



COUNCIL WORK SESSION

Wednesday, December 06, 2023

APPROVED MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT

Mayor Rick Scholl
Councilor Mark Gundersen – arrived at 2:09 pm
Councilor Russell Hubbard
Councilor Brandon Sundeen

MEMBERS ABSENT

Council President Jessica Chilton

STAFF PRESENT

John Walsh, City Administrator	Shanna Duggan, Recreation Manager
Kathy Payne, City Recorder	Jacob Graichen, City Planner
Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder	Jenny Dimsho, Associate Planner
Crystal King, Communications Officer	Sharon Darroux, Engineering Manager
Mouhamad Zaher, Public Works Director	Bill Monahan, Contracted City Attorney
Suzanne Bishop, Library Director	Tina Curry, Contracted Tourism Director

OTHERS

Ron Trommlitz	Dustin King	Rory Moore
Bobbe Trommlitz	Brady Preheim	Jane Garcia
Colleen Ohler	Lynne Pettit	Steve Topaz
Stephanie Patterson	M. Millar	Jim Coleman
Erin Salisbury	Lane	Will Uebelacker
Steve Toschi		

CALL WORK SESSION TO ORDER

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

- ◆ Steven Topaz. Mr. Topaz believed his comments at the November 1 City Council work session being summarized in the minutes reduced them to a lie. He spoke about whether the cost of an estimated \$150,000 for stopping construction on the 1st and St. Helens Streets intersection to help the Halloweentown celebration would be paid for by the Halloweentown operation or by the City and why the monies for the intersection were not put in the original budget, submitting his full testimony in writing for the record.
- ◆ Ron Trommlitz. Mr. Trommlitz continued his comments from the November 18 meeting on his seeking answers about the 2 million-gallon reservoir rehabilitation failure, people considering suing him for doing so, and the denial of his request to see the Walker report, submitting his testimony in writing for the record.
- ◆ Colleen Ohler. Ms. Ohler pointed out she was not lying at the last meeting after Council President Chilton talked about not liking lies about the police. She offered to forward the 29-page email thread saying the St. Helens Police would not help with security for Halloweentown and would

not ask the Oregon State Police for help. She was happy to help write a proposal to ask the State for help. She thanked Council President Chilton as the only Councilor who helped during Halloweentown.

Councilor Gundersen arrived at 2:09 p.m.

- ◆ Brady Preheim. Mr. Preheim spoke about his disappointment in Councilor Gundersen's appointment to the Fire & Rescue Board and how it was a conflict of interest for people to serve two elected positions. He agreed about the need for more policy staffing and suggested temporarily dedicating the \$10 water bill fee to police staffing in the face of the upcoming retirements and putting out for a levy as promised to rebuild the police station. It was wrong and illegal to build the police station for 30 years on the water bill. He questioned the top-heavy management at the police station with 24 officers and only 10 on patrol.
- ◆ Steve Toschi. Mr. Toschi stated that on October 12, he posted on Facebook that he was going to apply for the Budget Committee. He asked others with accounting or business backgrounds to apply. He spoke about efforts by the City to encourage more applicants, and more people have applied. The City had everything needed to move forward with the Budget Committee, and he asked the Council to move as quickly as possible to approve the five applicants.
- ◆ Erin Salisbury. Ms. Salisbury thanked the Council for their work and stepping up to make the hard decisions. Most people showing up to meetings were complaining or asking for something. She was interested in the Wapama Way property discussion.

Mr. Topaz attempted to make another comment, but Mayor Scholl directed him to do so at the Council Regular Session tonight. Mr. Topaz registered a complaint that denying him another three-minute comment period was against the rules.

DISCUSSION TOPICS

1. Employee Length of Service Recognition - Crystal King - 15 Years

The Council recognized Communications Officer Crystal King for 15 years of service with the City of St. Helens. Mayor Scholl commended Ms. King for taking the City's websites to a higher level.

OTHER BUSINESS

City Administrator Walsh stated the Personal Services Agreement with Moore Site Services for on-call services at the mill site would be on tonight's regular session agenda. Rory Moore spoke about his background and knowledge of the mill. Mayor Scholl noted Mr. Moore was well respected and knew the infrastructure at the mill.

2. Strand Street and Wapama Way Corner Lot

Will Uebelacker, representing Lane Attrash, presented the proposed plan for the corner lot at Strand Street and Wapama Way, a copy of which was included in the archive packet, and requested to purchase the City property located at the northwest corner of Strand Street and Wapama Way, which would alleviate parking concerns for development in that area. The development would be a bridge connecting the historic downtown with the new Waterfront development.

