



COUNCIL WORK SESSION

Wednesday, February 07, 2024

APPROVED MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT

Mayor Rick Scholl
Council President Jessica Chilton (via Zoom)
Councilor Mark Gundersen
Councilor Russell Hubbard
Councilor Brandon Sundeen

STAFF PRESENT

John Walsh, City Administrator
Kathy Payne, City Recorder
Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder
Gloria Butsch, Finance Director
Suzanne Bishop, Library Director
Bill Monahan, Contracted City Attorney
Tina Curry, Contracted Tourism Director

OTHERS

Steve Topaz	Ron Trommlitz
Stephanie Patterson	Nancy Whitney
Richard Mason	Brady Preheim
Colleen Ohler	Brent Keller

CALL WORK SESSION TO ORDER – 2:00 p.m.

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

- ◆ Steve Topaz. He spoke of his time serving on City Council. City Council is responsible for everything that happens in the city. In 2021, Council approved adding two police officers but that didn't happen and Council was not informed. Reviewing old notes, he talked about resolutions that were approved and connected to bonds that did not receive approval from Council.
- ◆ Nancy Whitney. She addressed utility fees being added to water bills and asked Council what gives them the right to add and spend those fees. Recently, Portland was sued and had to re-pay fees they collected. She is happy to see a police levy on the ballot. However, she expressed concern over Councilor Gundersen saying he they would add the fee if the levy doesn't pass.
- ◆ Ron Trommlitz. He talked about his concerns regarding the 2MG Water Reservoir and the attorney client privilege over the Walker Report. He wants to know what took WPI so long to repair the leaking. Construction costs are only increasing now with all the delays. He blames the City for the failures and delays.
- ◆ Brady Preheim. He addressed concerns he had with Councilor Hubbard; including thinking he had resigned at a previous meeting, receiving a Main Street grant and attending secret meetings, and

not disclosing attending tourism related meetings. Brady thinks the levy is a bad idea but is glad to see they will vote on it. However, it is corrupt for Councilor Gundersen to say they will add the fee to utility bills if the levy fails. He thinks the levy should have been for more.

Councilor Hubbard announced that he has been physically threatened by Brady Preheim on his radio program and wants the City's attorney to address that.

Mayor Scholl talked about the Main Street program and disagreed with Brady's comments. Mayor Scholl appreciates Councilor Hubbard staying on the Council.

- ◆ Colleen Ohler. Thanked Councilor Sundeen for his words at the last Council meeting. She took it to heart and it changed the way she addresses people. She also apologized to Councilor Hubbard for the way she spoke to him at the last meeting. She thanked everyone for their work on the levy and will work on promoting it.

Mayor Scholl thanked Colleen for her work. A simple mistake about deadlines was made. He is an advocate for moving forward.

DISCUSSION TOPICS

1. Annual Report from City Forester - *Brent Keller of Mason, Bruce, & Girard*

Brent Keller reviewed his report. A copy is included in the archive packet for this meeting.

Mayor Scholl asked about the effects from weather. Brent said they will re-evaluate what was planted this fall.

Brent pointed out an area that is readily available to be harvested. However, he suggested they wait another year for a peak in the market.

Mayor Scholl talked about projects and funding. The harvest price is slightly above the five-year average. Discussion of funds that would benefit from harvesting. City Administrator Walsh explained that these are special revenue funds since they don't cut every year so they can't factor it into debt ratio for projects. Council President Chilton suggested using it to fund projects and use other funds for police. Walsh said he and Finance Director Butsch have discussed that during budget strategy, however, it's not consistent with their financial policies.

Council thanked Brent.

2. Fiscal Year 2023/24 2nd Quarter Financial Report - *Finance Director Gloria Butsch*

Finance Director Gloria Butsch presented her report. A copy is included in the archive packet for this meeting. They were right above the 50% mark at the end of December. They are still working on a budget of how they'll look at the end of the year. Walsh pointed out that it's hard to predict when you're only half-way through the year.

