



# COUNCIL WORK 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  
Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder  
Rachael Barry, Government Affairs &  
Project Support Specialist

Mouhamad Zaher, Public Works Director  
Bill Monahan, City Attorney  
Mike De Roia, Building Official  
Sue Nelson, City Engineer  
Crystal King, Communications Officer  
Tina Curry, Event Coordinator

### OTHERS

|                |                             |
|----------------|-----------------------------|
| Alex Tardiff   | Heather Karrik              |
| Natasha Parvey | Brady Preheim               |
| Susana Hensley | Rainier Chamber of Commerce |

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

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

- ◆ Michelle Damis (received via email). *December 2019, we relocated to St. Helens to our forever home on the River. After living in the Portland area most of our lives with short stints in Boston and San Francisco we were ready for a true community. We certainly found one, even in a pandemic I have met more people here than anywhere else we have ever lived. St. Helens is a true gem, and I intend to see it stay a gem while absorbing the growth and change that is at our doorstep. St. Helens is growing; it is going to change. We need to be ready; we need to be proactive. It can be done in a way that enhances our community and helps us all thrive. I was recently asked to join the Committee for the new Public Safety Facility that is so desperately needed. I was incredibly impressed by the research and planning that has gone into this project, and I was proud of the considerate and thoughtful debate that the committee engaged in.*

*Our gem of a city deserves a proper facility for our officers, our residents, victims, and more. I do not have the space to go into all the aspects that are urgently important here, so I encourage you to visit the website and read all the plans and attend any virtual community meetings you can. The cost of **not** having a proper facility far outweighs the modest proposal presented. I intend to not just LIVE in St. Helens but to THRIVE here.*

**DISCUSSION TOPICS****1. South Columbia County Chamber of Commerce Semi-Annual Report - *Alex Tardiff & Heather Karrik***

1:02 p.m.

Chamber Board President Alex Tardif, Administrative Assistant Heather Karrik, and Vice President Susan Hensley were in attendance to give their report.

- Annual meeting was held last week. City Administrator Walsh and Government Affairs & Project Support Specialist Barry were both in attendance. They talked about the past and future for the Chamber. They ended the year with about \$5,000 in net operating income.
- Plan to hire a part-time executive director this year, which Heather will help supplement.
- Plan to begin an educational program this year to help meet the needs of businesses.
- Plan to begin a business incubation center to help those who want to start a business.
- Planning a 100-year Building Celebration this year. The event will likely be held in September. They will be seeking approval from the City to close McNulty Way for a street party.
- The entire Board is new, and the executive director was let go last year due to the pandemic. They have been working hard to make the Chamber sustainable for the business community.

Council President Morten is excited about the Chamber bringing the community together. He thanked them for their work.

Mayor Scholl admires the resilience of the Chamber and small businesses. He looks forward to supporting the Chamber in September. He suggested working with Emmert Motors to use their covered area. The Chamber awards was very successful, until the pandemic disrupted it.

Councilor Birkle is glad to see the Chamber revitalized. The timing is good as SHEDCO is being revised. The Christmas Bazaars held at the Chamber was a good idea this year. The owner of Vanderwall's recently mentioned the desire to have an event in the Houlton area. He is glad to see the Chamber is proposing an event. Alex added that they hope to borrow a trolley that can transport visitors from Houlton to downtown and back. They have a lot of big plans for how it will work.

Councilor Topaz informed Alex that he spoke with some retired train masters at the Chamber several years ago. They said there were some old train signs and fixtures in the attic. Alex will check on that.

Councilor Chilton is excited to hear more about the event.

Alex thanked the Council and looks forward to working together.

Chamber Board meetings are held on the second Tuesday of every month from 3-5 p.m. Meetings are held via Zoom and open to the public.

**2. Review Proposed Amendments to Non-Represented Job Descriptions**

1:14 p.m.

City Administrator Walsh reminded the Council that this is carried over from the last work session. The old and proposed job descriptions are included in the packet.