City Planner Graichen recommended the right-of-way for both streets be dedicated prior to sale which would raise other questions to be addressed at a later time. The question for the Council was the willingness to dispose of the lot.

Mayor Scholl liked the idea because parking was needed for both facilities.

Councilor Hubbard stated he would like to see the old part of town grow organically. The Planning Commission needed to vet the idea.

Mayor Scholl said it first needed to be decided if the City would accept the proposal.

Erin Salisbury, as an adjacent property owner, spoke about her passion for development and how she wanted to make sure the first person who offered to buy the property was not given the only opportunity to make a bid.

Mr. Uebelacker confirmed that they applied for temporary shoring as the south wall was failing. The Code stated any remodel of an existing structure would not make the same parking requirement. If they did acquire the lot, they would ask for an extension so they could work with the community and the City in order to develop something that works for everybody.

Mr. Graichen added the order for shoring and potential demolition came from the Building Official. The incentive for the parking allowance rides with the building. He clarified regarding the corner lot below, the off-street parking exception would not apply because there was no building. But another provision allowed abutting on-street parking to possibly count towards the off-street parking requirement.

Associate Planner Dimsho agreed with Ms. Salisbury's points about a competitive process. Sometimes working with adjacent property owners was more beneficial. The City could also tie conditions of development to the sale. The Council acting as the Urban Renewal Agency had special powers for selling property and could sell property for less than market value based on what the Agency wanted to see built. Parking requirements were a huge burden.

Mayor Scholl stated not everything like sales of property needed to go to the Planning Commission first. The Council and staff discussed buying property, designing the property, and the process. Ms. Dimsho pointed out with so many eyes on the subject property, the City would want the Planning Commission to weigh in. Mr. Walsh added it would be an opportunity for the City to get frontage improvements for public benefit.

Mayor Scholl was in favor of the sale and bid process. Councilor Hubbard added the Council should have a process for any City-owned real estate someone wanted to purchase. Mr. Walsh added staff abided by Council's standing order to bring all proposals to them.

Mayor Scholl confirmed the matter would be discussed during the regular session tonight where the Council would make a direction.

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

Recreation Manager Shanna Duggan announced that they just celebrated their fifth anniversary of Recreation and presented her report, a copy of which was included in the archive packet for this meeting. She reviewed Recreation's 2023 statistics, their projects and goals, her board and committee work the past year, current programming partnerships, a registrations and demographics snapshot from the last 60 days, the 21st Century Community Learning Center Grant, next steps, and their recent programs.

Mayor Scholl expressed appreciation for the after-school programs and Ms. Duggan's work.

4. Planning Division Semi-Annual Report - *City Planner Jacob Graichen & Associate Planner Jenny Dimsho*

City Planner Graichen and Associate Planner Dimsho presented their report, which covered eight months instead of six and a copy of which was included in the archive packet for this meeting. Ms. Dimsho updated the Council on the Riverwalk Project Phase I, the Oregon Department of Transportation Community Paths Program for the 7.7-mile regional trail between St. Helens and Scappoose, the Certified Local Government Grant Award for improvements to 135 S. 3rd Street, the Veterans Memorial Grant for the service flag/monument expansion at McCormick Park, other project management support, Urban Renewal Agency support, and the impact of the Cascades closure on Urban Renewal funds.

Mr. Graichen reviewed his report. Key items highlighted included the St. Helens Industrial Business Park, recruitment of the Planning Commission vacancy, the Commission's lead role in efforts regarding HB 3115, a thank-you to the Safety Committee for the new sign on the storage room door, Wapama Way's name designation, support on the reservoir project and donation of the properties off Pittsburg Road and Highway 30, Columbia County records coordination, FEMA's Elevation Certificate update, and the Engineer's TMDL project.

Ms. Dimsho reviewed current planning efforts such as the Amani Center and a historic resource review for modifications to the historic courthouse.

Mr. Graichen highlighted projects in the next six months of CCMH's zone change, the Columbia Commons subdivision, Broadleaf Arbor, the Skinny's area and non-conforming use resulting in expansion of access and parking for Skinny's, the police station, Belton Road partition, Code amendments, and planning for the St. Helens Industrial Business Park.

Ms. Dimsho announced that Planning had received a grant for the Economic Opportunities Analysis (EOA) update. Mr. Graichen noted the EOA and plan amendments are budget-neutral.

Ms. Dimsho stated that next week the joint City Council and Planning Commission meeting would review Measure 101 psilocybin amendments for discussion.

