



COUNCIL WORK SESSION

Wednesday, September 03, 2025

APPROVED MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT

Mayor Jennifer Massey
Council President Jessica Chilton
Councilor Mark Gundersen
Councilor Russell Hubbard
Councilor Brandon Sundeen

STAFF PRESENT

Johne Walsh, City Administrator	Suzanne Bishop, Library Director
Kathy Payne, City Recorder	Dan Dieter, Library Assistant
Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder	Sharon Darroux, Engineering Manager
Crystal King, Communications Officer	Jacob Graichen, City Planner
Matthew Smith, Police Chief	Ashley Wigod, Contracted City Attorney

OTHERS

Arthur	Leslie Wilson	Brad Hendrickson
Adam	Steve Topaz	Dinae Monro
Jenn	Marci Sanders	Robyn Toschi
Erin Salisbury	Brady Preheim	Patrick Birkle

CALL WORK SESSION TO ORDER – 3:00 p.m.

CLEARING CONFUSION AND SETTING THE FACTS STRAIGHT

1. Response to August 20 Visitor Comments

Mayor Massey provided a chronology regarding a citizen concern about Ordinance No. 3310, which delegates duties to the City Administrator. She explained that Section 33 of the City Charter, approved by voters in 2012, authorizes City Council to appoint officers and delegate duties. Relevant actions included:

- March 20, 2019: Resolution No. 2038 updated the authority and duties of the City Administrator
- January 5, 2022: Ordinance No. 3002 codified authority and duties of the City Administrator
- May 21, 2025: Resolution No. 2038 updated the authority and duties of the City Administrator
- August 20, 2025: Ordinance No. 3310 codified the updated duties to be consistent with Resolution 2038

Mayor Massey clarified that the City Administrator does not have authority to sell real property. Under Ordinance No. 3310 and St. Helens Municipal Code 2.12, City Council must authorize the City Administrator before the City purchases and sells real property, though the authorization may include allowing final negotiations in substantial accordance with approved terms.

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

- ◆ Steve Toschi. Expressed concern about water rights related to the Arcadia project and contracts put out for public review. He stated the City claims rights to pull 40 million gallons per day from

the Willamette River/Columbia River channel. Toschi questioned whether these water rights are attached to the property being sold to Arcadia and emphasized that the City should ensure water rights are excluded from the deed to Arcadia. He noted the contract currently states the City will provide a license for 20 million gallons a day and an easement for access to the pump station.

- ◆ Leslie Wilson. Discussed her concerns regarding the Sand Island ferry. She explained that initially there was a free ferry service to Sand Island, but later residents were told they could only use the ferry if they were campers. Wilson expressed frustration that citizens of St. Helens who pay taxes can't use the ferry to access Sand Island unless they're camping there.
- ◆ Patrick Birkle. Followed up on the Sand Island discussion, noting he recently visited the island and had concerns about the relationship between the Sand Island Campground and the City, particularly regarding the City's oversight of the campground in light of development there. He also mentioned the upcoming compensation package discussion on the agenda, suggesting the importance of clarifying what "compensation for food for family, relatives, household members" actually means.
- ◆ Steve Topaz. Mentioned that he and Art had met with Mayor Massey and City Administrator Walsh about problems with the lagoon and thanked them for providing electronic copies of the minutes. He and Art have been involved with issues of moving Portland Harbor toxic waste to the lagoon since 2014, with a presentation scheduled for October 1.
- ◆ Brady Preheim. Discussed Sand Island and concerns about policing on the island, noting that there have been incidents and the City needs to address how police would respond. He also complained about construction quality issues with the waterfront project, including cracking sidewalks with poor-quality patches, lighting that doesn't work and has been broken for three weeks, and inconsistent design elements.