Councilor Topaz reviewed his comments:

- The City Recorder job description does not include adequate minimum requirements if that position had to be replaced right now.
- He wants drug testing to be required for all positions.
- He wants most people to be trained in CPR.
- He is upset that there is no mention about military education.
- He questioned the amount of weight that can be lifted. The Police Department lists 150 pounds but that does not match federal rules.

- He wants everyone to have a physical. They do not have to pass it, but he wants to know the limitations his personnel would have.

City Recorder Payne reported that only safety sensitive positions can be drug tested. It is included in the job posting. It does not need to be in the job description. Councilor Topaz responded that he does not want someone like Assistant City Administrator Brown taking his money and leaving for Mexico. Payne reported that Brown cannot be tested because he is not in a safety sensitive position.

Mayor Scholl pointed out that Veteran's Preference Points are applied to veterans. Councilor Topaz clarified that he was talking about military education and not points.

Walsh added that there is a zero-tolerance policy in the Personnel Policies. They have the ability to test safety sensitive positions upon hire and randomly.

Brown declared that he would appreciate a city councilor not referring to him as a drug addict. Councilor Topaz responded that there needs to be a background of why a decision was made. The fact that the law does not allow them to force him to take a drug test is much important than whether or not he was a drug addict. They needed an example of why and why not. He told Brown to not feel embarrassed. Brown told Councilor Topaz that he is flirting on a fine line of another grievance. He needs to be careful.

Mayor Scholl asked Councilor Topaz to respect the staff. He can use a hypothetical name for examples.

Councilor Chilton asked if performance reviews are done? Mayor Scholl said yes. Councilor Chilton said that 360 reviews are done at her job to allow co-workers to review each other. Does the City do that? Mayor Scholl and Payne both said yes.

Walsh said that minimum standards for lifting is governed by federal ADA standards. Some expectations are required but they also need to be as accommodating as possible.

Councilor Birkle appreciates Payne's work on this. He is glad to see the alignment with actual job assignments. He would like to see a flow chart of job positions.

Councilor Topaz would like to see a chart showing who has authority over staff. Does the Council have authority to fire someone for stealing money, or can only Walsh do that? Mayor Scholl said it could be the Council but usually it starts with the supervisor. Walsh is the only one that Council has authority over. Walsh added that Council may need to authorize an internal investigation.

Councilor Topaz disagreed with some of the job descriptions. He would like all police to coordinate with other agencies. Who is responsible for coordinating in the event of an accident? Mayor Scholl said there is an Emergency Response Team at the County. Councilor Topaz wants to see that mentioned.

Mayor Scholl appreciates the work done by staff reviewing every job description. Payne clarified that it is only the non-represented group. The other job descriptions will come later.

### **3. Strategic Action Plan Updates**

1:31 p.m.

City Administrator Walsh reported that they are in between a lot of projects right now.

### **4. City Administrator Report**

1:31 p.m.

- St. Helens fared well during the snow event challenges. There are still people without power in other areas. He thanked the Public Works staff.
- Moving along with the Riverwalk and 1<sup>st</sup> Street and Strand Street extension projects. They have had several meetings with the consultants.
- Working on the parallel track for project funding with the State.

- Receiving the additional funding from the Oregon Parks & Recreation Department for the Riverwalk.
- Public engagement for the central waterfront is progressing. They are working with a film crew to produce a short documentary.
- The Public Safety Facility has had ongoing good work. It will create the physical space needed, open doors for grant funding, and assist with recruiting and retaining officers. There is a big expense with training new officers at the academy.
- A wetland consultant is currently looking at the St. Helens Industrial Business Park property. He has met with PGE about the infrastructure.
- Improvements have been made to Community Development processes. Building is up 500%. Additional staff and improvements are helping things move faster. Council should tell him if they hear differently from community members.
- COVID relief funds were required to be used by the end of the year. There is supposedly another wave of funding coming for local governments.
- Typically begin talking about events and fireworks now. He heard from Western Fireworks but was not sure how to respond. It is not a tourism funded event.

Mayor Scholl said it will be hard to get community partners financially. He loves 4th of July and celebrating America's Birthday. Vancouver has already cancelled. He wants to move forward.

