



## COUNCIL REGULAR SESSION

Wednesday, February 17, 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  
Mouhamad Zaher, Public Works Director  
Tina Curry, Event Coordinator

#### OTHERS

Brady Preheim                      Kelly Merritt  
Natasha Parvey                  Autumn Oliver  
Scot Stockwell                  Heidi Oliver  
Jaime Smith

#### CALL REGULAR SESSION TO ORDER – 7 p.m.

#### PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mayor Scholl recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

#### VISITOR COMMENTS – Limited to five (5) minutes per speaker

- ◆ Brady Preheim. (received via email and read into the record) *Al Petersen is a BIG FAT LIAR. At the February 3, 2021 Council work session, I criticized the City Council for proposing to sign an MOU with SHEDCO. Mr. Petersen responded to my comments by calling me a liar, and then stating on the public record that he had contacted Ms. Stuart, and that she was in full agreement with the SHEDCO transition. This is a BIG FAT LIE. I spoke to Ms. Stuart on February 9, 2021 at 1:52pm and she informed me that she had not spoken with Mr. Petersen since BEFORE her presentation to the City Council on September 16, 2020.*

*I remind the Council of the recommendations made by Ms. Stuart at your September 16, 2020 work session (not in October or November as Mr. Peterson stated). In her verbal comments, Ms. Stuart, at around 38:42 into the meeting stated that ALL board members need to resign, and start with a clean slate, these are her words not mine. She stated that at least three times during her presentation. She then said that of the board members that have NOT term limited out, could be part of the City/SHEDCO group to recruit new board members, and could apply to be on the board again, with the City's approval.*

*AFTER a new board is created, and SHEDCO fixes their transparency issues and releases their minutes and financials to the City, an MOU with City funding for a paid main street coordinator*

*could be arranged. AGAIN, AFTER the current corrupt SHEDCO board is replaced, and documents provided. Having an MOU BEFORE is like the City trying to build a house, and you start with the roof instead of the foundation. Of course, I would not put that past the City.*

*The business community is a small one and we talk. There is not a business member in St. Helens that does not know about the corrupt practice that awarded the two Main Street grants to applicants for which Al was the architect. It is also widely known that Sommers Financials' application was not even considered. It really did not matter, as the outcome for the "contest" was corruptly predetermined.*

*I would also like to point out the first grant was LOST because of SHEDCO's incompetence. Unlike what Mr. Petersen would like you believe; the grant is given to SHEDCO for the benefit of El Tapatio. Any failure to use the grant are at SHEDCO's feet. Now, here we are coming up on two years for the theater grant, and so far, nothing has been done. Had his grant been given to KW or Sommers, it would have been used, as both of these businesses have already completed their projects. I love the theater and hope they use the grant. But another failure here not only reflects badly on SHEDCO, but it also reflects badly on the City and the Main Street program. These are wasted dollars we cannot afford to lose.*

*Finally, I would like to state for the record that I am many things, but a liar is not one of them. It would be wise for freshmen councilors to do their homework before they open their mouths and make themselves look like an incompetent fool. If I can spend the time to call Ms. Stuart, why can't you? If this is a job you do not want or have the time for, resign. The city council is one of the few in the entire state that gets a salary. It is time you earn it.*

Mayor Scholl corrected Brady's statement to say that the MOU requires them to start giving the City copies of their minutes and treasurer reports. Al Petersen stated that they are having a hard time getting board members right now. He encouraged people to join the Board. They can have up to nine members.

- ◆ Kelly Merritt, representing Next Renewables. They are building a renewable diesel facility at Port Westward. He was hired to assist with community relations. He previously worked at the Beaver Generating Plant for PGE 20 years ago. He was there for nine years and then went national with Enron, which moved him to Texas. He has since been trying to find ways to come back to the Clatskanie area. He was a very active member of the community when he lived there in the 1990s. This project is near and dear to his heart because he has looked at multiple projects to bring jobs to Clatskanie and Oregon. He has been building hydrogen zero admission power plants, major solar power plants, and all new technologies around the world. This is the first one of three that he has seen try to move to Port Westward that he thinks is a good fit. Product is moved in and out by boat. He talked about the renewable diesel process and permitting. He looks forward to bringing jobs to the community.

Council President Morten welcomed Kelly. What are the biproducts and how are they dealt with? Kelly responded that the solids and bleaching clay go back as a filtrate by truck or rail to either the landfill or another beneficial use.

Discussion ensued about the process.

- ◆ Jaime Smith. She has questions about the property purchase. What is the property being purchased for and where will the funds come from to purchase it?

Mayor Scholl asked for Jaime to wait for the property public comment period on the agenda.