5. Wastewater Collection System Capacity Improvements Project Update - *Public Works Director Mouhamad Zaher & Engineering Manager Sharon Darroux*

Public Works Director Zaher and Engineering Manager Darroux presented an update on the wastewater collection system improvements, a copy of which was included in the archive packet for this meeting. They reviewed the project background and timeline, an overview of the sewer basins improvements, the project engineering consultant selection process, the project costs forecast of \$16.4 million and grants received, and next steps including requesting the Council's approval to move forward with the design services.

Ms. Darroux provided further details about the sewer connection system and basins and what the project entailed from a technical standpoint. A Request for Proposals (RFP) was put out in October for professional engineering services. She highlighted the quality management part of the RFP and addressed the three proposals received. Consor was the final selection with what Ms. Darroux believed was one of the best and more robust quality control plans. Mr. Zaher noted the selection process was rigorous.

With the last Sewer Master Plan update prior to 2021 being done in 1989, Mayor Scholl wanted to make it clear his administration and the people working today were not kicking the can down the road and were addressing head-on significant issues in the City that had been neglected for many years.

6. Undergrounding Utilities at the S. 1st Street & St. Helens Street Intersection Update - *Public Works Director Mouhamad Zaher & Engineering Manager Sharon Darroux*

Public Works Director Zaher and Engineering Manager Darroux presented an update on the undergrounding of utilities at the S. 1st and St. Helens Streets intersection, a copy of which was included in the archive packet for this meeting, reviewing the project background, timeline, and the design update.

Ms. Darroux pointed out that tonight's agenda included a request for the Council to authorize resolution for an emergency procurement which allowed staff to directly solicit quotes from contractors to do the work, explaining why emergency procurement was faster and safer. The intersection currently had temporary traffic control, which cost \$25,000 per month. It had been difficult to secure competitive bids for the work; emergency procurement would still be a competitive bid.

She clarified communications utilities would be on all sides, mostly on the Wild Currant side crossing St. Helens Street. It would depend on what the communications companies would want. Mr. Zaher

emphasized why it made more sense to put in the telecommunication services while the intersection was dug up.

Break - 4:11 pm

7. Review New Building Permit Technician Job Description - *City Administrator John Walsh*

City Administrator Walsh reviewed the new Building Permit Technician job description (included in the meeting packet), last updated around 12 years ago, that had been vetted and accepted by the union. City Recorder Payne added the majority of administration duties were removed from the description and clarified Heidi Davis currently had the job title. The description was on tonight's regular session agenda for approval.

8. Discussion Regarding Police Staffing

City Administrator Walsh reminded the Council that this was a standing item on the agenda.

Key discussion items regarding police staffing were as follows:

- Mayor Scholl talked about the City's meeting with the union members and their agreement to look at hourly staffing and creating positions for the pending retirements.
- The union would like to see the \$10 fee be used to fund three positions and postpone building the police station. Councilor Sundeen agreed, adding the union made it clear staffing was their priority right now and they would like to see a plan to know what is coming up.
- Mayor Scholl addressed next steps in the process, that the union said ten-hour shifts would be ideal, and the possibilities for 24-hour service.
- He clarified the three positions would backfill the upcoming retiree positions until they retired and then would roll into the positions.
- He believed there was still a position in their budget and that the City should do its due diligence to look.
- The police station design could work in other areas, so it would not be completely wasted.
 - Mr. Walsh explained no money was being spent for the architect to look at what the design would look at in other spots and that everything, including the contractor, is on hold with the project and addressed definition changes to the Public Safety Fee implementing ordinance. The contract was pay as you go at this point with no hourly cost after the City said to stop.
- Mayor Scholl said with what was heard at the last Council meeting about the police burnout and the amount of overtime, the \$10 fee to fund three positions would best serve the community.
- Mr. Walsh spoke about how, from a budget perspective, the \$10 fee would not pay for the debt service on the facility. If the City were to continue construction on the facility, it would be an additional \$140,000 of General Fund money and would add to the budget woes. It made sense to hold on the police facility, budget-wise.
- Mayor Scholl emphasized the City had no control over Cascades closing which affected the City's finances. The decision was strictly a financial one on the part of Cascades.

9. Report from City Administrator John Walsh

City Administrator Walsh provided his report. Highlights were as follows:

- The City had the termination agreement with Cascades Tissue to which they had tentatively agreed. Attorneys had been working on it, and he had seen a rough draft. He met with them to discuss the terms. It would come to the Council for review as soon as possible, targeting the end of the year to wrap everything up.
 - Mayor Scholl reported the Council would bring in Water Quality Manager Aaron Kunders to talk about how the closure would affect the wastewater treatment plant.
 - A meeting would be held at the mill tomorrow to talk about an auction on site of the machines, motors, etc., in January or February.