DISCUSSION TOPICS

2. Employee Length of Service Recognition - Dan Dieter for 10 Years

Mayor Massey recognized Dan Dieter for his 10 years of service as a Library Assistant. Library Director Bishop shared that Dieter was the City Employee of the Year in 2017 and described how popular he is with library patrons. She noted that children come in hoping he'll tell them jokes, and he helps adults find the right books. Bishop praised his mentorship of newer employees, deep knowledge of the library, and talent for finding cost-effective solutions.

Council presented Dan with a certificate and took photos with him and Director Bishop. Library staff also took the opportunity to promote National Library Card Sign-up Month, with Mayor Massey scheduled to sign a proclamation at the regular session.

3. Quarterly Reports from City Departments/Divisions (Informational)

Council reviewed the Police Department quarterly report. Council President Chilton commented positively on the community engagement activities mentioned in the report, particularly at Avamere, and welcomed two new officers to the department.

Mayor Massey discussed the need for a police staffing study, noting the last one was done in 2012. She asked for Council consensus to pursue a new staffing study to understand appropriate staffing levels based on current population. Police Chief Smith mentioned being down three positions with three conditional offers out, and operationally down five positions, with a goal of having 15 sworn officers back

to patrol by the second quarter of next year. Smith indicated he has contacts at the Hatfield School of Government who could assist with a staffing study.

Regarding the library report, Council President Chilton expressed excitement about the upcoming genealogy conference and the expansion of the makerspace. Mayor Massey highlighted the Columbia County Genealogy Conference scheduled for September 2025, featuring nationally recognized presenters, with participation available via Zoom or in person.

4. Annual Report from the St. Helens Senior Center - *Senior Center Manager Dinae Monro*

Senior Center Manager Dinae Monro presented the annual report for the St. Helens Senior Center. She detailed significant changes over the past year, including:

- The Center faced financial difficulties that led to handing back responsibility for the meals program to Community Action Team (CAT)
- Most staff members were laid off, going from 6-7 paid staff to currently only Monro and two CAT-funded kitchen staff
- The Board transitioned from an advisory to a working Board with almost complete turnover
- The Center is financially breaking even thanks to revenue from Top Notch Thrift Store
- The Center relies heavily on approximately 256 registered volunteers

Monro emphasized the Center's critical role in providing meals, with about 200 meals distributed daily and coverage of 60% of all home-delivered meals in Columbia County. The Center serves areas from north of Deer Island to Yankton and south to Rocky Point, occasionally including parts of Multnomah County.

Key services provided include:

- Daily activities (exercise classes, art classes, tai chi, billiards, cards)
- Food pantry
- Medical equipment lending program (wheelchairs, walkers, etc.)
- Personal care products

Monro highlighted three ways the public can help:

- Financial donations
- Volunteering time (especially for meal routes)
- In-kind donations (food, garden produce)

She noted that food costs have increased by 27%, creating challenges with feeding 200 people daily. Monro mentioned that within the next few years, one in five people in Columbia County will be seniors.

Mayor Massey and Council President Chilton expressed appreciation for Monro's presentation and the stabilization of the center after recent difficulties and encouraged her to share this report with surrounding jurisdictions and increase marketing to share needs.

5. Discussion regarding the Relationship between St. Helens Sand Island Campground LLC and the City - *City Administrator John Walsh and Brad Hendrickson*

City Administrator Walsh explained that in 2019, the City entered a 10-year agreement with Sand Island Campground LLC to maintain the island, which previously had been serviced by the City with minimal maintenance.

Brad Hendrickson explained why the free shuttle service to Sand Island ended. Initially, the campground provided a free shuttle to the island, but after complaints to the Coast Guard, they were told all boat captains needed pilot's licenses. This requirement made it difficult to staff the shuttle seven days a week, leading to limited operation Thursday through Sunday primarily for campers.

Council raised questions about several aspects of the agreement:

- Whether day visitors can use the shuttle (Hendrickson indicated they currently cannot)
- The requirement for a camp host to live on the island (Hendrickson explained the host was moved due to safety concerns and physical abuse approximately two years ago)
- The number of parking spaces available for island visitors (six designated spots for 80 campsites)
- Policing and safety on the island

Council agreed to send questions to Walsh for he, Wigod, and Smith to review along with the lease agreement and prepare for further discussion at the October 15 Council meeting.