**ORDINANCES – Final Reading**

- 1. Ordinance No. 3259:** An Ordinance Renewing Solid Waste Drop Box Franchise and Repealing Ordinance No. 3140

Mayor Scholl read Ordinance No. 3259 by title for the final time. **Motion:** Motion made by Council President Morten and seconded by Councilor Chilton to adopt Ordinance No. 3259. **Voting:** Yea: Mayor Scholl, Council President Morten, Councilor Birkle, Councilor Topaz, Councilor Chilton

**PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD - Purchase of Property at 2625 Gable Road**

- ◆ Jaime Smith. She has not seen this on any other agenda. What is the property being purchased for, where is the funding coming from, and how much will it cost?

Mayor Scholl explained that the funding is partly coming from last year's City reserves. The purchase price is \$800,000. It is potentially a future site of a recreation center. They have an agreement with the School District to have an all-encompassed compound for fields, gym, and facilities.

- ◆ Scot Stockwell, St. Helens School District Superintendent. He is in support of the property purchase adjacent to the school district property. The City and School District have a strong partnership. This is a great way to work together and build a stronger community. The property is a great location abutting the high school fields. Having just passed the bond, they will be renovating that whole area. It is a great opportunity to build pathways between the school and recreation center. He envisions all sorts of community events, as well as offering a place for kids to go after school. He is excited about the opportunities and would encourage Council to approve the purchase.

Jaime asked if the bond money is being used for this. Scot said no. Jaime asked if the \$800,000 includes enhancements and Code updates. Assistant City Administrator Brown explained that the \$800,000 is paid by the City. The building, as it is now, can be used as a recreation facility. He does not anticipate any renovations needing to be done at this time. The purchase agreement includes a due diligence period for an inspection to be done to determine if there are any issues, and if the contract needs to be re-negotiated.

Mayor Scholl added that the building includes three classrooms, two offices, a small kitchen, a bathroom, and then another building for the church facility with a larger meeting area with two ADA accessible bathrooms. The building seems to be a very good fit. Hopefully, the school construction class can help them if there are needs. Scot agreed that would be a good partnership.

Scot repeated that no bond dollars will be spent on the subject property. They do plan on adding and improving two baseball and two softball fields with turf fields to use year-round. Soccer fields would be in the outfields for the off-season. He talked about the emergency access this will allow.

Jaime asked if there are plans to continue using the current recreation center. Mayor Scholl responded that they plan to continue using the facility, at least until the proposed facility is ready.

Scot reviewed a picture of the proposed high school property layout.

- ◆ Brady Preheim. Unlike the proposal to tax the Public Safety Facility onto our water bill, he would have voted for the Parks & Recreation \$2 fee. However, he is really concerned about this purchase. The City seems to be spending money like a drunken sailor. First, they purchased the Boise facility, which is nice, and now they want to buy a church. He referenced worshipping at the "Church of Rick." He does not want to see another \$2 fee to purchase the building. He understands that most of the Council are either retired or work for a public agency, except for the mayor. They do not realize how bad this looks. There are lots of small businesses and

individuals who are struggling. It is not a good message for the City to keep spending money. It is very bad timing. Citizens should get an opportunity to vote.

Mayor Scholl commented that it is not the "Church of Rick." They do not take this lightly. A lot of work was done behind the scenes to negotiate the price. Kids are feeling unwanted and unneeded. Connect St. Helens will help bring them together to hear their stories. More than ever, they need a recreation program.

Council President Morten clarified that they will not be spending a million dollars to upgrade this facility. It is ready for use. There are parking facilities.

Councilor Birkle introduced his Russian Tortoise, Chewy. When he ran for Council, he used a photo of her hidden inside her shell with the statement that, "he is not going to hide in his shell when it comes time to make difficult decisions." They live in a represented democracy. While there are times when it is appropriate for the citizens to vote on issues, it is not the nature of federal, state, and local government to have citizens vote on every issue. That is why they were elected. He takes issue with the implication that he does not have time to do his job. No one, other than his wife, knows the time he spends after his eight-hour workday and on the weekends to fulfill his duties as an elected official. He agreed there are times that citizens do need to have a vote. He has not made up his mind of whether or not citizens should vote for the Public Safety Facility. If every property purchase were put out for a vote, the City would not go anywhere. He was elected to make hard decisions. This decision will benefit the City long-term. He is in favor of moving forward with the purchase.

Councilor Chilton was initially shocked when she heard about the purchase. However, this is creating a long-term partnership with the School District's new high school facility. She is in support of the purchase with the understanding that they will not be putting money into facility improvements.

Councilor Topaz talked about how St. Helens is changing. It is important to provide facilities for our young people. This was not an easy decision.

Mayor Scholl pointed out that children are our future. This is the best investment purchase he has seen since serving on Council. It makes the absolute most sense.