- The City had been constantly working on Project Sprint. The major concern was that of power and transmission. The city had incredible water and wastewater resources as well as ample land. PGE was committed to help solve the issue. The Council and staff discussed looking at connecting to a bigger line. Mayor Scholl said the public needed to be educated on the vital importance of the project and that Project Sprint appreciated that the City was working on the power issue.
 - Walsh reviewed the potential build area which the Council discussed. A copy of a map of the proposed area was submitted for the record. Key discussion items included that PGE would pay fair market value for the site, how PGE would handle the fact that the current substation was obsolete, that the boundaries of the project would be subject to change, and the aggressive timeline of nine months for the PGE work. Mayor Scholl explained why he liked Parcel 1. The site would include PGE's desire for a road all the way around it. PGE could not order this until they had acquired the property which necessitated diligent work on the part of the City.
- Staff would bring to the December 20 meeting a personal services agreement for the \$60,000 Economic Opportunity Analysis grant from the state. EcoNorthwest was a recognized leader in the field and helped staff write the grant. As the amount was less than \$100,000, the City could do a direct appoint. Otherwise, the process would take a couple months.
- Last week, he sent an email to all staff and the Council about the financial impacts of the Cascades closure, the wind-down of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds, and the state of inflation. He asked the staff for ideas. One goal was not to go lower than 15% minimum reserve, which would take an estimated \$1,620,000. There was a menu of options, and he was hoping through the budget process they would get as close to a balanced budget as possible. There could potentially be a reduction of staff.
 - Mayor Scholl said some positions were funded with ARPA funds knowing the funds were temporary. The City did not expect the closure of Cascades. The City knew the budget would be tight budget, but there was hope with the Waterfront redevelopment. The City knew it would eventually work itself out through economic development. It would be a rough year. Mr. Walsh agreed that St. Helens was not the only jurisdiction facing such a challenge.
 - Ms. Butsch was targeting January 11 for the first budget orientation meeting, a couple of months earlier than the usual process.

Mayor Scholl asked Attorney Monahan to speak about appointing the spouse of a City employee to the Budget Committee. Jen Massey applied for the Committee and her spouse works for the Police Department. He confirmed she could be appointed. Depending on what the Budget Committee would act upon, there could be a potential or actual conflict of interest which would necessitate a declaration in the case of the former and recusing oneself in the latter. The situation was not uncommon for cities. Should Ms. Massey be appointed, Mr. Monahan recommended she be given the April 2021 Guide for Public Officials prepared by the Ethics Commission. Councilor Sundeen added that he contacted the Ethics Commission last year about a similar situation.

- With the COVID ARPA funding, the City had invested \$80,000 in broadband. Much of Columbia County and some areas of the city were poorly served. There is a lot of money available for these types of projects. Michael Curry with Strategic Network Group would give a presentation at the next meeting about securing funding to expand broadband in underserved communities. The expenditure was already authorized.
- Christmas Ships would take place on Saturday, and Tourism was hosting the Captains Dinner. The two fleets would combine.
- The Council had instructed staff to move forward on appraisals of City property, and Mr. Walsh listed which ones were in the process of being reviewed.

- The City had received notice that Columbia Fire & Rescue District no longer had a fire marshal, which was a concern for communities with building code programs. The City would meet with Chief Smythe to talk about the need for a fire marshal next week. Some logistics would need to be worked out if utilizing Scappoose's fire marshal through the Intergovernmental Agreement.
- The Tourism contract would expire at the end of year. One of the budget strategies was to lean more on tourism for another \$100,000. The contract did not have a revenue-sharing component. Staff had been meeting with the Tourism Director to discuss more of a franchise model where the City gets a percentage of the revenue. Councilor Hubbard recommended looking at the whole contract as some terms did not look correct, and Mayor Scholl agreed. Mr. Walsh explained that as an independent contractor the Tourism Director had a broad autonomy. In the franchise model, she would take none of the hotel tax. She would create all of her own revenue, and the City could have a percentage of it in addition to the hotel tax.

ADJOURN – 5:20 pm**EXECUTIVE SESSION – None**

Respectfully submitted by Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder.

ATTEST:

/s/ Kathy Payne

Kathy Payne, City Recorder

/s/ Rick Scholl

Rick Scholl, Mayor