6. 13 Nights on the River Public Voting Process for Levitt Grant in Partnership with St. Helens Main Street Alliance - *Communications Officer Crystal King*

Erin Salisbury from St. Helens Main Street Alliance and Communications Officer Crystal King presented on the Levitt Grant application for 13 Nights on the River. The City has made the first cut from over 300 applications nationwide and is now in a pool of 100 applicants. Public voting will open on Friday, September 5 and run through September 15 to determine if St. Helens makes it to the next round of 50 finalists.

If awarded, the grant would provide \$40,000 per year for three years, effectively doubling the budget for 13 Nights on the River. This would allow for higher-quality musical acts, improved infrastructure, and better value for sponsors. Salisbury emphasized that Main Street is not trying to take over 13 Nights but is partnering to bring more resources to the event.

Communications Officer King outlined the promotional strategy, which includes:

- Press releases to local media
- Social media content for Facebook, Instagram, and X
- Special newsletter to be sent out when voting opens
- Outreach to partner agencies (Main Street, CET, Keep It Local, Chamber of Commerce)
- Posters and postcards for distribution

Salisbury noted that St. Helens is one of only five Pacific Northwest cities in contention (along with Applegate, Oregon; Olympia, Washington; and two Idaho cities) and encouraged widespread sharing of the voting information.

7. Review Transfer of Jurisdiction for Portions of Gable Road, Columbia Boulevard, and Bachelor Flat Road - *Engineering Manager Sharon Darroux and City Planner Jacob Graichen*

City Planner Graichen and Engineering Manager Darroux presented on the transfer of certain County roads to City jurisdiction. Graichen explained that as the city grows, road jurisdiction changes, with the last major transfer occurring in 2002.

The roads being transferred include:

- Gable Road from Highway 30 to Columbia Boulevard
- Columbia Boulevard
- Bachelor Flat Road (approximately 125 feet west of Whitetail Avenue)

Darroux detailed the condition of each road and improvements needed before transfer:

- Gable Road: Minor repairs needed to an ADA ramp, catch basin lid, and storm drain manhole
- Columbia Boulevard: No repairs required
- Bachelor Flat Road: Paving required, sidewalk panel repair, and addressing a transition at the end of sidewalk

The transfer process involves:

- County filing notice and holding a public hearing
- Creation of an Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA)
- County completing required improvements
- City accepting improvements
- City creating an ordinance to finalize the transfer

Benefits of the transfer include more coordinated planning and maintenance, with the City assuming responsibility for permits, maintenance, snow removal, and signage after the transfer.

8. Review of Erosion Prevention and Sediment Control Code Revisions - *Engineering Manager Sharon Darroux*

Engineering Manager Sharon Darroux presented updates to the Erosion Prevention and Sediment Control Code. Key changes include:

- Increasing the trigger for the main permit from 1,000 to 5,000 square feet of ground disturbance
- Maintaining the 50-foot buffer for water and wetland protection
- Adding a tiered approach for plan requirements based on site size:
 - Small sites (5,000-10,000 sq ft): Hand sketch acceptable
 - Medium sites (10,001 sq ft to 0.5 acres): Plan drawn to scale with more detail
 - Large sites (0.5 to 1 acre): More detailed plan with post-stabilization elements
 - Sites over 1 acre: DEQ 1200-C permit can serve as City permit

Exemptions include ground-disturbing activities under 5,000 square feet and general landscaping and gardening projects.

9. Staff Report for 2025 Storm Cleaning & CCTV Project (Informational Only)

Engineering Manager Darroux briefly mentioned the Storm Cleaning and CCTV Project bid was favorable. No detailed discussion occurred on this informational item.

