



COUNCIL WORK SESSION

Wednesday, June 02, 2021

APPROVED MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT

Mayor Rick Scholl
Council President Doug Morten – arrived at 1:04 p.m.
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
Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder
Mouhamad Zaher, Public Works Director
Rachael Barry, Government Affairs &
Project Support Specialist

Crystal King, Communications Officer
Joe Hogue, Police Lieutenant
Jacob Graichen, City Planner
Jenny Dimsho, Associate Planner
Mike De Roia, Building Official
Tina Curry, Event Coordinator
Bill Monahan, City Attorney

OTHERS

Kellie Smith
Aurora Biggers
Brent Keller

CALL WORK SESSION TO ORDER VIA ZOOM – 1:00 p.m.

VISITOR COMMENTS - *Limited to five (5) minutes per speaker*

- ◆ Kellie Smith. As a St. Helens School District Board member, she thanked the Council for the partnership with Parks & Recreation. As a parent, she is here to talk to the Council about a prom for St. Helens High School students on June 19 at 7 p.m. on the Waterfront property. She thanked Parks & Recreation Manager Shanna Duggan for her help to quickly coordinate the location and waive the fees. Kellie is requesting financial support from the City. They have a rental and decoration fee of \$650 and a dessert table fee of \$350. The parents will be doing the prep, setup, tear down, and chaperoning. Council is welcome to assist with chaperoning as well.

Mayor Scholl is in favor of helping with some of the costs.

Councilor Chilton is in support but asked how they normally fund the prom. Kellie responded that fundraising is normally done all year. They lowered the fee to \$15 at the door or \$10 for pre-sale tickets. They have not been able to do anything like this all year.

Council President Morten arrived.

Councilor Birkle asked how much the City waived in fees. Kellie responded that she is not sure about the fee, but the usage fee was waived. Mayor Scholl thinks it is about \$50-100 in fees.

Councilor President Morten likes the dessert table idea.

Councilor Topaz asked if there were any other sponsors. Kellie responded that it is sponsored by parents. Consensus of Council to sponsor the dessert table with \$350. It will come out of Council funds.

DISCUSSION TOPICS

1. Planning Commission Annual Report - *Jacob*

1:09 p.m.

City Planner Graichen reviewed the report. A copy is included in the archive packet for this meeting.

The Planning Commission desires to have a joint meeting with the Council. They would prefer it to be in-person.

Councilor Birkle and Councilor Chilton agreed with the preference to hold an in-person meeting. Council President Morten preferred to wait until Oregon opens more. Mayor Scholl suggested meeting in September. Graichen will share that with the Planning Commission.

2. Police Staffing Discussion - *Joe*

Lieutenant Hogue reviewed the staffing needs report. A copy is included in the archive packet for this meeting. He talked about the low number of sworn officers, much of which is attributed to the low pay compared to surrounding agencies. He went on to talk about the process and expense to recruit and train new officers. Change needs to occur to retain officers. They will likely need to recruit six new officers in the next year. He reviewed the impacts on the community if changes are not made.

Assistant City Administrator Brown reviewed the current St. Helens Police Department salaries. He worked with the Police Department to create a nine-step salary range. They are proposing \$7,100 at the top step. The financial impact will be \$240,000/year. There are COVID relief funds available to help pay for this over the next two to three years. If the City moves forward, it will put a burden on the General Fund. They need to consider the funds that will be taken out for the proposed public safety facility. The City will need to be more careful about spending and hiring in the General Fund. The proposal also recommends adjusting the vacation accrual and starting officers with 40 hours of sick leave.

Hogue talked about the proposal being an attraction to officers with four to six years of experience. This puts them in line with other agencies.

City Administrator Walsh reported on the importance of succession planning. It reduces the reasons for people wanting to leave and encourages people to come here.

Councilor Topaz said if you want good people, you have to pay them. He sees a "nickel and dime operation." He does not see an attitude by the City to get really good officers by offering really good pay. Having a good police department and school system will attract people to the community. He said the City blew \$900,000 on an Engineering project at Godfrey Park that went belly up. They blew \$735,000 in not collecting rent for the marijuana grow operation. They need to get a good department and pay for it.

Mayor Scholl stated for the record that it is false that the City blew \$900,000 on an Engineering project in Godfrey Park. That was a subcontractor that messed up. The marijuana facility was a purchase agreement. He asked Council to speak up if they hear himself or another Council say something that is not true. They are not a second-rate police department. They have brilliant officers who are bringing attention to what is happening. There is a Public Works Fund for anything that happens in the Urban Renewal District. If they can use that in the future, they can make this happen.

