



# COUNCIL WORK SESSION

Wednesday, December 03, 2025

## APPROVED MINUTES

### MEMBERS PRESENT

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

### STAFF PRESENT

John Walsh, City Administrator	Matthew Smith, Police Chief
Kathy Payne, City Recorder	Douglas Treat, Police Lieutenant
Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder	Pati Askelson, Records & Evidence Specialist
Mouhamad Zaher, Public Works Director	Everardo Medina, Code Enforcement Officer
Bishop, Library Director	Suzanne Melanie Payne, Municipal Court Clerk
Jacob Graichen, City Planner	Gloria Butsch, Finance Director
Aaron Kunders, Water Quality Manager	Ashley Wigod, Contracted City Attorney
Crystal King, Communications Officer	David Rabbino, Contracted City Attorney

### OTHERS

Steve Topaz	Al Petersen
Howard Blumenthal	M. Anderson
Adam	Brady Preheim
Watson	Art Leskowich
Nick Hellmich	

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

### CLEARING CONFUSION AND SETTING THE FACTS STRAIGHT

1. Response to November 5 Visitor Comments

There were no responses to visitor comments from November 5.

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

- ◆ Al Petersen. Expressed his dissatisfaction with a staff decision concerning a door that would open into the right of way. He represented his viewpoint citing examples where other City-managed doors, like those at City Hall and the Muckle building, open over sidewalks and rights-of-way. Petersen emphasized that his appeal was rooted in precedent, suggesting that the staff's enforcement lacked consistency. He provided documentation to the Council and expressed his wish for the matter to be included in a future regular Council meeting agenda. Petersen raised an issue regarding the enforcement of specific Building Code provisions related to bike rack shelters. He noted the perceived double standard in enforcement, pointing out the City's insistence on covered bike racks for private properties while allegedly not adhering to the same standards for City infrastructure.

- ◆ Howard Blumenthal. Voiced his apprehension over the topic of permitting side-by-sides and ATVs to operate on city streets. He raised substantial safety concerns, linking it to existing challenges with electric motorcycles and e-bikes, noting their tendency to travel off designated trails. His main worry lay with the possible increase in unsafe interactions between these smaller recreational vehicles and larger, everyday vehicles, like trucks, on public roads. He also mentioned the risk of vehicle modifications that could elevate exhaust emissions beyond permitted levels, exposing a need for regulatory caution.
- ◆ Brady Preheim. Read a statement from the Hush podcast made by Vishal Christian, who critiqued Mayor Massey's actions in handling the Sarah Zuber case. The comments insinuated that Mayor Massey's approach to the case was politically motivated. Preheim questioned the transparency surrounding the unredacted Band report that has not been released. He also asked where the report is for tourism since Halloween ended over a month ago.
- ◆ Arthur Leskowich. Brought the Council's attention to enforcement actions taken by the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) against the City. Two distinct issues were highlighted: the first, concerns surrounding a construction permit for stormwater control at the Vener Plant development; the second, issues linked to the Boise Mill Plant's existing permit. Leskowich underscored that the City faced penalties exceeding \$33,000, with certain violations described as exhibiting "extreme negligence" and "blatant disregard" for the fulfillment of permit duties. He suggested that the gravity of these descriptions could warrant a formal discussion on the City's protocol and operational oversight to ensure compliance.
- ◆ Steve Topaz. Shared his worries about persistent issues within the Police Department, notably the alleged staffing shortages and the constrained accessibility of the current police station. He argued that the police force was insufficiently staffed and alleged that the City administration had not fully executed the Council's directive to hire additional officers. Moreover, Topaz expressed skepticism about the plans for a new police station, implying it was an onerous financial burden given the current administrative challenges.

## DISCUSSION TOPICS

### 2. Employee Length of Service Recognition - Pati Askelson (5 Years) and Mouhamad Zaher (5 Years)

Police Chief Smith recognized Records & Evidence Specialist Askelson for her five years of service. He highlighted her work managing the department's records division and property evidence, noting she recently helped the department pass a criminal justice information systems audit. He described her as consistently reliable with a positive attitude.

City Administrator Walsh recognized Public Works Director Zaher for his five years of service, praising his energy and leadership in infrastructure projects, particularly his work on the Waterfront Development project. Zaher expressed gratitude for the opportunity to serve the City and work with the City's team.

### 3. Quarterly Reports from City Departments/Divisions - Public Works, Library, and Police (Informational)

Mayor Massey acknowledged the update on the Waterfront punch list being 90% complete and praised the reservoir siting study open house for allowing public engagement. She noted another utilities rate open house was scheduled for December.

Regarding the Library report, Mayor Massey highlighted the significant 53% increase in library cards issued (474 cards) compared to 2024. In response to her question about demographic data on library

users, it was noted that many new cardholders are younger people in their thirties and forties, with some using the library for job applications. Councilor Sundeen asked about the expanded makerspace, which was reported to be seeing increased usage, particularly by crafts people preparing for holiday bazaars.

