businesses by moving the event, but they wanted to maintain public safety.

Event Coordinator Curry described where the shuttle could run and how the event could be arranged downtown. Mayor Scholl reiterated that holding the event downtown would not be safe during construction.

Council President Chilton respected Event Coordinator Curry's creativeness to make the event work downtown, but she did not think the event would work downtown for safety reasons, just for this year.

Event Coordinator Curry asked if the 4<sup>th</sup> of July would still happen. Council President Chilton stated the 4<sup>th</sup> of July would need to be creative.

Councilor Gundersen had received a lot of emails from downtown businesses that preferred the event be held at McCormick Park during construction.

Event Coordinator Curry said if the 13 Nights event was moved, she wanted the City to cover the insurance. Council President Chilton said that needed to be discussed with City Administrator Walsh.

Councilor Hubbard talked about an online poll done by The Chronicle in which 45 percent of participants thought the event should be postponed until it could be held downtown, and 41 percent voted to hold the event at McCormick Park. Council President Chilton noted that only a small percent of residents had responded to the survey.

Councilor Sundeen agreed that downtown was the ideal location to hold the event, but he did not believe it would be worth the risk to invite massive crowds into the downtown area during construction. Downtown would not be closed down, but it was not the place to hold an event. 13 Nights on the River could work for one year at McCormick Park.

Mayor Scholl said the City already had insurance on the park, and it would not be fair for the City to cover the insurance for the event. There needed to be more discussion on this matter.

The Engineering team had created plans for a walking path and a crosswalk at McCormick Park, and power would be supplied to the park.

City Administrator Walsh said they were working with the Columbia River People's Utility District (CRPUD) on developing the power supply at McCormick Park as it would be very busy downtown for the next couple months, and they wanted people to be safe.

Event Coordinator Curry talked about the potential issues with the logistics of holding the event at McCormick Park including garbage disposal, littering, and parking.

Mayor Scholl talked about where the beer garden could be located, and noted it was not necessary to have a beer garden.

Council President Chilton appreciated Event Coordinator Curry's flexibility and her work to create a successful event.

Mayor Scholl was tired of the matter being political and stated it should not be a fight.

The Council continued to discuss maintaining public safety during a year of construction while promoting businesses and vendors. Construction project timelines and outcomes were reviewed.

City Administrator Walsh said communications with business owners about upcoming construction projects had increased. Small businesses would be supported and highlighted during construction.

Mayor Scholl apologized to Event Coordinator Curry for his tone and getting emotional.

**6. Discuss St. Helens Industrial Business Park Property and Power - Mayor Scholl**

Mayor Scholl thanked Public Works Director Zaher for his work on Project Sprint. He discussed the grant that would pay for building a new power substation at the industrial business park. He hoped they could meet with Portland General Electric (PGE) representatives in person at the Mill site.

The Council discussed the possibility of opening the Mill or other developments using the power from the existing substation. PGE said the current substation was unsafe. The Council discussed power needs in the city. There was no reason not to use the grant to pay for a new power supply. City Administrator Walsh discussed a recent meeting about the grant and the semiconductor industrial funding coming from the State. PGE had been notified that the grant funds would be awarded. The new substation could be located anywhere.

Councilor Gundersen believed that Project Sprint would have stayed in St. Helens if not for the lack of power. Councilor Gundersen said upgrading the power capacity could attract other businesses.

The Council discussed the power needs of industrial businesses, and moving forward to create a site that would fit the needs of a new substation.

City Administrator Walsh said PGE had been notified and they were already working on solutions for power.

**7. Review Survey Results regarding Disposition of the Flying Eagle Canoe**

Mayor Scholl reviewed the survey results showing a majority of people wanted to declare the Flying Eagle canoe surplus and "set it free".

Council President Chilton talked about the amount of work involved in displaying the canoe respectfully. Insurance would not cover the liability for loaning out the canoe. The feasible options were to display the Flying Eagle or declare it as a surplus property.

Councilor Sundeen did not like the canoe sitting under a tarp, displayed in the park, or put in a case. The canoe could be vandalized. The Historical Society did not have space for it. There was no good space to display the canoe, and it was better to give it the respect it deserved.

Councilor Hubbard said the Flying Eagle had a huge following and it was a liability to keep it.

Councilor Gundersen wanted to see it enjoyed on the water as an educational opportunity.

Mayor Scholl talked about the work that had gone into the canoe, and the liability of keeping the canoe. The survey results were clear, and the decision would be made at the evening session where the canoe would likely be declared surplus property. He hoped no one would bid against Willow Bill.

City Administrator Walsh said the canoe could be declared surplus and then it could go to another public agency or to the highest bidder.

Willow Bill said the canoe would rot away if nothing happened. If they put the Flying Eagle up for surplus, the City would lose it. He stated the City did not have to surplus the canoe, and they could give it to him, as no one else was trying to preserve it.

Mayor Scholl clarified that by government process they would have to declare the canoe surplus.

Councilor Sundeen stated the insurance email had specified that while the canoe was in City care, it could not be used in the water.

Council President Chilton noted the only options to "free the canoe" were to declare it surplus, or give it to another governmental organization.

**8. Report from City Administrator John Walsh**

City Administrator Walsh presented his reports. Highlights of the report with input from the Council were as follows:

- Volunteer appreciation week would be later this month.
- The Council was in favor of planning a Boards & Commissions reception. They discussed current budgeting limitations, possibly using Beyond the Forest as a caterer, and noted attendance was normally low.
- Project Sprint would not be coming to St. Helens, but the City would continue moving forward with electrical upgrades for the industrial property.
- Both newspapers planned to cover the Project Sprint story.
- The City should share their stance and do a press release.
- City Administrator Walsh discussed his assignment for the League of Oregon Cities Energy and Environment Policy Committee regarding electricity and transmission.
- New energy technologies used the same poles but provided more power by changing the conductors in certain cases. There were some barriers to the permitting process.
- The process for new transmission lines used to take twenty years. The City hoped the process could be reduced to five to ten years.
- This was the first month not having Rachael Barry working for the City. She had worked on administration, grants, and coordinating networking and relationships. The work was now falling back on City Administrator Walsh, Communications Officer Crystal King, and Mayor Scholl.
- The City had been building relationships with cruise ships on the river as part of the Waterfront project. St. Helens could potentially have a cruise ship stop in the future.
- On May 3, 2024 a small cities meeting would be held to discuss regional priorities.

**ADJOURN – 3:37 p.m.**

**EXECUTIVE SESSION**

- Real Property Transactions, under ORS 192.660(2)(e)
- Consult with Counsel/Potential Litigation, under ORS 192.660(2)(h)

Respectfully submitted by Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder.

ATTEST:

/s/ Kathy Payne

Kathy Payne, City Recorder

/s/ Rick Scholl

Rick Scholl, Mayor