#### **APPROVE AND/OR AUTHORIZE FOR SIGNATURE**

2. Purchase of Property at 2625 Gable Road
3. Contract Payments

**Motion:** Motion made by Councilor Topaz and seconded by Council President Morten to approve '2' and '3' above. **Voting:** Yea: Mayor Scholl, Council President Morten, Councilor Birkle, Councilor Topaz, Councilor Chilton

#### **CONSENT AGENDA FOR APPROVAL**

4. Council Special Session, Work Session, Executive Session, and Regular Session Minutes dated January 27 and February 3, 2021
5. Animal Facility Licenses
6. Declare Surplus Property - City Hall Vehicles
7. Amendments to Non-Represented Job Descriptions
8. OLCC Licenses
9. Accounts Payable Bill Lists

**Motion:** Motion made by Councilor Birkle and seconded by Council President Morten to approve '4' through '9' above.

Discussion.

Councilor Topaz expressed the need for continued work on the job descriptions. Can the documents be amended further in the future? Mayor Scholl said they can be amended at any time.

Council President Morten was hesitant at how much was included for approval. It was a lot to digest at one time. He would prefer to have one item presented at a time.

Councilor Chilton questioned the Accounts Payable Bill Lists.

- What is E2C? Mayor Scholl responded that it is the event coordinator.
- What does the City get from E2C for \$10,000/month? Brown responded that it is part of the yearly contract for E2C to organize community and tourism events. Mayor Scholl explained how the Budget review will help this make more sense. Councilor Topaz said that is why he asked for more details about the expenses. Councilor Chilton agreed with auditing the cost to find out why the City is paying \$10,000/month for marketing. Brown clarified that it is not only marketing. The Personal Services Contract with E2C is \$10,000/month and renewable annually by the Council. Mayor Scholl added that the City does not pay for anyone hired by E2C. Walsh talked about the tourism revenue that offsets that expense. Tourism revenue is not tax dollars. That money is required to go back into tourism. The two main revenue streams for tourism are hotel taxes and event fees. They cannot spend more tourism money than what comes in. The tourism events bring visitors here to spend money at our shops and restaurants. Councilor Chilton expressed the desire to review it further at a work session.
- City of Portland Lab Services? Mayor Scholl said that is likely testing water.
- Professional services? Brown said that could be attorneys, janitorial services, consultants, etc.

Mayor Scholl pointed out that the City undergoes a very strenuous annual audit.

Councilor Birkle had similar questions when he served on the Budget Committee. He would be interested in knowing if there is an inventory of items purchased for tourism.

Discussion ensued about the perception of what is being done.

**Voting:** Yea: Mayor Scholl, Council President Morten, Councilor Birkle, Councilor Topaz, Councilor Chilton

## **WORK SESSION ACTION ITEMS**

None.

## **MAYOR SCHOLL REPORTS**

- Congratulations to the Employee of the Year recipients!
- Shout out to Public Works crew for all their hard work! There was a foot of snow and freezing rain on top of that.
- He is looking forward to spring.
- Thankful the Governor lifted orders from Extreme to High for Columbia County. It is nice to be able to sit down in a restaurant and eat.
- He really likes what he does and all the questions that the new councilors are asking.

## **COUNCIL MEMBER REPORTS**

Council President Morten reported...

- Acknowledged the businesses that have made it through this difficult time. Hopefully, the most difficult time is behind them.
- Before the big storm, he noticed a lot of people using the parks, even in the rain.
- Acknowledged staff and crews. They put a lot of effort into getting through the big storm.

Councilor Topaz reported...

- During the work session review of job descriptions, he talked about checking on the mental drug health of the system. He apologized that it could have been assumed that he was accusing Brown of that. He was using his position as an example. There is a problem with State law and drug testing.
- He spoke about the dredging maps a few meetings ago. The maps were given to Public Works Director Zaher. The purpose of the maps was to show the changes in the Waterfront over time. He talked about areas that need to be cleaned. The Waterfront is complicated.

Councilor Chilton reported...

- Spent time in the snow with her family. She appreciates that the City continues to close part of N. 4<sup>th</sup> Street for sledding.
- It was good to see people helping people during the snow event.
- It was nice to sit and eat at Plymouth Pub.
- She continues to get comments from people in the community about City projects. There are a lot of great ideas and committed citizens.

Councilor Birkle reported...

- He received a nice gift certificate from his instructional assistant for Plymouth Pub.
- He was glad to be able to go into his favorite restaurant establishment that caters to dogs and their lovers.
- It was fun in the snow.
- He attended the Public Safety Facility Public Forum on Saturday. It was a great presentation. He wants to hear from people. There are many more opportunities for citizens to participate. He wants to hear from citizens and business owners.
- He made a pledge when he ran for City Council, that he would set aside his stipend to create a foundation for environmental preservation in the community. However, with more immediate needs in the community, he is donating his entire stipend to organizations and causes for people who are in need. He will not be keeping any for himself. He does not believe that anyone ran to receive the stipend. It is given in recognition of some of the work they do.
- The Planning Commission welcomed a new member. He is impressed with the Commission's work and viewpoints.

## **OTHER BUSINESS**

None

**ADJOURNMENT** - 8:27 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder.

ATTEST:

/s/ Kathy Payne

Kathy Payne, City Recorder

/s/ Rick Scholl

Rick Scholl, Mayor