Councilor Topaz clarified that he did not say the police department was second-rate. He wants them to be first-rate by a lot more, which is the reason to increase their salary above everyone else.

Councilor Chilton asked Lieutenant Hogue if he thought the increases will be effective in retaining and recruiting. Hogue thinks so. He just recently heard from an officer who was recruited outside of the area during a training. They have not been able to compete with the big eligibility lists.

Mayor Scholl asked if they could utilize Urban Renewal District funding for Public Works projects. As long as they continue to grow, they will be okay. Walsh said they are very fortunate to be growing right now. There is a saying, "You'll have the things you choose to afford." Supporting public safety is paramount to that mission. There may come a point you sacrifice other things. Brown added that the Urban Renewal District can help pay for some administrative costs in the General Fund when it becomes healthy and dependable. It will indirectly free up money to help pay for things like public safety.

Council President Morten asked Hogue about recruitment and the mortgage incentive. How many officers have taken advantage of it? Hogue thinks only four or five officers have utilized the benefit. It was only used by existing officers. It did not attract new officers. Most of the people in the metro areas already have a mortgage and are not interested in moving to St. Helens. Council President Morten asked if they considered doubling the mortgage incentive. He agreed they need to increase the salary. How time sensitive is this? Hogue wants to see the salary increase now to fill positions. He envisions a recruiting tour in 2023-2024 to fill the upcoming retirement vacancies. They did a lot of listening to find out what would bring people here.

Councilor Birkle agreed with Councilor Topaz about the salary. He values the work of new officers. It is a solid move forward. They may need to tighten their belt in other areas. Public safety and law enforcement officers endure a lot of stress. He agreed with the MOU as a first step. He thanked Hogue for the research and presentation.

Councilor Chilton agreed. They need to support police officers.

Mayor Scholl suggested this be added tonight for a vote.

Brown talked about the impact of raising the salary. There are some areas that St. Helens offers better benefits.

Councilor Topaz talked about the cost to citizens. It will cost citizens more with a reduced police department.

3. Discussion regarding Status of Arts & Cultural Commission and Youth Council - *Rachael*

2:02 p.m.

Government Affairs & Project Support Specialist Barry reviewed the status of the Arts & Cultural Commission (ACC) and Youth Council (YC).

Arts & Cultural Commission

- Formed in 2004 and 2005
- Currently on hiatus
- Had four vacancies in September
- Three remaining members
 - One is really interested in project-based work. Active with the Recreation Program.
 - One is generally interested
 - One was not responsive
- Reviewed the purpose of the ACC in the St. Helens Municipal Code.
<https://www.codepublishing.com/OR/StHelens/#!/StHelens02/StHelens0236.html#2.36>
 - The Code does not align with their desire for project-based work.
 - Requests two Council volunteers to review the Code, Mission fit, and staff support.

Council President Morten volunteered to serve on the review committee.

Youth Council

- Established in 2015
- There has been some reinvention since the Recreation Program created the Youth Leadership Club.
 - Assists in creating programming for Parks & Recreation and works on community-wide service projects.
 - The Club is open to students in grades 6-12 and meets monthly.
 - There are 15 youth participating, mostly middle school age.
- Reviewed the purpose of the YC in the St. Helens Municipal Code. <https://www.codepublishing.com/OR/StHelens/#!/StHelens02/StHelens0270.html#2.70>
- Suggests Council attend their meetings to get their input. Parks & Recreation Manager Shanna Duggan is a great leader of the group.

Council President Morten approves of the shift from Council to Parks & Recreation for oversight. He does not recall the Youth Council ever reporting recommendations to the Council.

Councilor Birkle did not completely agree with Council President Morten. He is glad there is a youth leadership program that is project based. However, he does still see the need for a Youth Council. He volunteered to assist with it. It was no fault of the youth involved, but the adult leadership provided was not all that it could be. Barry expressed that they do value the youth voice and input.

Councilor Topaz talked about the need to be flexible.

4. Discussion regarding SHMC 2.32 Council Elections - John

2:17 p.m.

Walsh reported that they are reviewing SHMC Ch. 2 for Code amendments. One thing that has been on his mind for many years is Council elections. St. Helens currently votes by position number. Some cities list all candidates, and you vote for your top choices. However, the mayor would always be on its own.