3. Report from City Administrator John Walsh

- Submitted a Business Oregon Grant to update electrical services at St. Helens Industrial Business Park.
- Project Sprint's Letter of Interest has been extended through March 31. They are diligently working on needs.
- Three companies have been in contact about re-starting the paper machines.
- Will be sending a letter of intent for a potential police station site.
- Appeals are due on Friday for the police levy.
- Urban Renewal Agency meeting tonight at 6:00 p.m.
- Met with St. Helens Police Association on Sunday. Their next meeting is March 15. Mayor Scholl pointed out that there were posts on Facebook saying the meeting was to discuss no longer having 24-hour service. Walsh said the meeting was to address the 2025 cost of living adjustment

and call-back for officers who are off, particularly for the drug recognition expert and K9 handler, but also in the case that they don't have 24-hour coverage. The meeting was productive and civil. Mayor Scholl would prefer to hear from Walsh or Chief Greenway rather than read about it online.

- He was recently appointed to the Energy and Environment Policy Committee for League of Oregon Cities (LOC). They are working through issues about electrical service and transmission.
- The State is working through the Regional Significant Industrial Sites program that allows cities to recover costs in industrial properties where they put in infrastructure.
- There will be a Request for Proposals (RFP) for realtor services at the next meeting
- He has been here a long time and loves the community. He thanked the staff for their dedication. They will get through this, complete the Waterfront development, and fill positions.

COUNCIL MEMBER REPORTS

Council President Chilton reported...

- Since joining the Council, she was told that bullying is part of politics. She does not condone it. It's not okay to attack people and should not be allowed to happen. It's bad culture and should not be allowed.
- She is an advocate for transparency. There is a lot of stress, questions, frustrations, and rumors right now. They need to be transparent with no secret meetings and no secret communications. Everyone has good intentions for St. Helens but they need to consider how it's done.

Councilor Sundeen reported...

- He thanked everyone for being involved and engaged.
- He's also disturbed by the lack of civility. It's taken a toll on him. It should be okay to ask questions and meet with people. It's helpful if someone is part of the solution. Communication is key.
- Parks & Trails Commission meeting next week.
 - There is a position vacancy
 - Thanked Dana Lathrope for her work as past Chair
 - Incoming Chair is Lynne Pettit

Councilor Gundersen reported...

- Council members are working together to solve problems. There are things he supports that others might not. It's a way to share ideas and not corruption. He is only one vote. He's had enough of the actions and words people are making towards Council members and Walsh. He will leave if it continues. Council is a team and they should have each other's backs. It's not easy.
- Attended a celebration at the National Guard Armory.
- He will attend the Planning Commission meeting next week. Mayor Scholl reminded him to declare ex-parte contact if hearings come to Council.

Councilor Hubbard reported...

- His focus is on employment and getting people back to work. He recently met with companies from Indonesia and California about their needs and will be meeting with another one soon.
- They are working on the effects the solar plant will have on Columbia River PUD (CRPUD). Mayor Scholl said CRPUD has his full support.

MAYOR SCHOLL REPORTS

- Citizens Day in the Park is June 22. Highway 30 Cruisers will host a car show. Staff normally help with setup, vendors, etc. Sponsors donate most of the cost for food. It's a nice event for citizens but can be smaller this year. He requested approval to spend \$1,000, Council assistance that day, and help recruiting volunteers. He will contact Highway 30 Cruisers and the Alano Club about volunteering.

Councilor Sundeen offered to help with the event and suggested they recruit board and commission members.

Mayor Scholl will work with staff to create a list of volunteer needs.

City Recorder Payne pointed out that their office is very busy right now and appreciates the Council taking more on.

- The Code of Conduct was approved on June 7, 2023. Board and Commission members and contractors need to be held to a higher standard. It does not take away First Amendment rights, it's about integrity, accountability, and respect. Community love, security, and fun needs to be brought back. He is disheartened with what is going on. They will get through this. A lot of cities are going through the same financial struggles. He is not happy with employees, former employees, and board and commission members participating. They can come talk to him civilly.
- He supports the police and jail levies. He suggests they campaign those together. They must find a way to get along.
- Commended Walsh for all his work. He keeps a level head, and cares about and values staff.
- Don't believe everything you read on Facebook. There's been a lot of negativity.
- He is happy to serve with each Council member.

ADJOURN – 3:28 p.m.

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