10. Completion of Purchase & Sale of 1300 Kaster Road to Arcadia Paper Mills, LLC - *City Administrator John Walsh*

City Administrator Walsh explained that about a year ago, the Council entered into a purchase and sale agreement with Arcadia Paper Mills. The current agenda item involves approving Amendment Number 2 to the purchase and sale agreement and authorizing the City Administrator to finalize the transaction.

Council members questioned whether water rights were being transferred. Contracted City Attorney Wigod confirmed that the City is not selling its water rights but is providing a license to use the water rights. Council members indicated this was consistent with their understanding that the City would retain the water rights.

The details of Amendment Number 2 were to be reviewed in more detail before the regular session where the vote would take place.

11. Review Proposed Amendments to Police Sergeant Job Description - *Police Chief Matt Smith*

Police Chief Smith presented proposed updates to the Police Sergeant job description. The changes include:

- Removing preference to hold the rank of corporal (as this rank no longer exists)
- Increasing minimum experience from five years to eight years
- Reducing certification requirements to basic police certification with a preference for advanced certification

Chief Smith explained that the advanced certificate is a combination of experience, training hours, and/or education issued through the Department of Public Safety Standards and Training.

12. Review Resolutions Establishing Official Compensation Package for Mayor, Councilors, and Employees - *City Attorney Ashley Wigod*

Contracted City Attorney Wigod presented four resolutions addressing compensation packages following a recent Oregon Government Ethics Commission advisory opinion that meals or nominal items provided to staff or elected officials are a form of compensation and must be expressly authorized.

The resolutions formalize existing practices such as providing meals during meetings or refreshments at city events. Four separate resolutions are necessary because elected officials cannot vote on their own compensation:

1. Resolution for the Mayor's compensation (other councilors vote)
2. Resolution for Councilors Gundersen and Sundeen (Mayor and other councilors vote)
3. Resolution for Councilors Chilton and Hubbard (Mayor and other councilors vote)
4. Resolution for staff compensation

Wigod emphasized that these resolutions are intended to continue existing practices, not expand compensation.

13. Discussion Regarding Oregon Association Chiefs of Police Agency Review - *City Attorney Ashley Wigod*

Contracted City Attorney Wigod explained that during the recent police chief recruitment process, the Oregon Association of Chiefs of Police (OACP) recommended an agency review as part of the transition to a new chief. The review would provide:

- Professional assessment of police operations and management systems
- Networking opportunities
- Mentorship
- Management and leadership tools

The review typically takes up to a year, allowing time for processes to be updated and tested. The estimated cost is approximately \$500.

Police Chief Smith expressed strong support for the review and also mentioned a paid mentorship program offered by former Chief Jim Ferraris, who conducted Smith's background investigation. Smith noted that mentorship would be particularly valuable during his first year as chief.

Council members expressed support for both the agency review and exploring the mentorship opportunity, requesting more information about the mentorship costs for the next meeting.

14. Report from City Administrator John Walsh

- Joint City Council and Planning Commission meeting on September 10
- Provided a brief update on the waterfront project punch list items in response to earlier public comments:
 - Contractors have been working on cracked sections of sidewalk
 - Issues with light poles on seat walls that cause immediate cracking are being addressed
 - Bollard lighting has been vandalized twice and needs replacement
 - Contractors are proposing to extend their warranty from two years to five years

Mayor Massey requested that the punch list items be presented at the next meeting and asked about progress on the nuisance ordinance, which City Attorney Wigod confirmed is in process.

ADJOURN – 5:09 p.m.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

- Labor Negotiations, under ORS 192.660(2)(d)
- Real Property Transactions, under ORS 192.660(2)(e)
- Exempt Records/Confidential Attorney-Client Privileged Memo, under ORS 192.660(2)(f)
- Consult with Counsel/Potential Litigation, under ORS 192.660(2)(h)

Respectfully transcribed by ClerkMinutes and submitted by Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder.

ATTEST:

/s/ Kathy Payne
Kathy Payne, City Recorder

/s/ Jennifer Massey
Jennifer Massey, Mayor