Councilor Chilton is opposed to it. She likes that people know what position they are voting for.

Councilor Topaz does not think it makes for an effective operation. Sometimes happiness and friendship are not the best road.

Council President Morten likes the change. Although, he also agreed with Councilor Chilton's pointed of running against a particular position. If all candidates are running for the same mission with a goal to work as a team, the vote for top choices might work.

Councilor Birkle requested Walsh bring a proposal for Council to review.

Mayor Scholl is okay either way. The voters vote for a reason.

Walsh talked about how open recruitment cultivates a team.

Councilor Chilton requested a citizen survey. Mayor Scholl agreed.

Councilor Topaz talked about it being a popularity vote. No one has the same abilities. He is leery of a popular vote.

Consensus to leave things the way they are.

5. Discussion regarding "Smith" Timber Sale - John

2:29 p.m.

Walsh reviewed the "Smith" Timber Sale bids. A copy is included in the archive packet for this meeting. It is on tonight's agenda for approval.

6. Review Proposed Application for City Grant Funds - Kathy

City Recorder Payne reviewed the application that was used when they did State Revenue Sharing grants. A copy is included in archive meeting packet. They were required to provide a report with how the money was spent. The Council may not want to include that level of reporting.

Councilor Chilton found the third and fourth pages confusing. She would like to simplify it. Mayor Scholl agreed with simplifying it.

Walsh reminded the Council that they discussed using the State Revenue Sharing for the Public Safety Facility. Mayor Scholl suggested re-wording it to "Council Appropriated Funds" or "Community Support Fund."

Council President Morten would prefer to see accountability of how the money was spent. Mayor Scholl agreed that it needs to be included in the application.

Payne will bring a proposal back to the June 16 work session for review.

7. Strategic Action Plan Updates

Brown reported that the only update will be discussed during executive session.

8. City Administrator Report

2:39 p.m.

- There are several resolutions on tonight's agenda for approval.
- Looking for Council's guidance for July and August public forums. He would like to do something at the new Recreation Center in September.

Councilor Topaz said the Waterfront is always a great public forum. He has a feeling a lot of people are confusing the entire Waterfront property with just Phase I. It needs to be clearer for the community. Council President Morten asked if he wants a concise plan for the property. Councilor Topaz responded that he is not looking for that. Morten agreed there needs to be constant communication and they have done that well. He disagreed with creating a plan for the entire area. It is smart to move in stages. Topaz disagreed with the communication. He is not hearing that on the street. They do need flexibility but have to be more repetitive. It is not completely understood right now.

Councilor Birkle agreed with Council President Morten. The City has done an unprecedented job communicating. People may not understand the phased approach, but they can continue to work on it. Ideas he had for public form are an explanation of the Urban Renewal District and Enterprise Zones and an update on the Riverfront Connector Plan to review the plan from the highway to the Waterfront property.

Mayor Scholl would like to see a SWAT meeting with all the cities, County, Port, and other agencies. They were doing well meeting and then COVID happened. Council President Morten and Councilor Chilton agreed. Scholl also requested an update about City County dinners.

- Millard Road Request for Proposals are due next week. He is seeking interest from the Council to review the proposals. EcoNorthwest will also review the economic and social impact of the proposals. Councilor Chilton and Councilor Topaz volunteered to review the submittals.
- St. Helens Industrial Business Park Request for Qualifications are due next week.
- The new community center needs to be named. Mayor Scholl suggested talking about it during a public forum.
- The technical advisory committees are meeting weekly to review the Riverwalk and Streets/Utilities project on the Waterfront. Both projects are moving along well.
- Over 500 survey responses were received for the Riverfront.
- There is a public forum on June 16 to review the Waterfront roadway alignment alternatives.

- The Riverwalk concept plans will be reviewed on July 21.
- There is a technical advisory committee meeting for the Riverwalk on July 14 at 4:00 p.m. Council President Morten and Councilor Chilton both volunteered to be involved in the review.
- Progress is being made on Main Street. They are recruiting members and working on a job description.
- He and Associate Planner Dimsho are making a presentation on Friday to the Infrastructure Finance Authority (IFA) Board to secure the funding for work on the Riverfront. It is a \$14.5 million request.

ADJOURN – 3:00 p.m.**EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Respectfully submitted by Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder.

ATTEST:

/s/ Kathy Payne
Kathy Payne, City Recorder

/s/ Rick Scholl
Rick Scholl, Mayor