Councilor Chilton said the citizens love the fireworks show. She would love to hear about ways to make it happen. Mayor Scholl said they have to pay a \$7,500 nonrefundable deposit for the fireworks by the end of March. They could do a smaller show this year. Walsh said the tailgate party seemed to fundraise the most money.

Councilor Topaz asked about the Governor's rules on spacing and meetings. Walsh said they had a 250-person cap at Halloween. It is hard to predict this year. They could postpone to not lose the deposit.

Councilor Birkle asked if they could provide a chart with timelines. If conditions are met by March 1, they could move on to the next step. Walsh could provide that.

Discussion about shooting fireworks. Mayor Scholl suggested moving it to the Waterfront property and sell parking. Unfortunately, you would not see it from the park. At \$20 each, 500 vehicles would be \$10,000 to pay for the fireworks.

Walsh invited Event Coordinator Tina Curry to talk about the event. Curry reported that 500 cars is more than double what they have had in the past at \$10 a carload. She talked about some of the community activities held on 4<sup>th</sup> of July that cost additional money. It is a financially difficult year to obtain sponsorships but thinks they could probably get around \$5,000. People may not spend \$20/carload.

Mayor Scholl suggested shooting smaller shells. He asked Curry if she could bring a proposal back to Council. Councilor Birkle suggested Curry work with the Chamber of Commerce and SHEDCO as well. He understands that Spirit of Halloweentown was different this year by blocking the Plaza and charging admission. However, he heard complaints from residents that access to downtown was limited during certain hours. He hopes they take that into consideration.

Councilor Topaz asked about shooting the fireworks from a barge. Mayor Scholl replied that it is much more expensive to shoot from a barge. It is cheaper for Public Works to bring in sand and have smaller shells that are shot from the Waterfront property. This is a community event, and the City has to secure the funding.

Discussion of raising funds for fireworks.

Councilor Chilton suggested sending a survey to citizens. Mayor Scholl agreed with asking how citizens feel about having it this year. Would they pay \$20 to tailgate for the show to occur? Would they prefer

to shoot fireworks on Saturday, July 3? Curry will work with Communications Officer King on a social media survey.

Councilor Topaz brought up the regulations added since 9/11. Mayor Scholl responded that there is a requirement for pyrotechnicians to have clearance through the ATF.

Council was in support of fireworks if it can be funded and follow rules.

- The Luminights Festival is postponed to next year.
- Sand Island is an asset to draw visitors.

Curry reported on new activities that can be held distanced.

- Sandcastle competition on Sand Island. Award-winning builders will build them on Wednesday, August 11 and then it will open for the public August 13-15. There will be free shuttle service to access Sand Island. She will work with restaurants to create picnic baskets.
- Zorb Ball at the 6th Street Park all summer long. Families will be eight feet apart. She is working with the Public Works Director and Parks staff to not take up the whole park. People can walk from 6th Street to 1st Street to shop and eat.
- 13 Nights on the River will be moved to the Waterfront property. They will use a stage they already own, and tailgating will be six feet apart. There are already some sponsors. She anticipates that they will not be able to obtain a liquor license. People can donate to the event, but there will not be a fee required to attend.

Council President Morten asked if it is possible to do a kite festival throughout the summer. It could be a competition for people who fly their kite the most over the summer. It would not require someone to oversee it and people could do it anytime and anywhere. Curry said they are actually working on a Kite Club now. The City owns about 50 kites that people will be able to check out and return from a locker with a special code. There has been quite a bit of interest. She has a plan to encourage people to come to town and distance. Councilor Topaz pointed out that there are some deadly areas to fly a kite on the Waterfront property.

- Council is invited to attend the St. Helens Connect retreat this weekend.

## **OTHER BUSINESS**

2:24 p.m.

Councilor Topaz wants an accounting of tourism to show exactly how much is being spent and for what. It is time for an audit of the whole system. The Tourism Director has a continuing contract with an office in City Hall. They need to be more transparent.

Mayor Scholl appreciates that this keeps coming back. He reminded Councilor Topaz that this is an item for the regular session Council report. Mayor Scholl suggested he work with another councilor if he wants to add it to the agenda. There needs to be two councilors supporting it.

## **ADJOURN – 2:27 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