For the Police Department report, Mayor Massey noted the high number of calls for service (3,990) from September 3 to December 3, including welfare checks, suspicious circumstances investigations, 14 suspected overdoses, 85 non-family disturbances, and 84 domestic violence disturbances. She emphasized these statistics demonstrate the need for 24-hour police coverage. The report also mentioned detectives executing two search warrants related to internet crimes against children. Mayor Massey expressed interest in conducting a police staffing study by the end of the first quarter of 2026, as the last one was completed in 2012. Chief Smith agreed to contact Portland State University about possibly having graduate students assist.

#### **4. Review Staff Report regarding WWTP Local Limits Evaluation - *Water Quality Manager Aaron Kunders***

Water Quality Manager Kunders presented information on local limits, which regulate contaminant concentrations that industries can discharge into the wastewater system. He explained that the limits were first established in 2017, and DEQ now requires a reevaluation as part of the permit renewal from December 2024.

Kunders recommended hiring Steve Anderson, who helped develop the City's pretreatment program around 2004 and conducted the 2017 local limits evaluation. Anderson's bid was significantly lower than other consultants, which Kunders attributed to his familiarity with the City's system.

Mayor Massey expressed concerns about the lack of information regarding Anderson's qualifications and experience in the service agreement, including no resume, confirmation of meeting DEQ requirements, project list, or defined deliverables. Kunders vouched for Anderson's experience, noting he does multiple similar evaluations annually. Contracted City Attorney Wigod acknowledged the mayor's concerns and suggested improvements to future contract provisions to better define scope of work and protect the City.

#### **5. Discussion Regarding Frequency of Joint Meetings with Boards and Commissions - *City Planner Jacob Graichen***

City Planner Graichen reported that the Planning Commission recommended reducing joint meetings with City Council from quarterly to annually, preferably early in the calendar year before budget season. He noted other boards and commissions have more recently started joint meetings.

Mayor Massey expressed preference for twice-yearly meetings, feeling that once a year would be too infrequent while quarterly might be excessive given attendance challenges. Council President Chilton emphasized the importance of maintaining the roundtable format that allows commissions to be proactive rather than simply presenting reports. Councilor Gundersen suggested scheduling meetings twice yearly with the option to cancel if unnecessary.

The Council reached consensus to maintain twice-yearly joint meetings when needed, and to cancel the upcoming joint meeting with the Planning Commission scheduled for the following week.

#### **6. Review Request for Leak Adjustment at 196 S. River Street - *City Administrator John Walsh***

Rich Mason, representing the 196 S. River Street property (Yachts Landing) explained that a significant water leak occurred when pipes fell into the river after a hose bib snapped off. The leak was difficult to detect as it was underwater, and was discovered in early July. Mason noted they are being proactive by

installing a flow monitor system that will automatically shut off water and send notifications when leaks are detected. The financial impact on the marina and HOA could be over \$8,000.

Councilors discussed the timeliness of the request, which was submitted in late October for a leak discovered in July. City Recorder Payne clarified that the property owners had been working with Utility Billing before the formal application was submitted. City Administrator Walsh expressed support for the adjustment, noting the property owners had done everything possible to address the issue.

The Council indicated support for approving the leak adjustment at the evening Council meeting.

### **7. Discussion Regarding Allowing Side-by-Sides in City Limits - *Mayor Jennifer Massey***

Mayor Massey presented a draft ordinance to allow street-legal side-by-sides (UTVs/ATVs) within city limits. She explained this was among the most requested items from constituents before she took office. She described her research process, which included consulting with municipalities that allow these vehicles and requesting review from the former interim police chief, Sheriff Pixley, and current Police Chief Smith. Feedback from other municipalities indicated no increase in accidents or additional police workload in communities allowing these vehicles.

The draft ordinance would require vehicles to be street-legal per state law, with proper insurance, licensing, safety equipment including helmets and safety glasses, and would permit crossing Highway 30 but not driving along it. Operators would need to be at least 18 years old and have proper licensing. The ordinance would establish an annual permit program.

Council President Chilton suggested adding car seat requirements for children and questioned the 18-and-older restriction since 16-year-olds with licenses can drive other vehicles. She also recommended clarifying language about operation during dark hours rather than using "daylight hours" terminology to avoid ambiguity. Chief Smith supported the 18-year age requirement due to safety concerns and noted section eight needed rewording to clarify helmet requirements for all occupants, not just passengers.

The Council directed City Administrator Walsh to revise the ordinance with the suggested changes, have it reviewed by legal counsel, and bring it back for discussion at the second Council meeting in January 2026.

### **8. Update on Parks and Trails Signage - *Mayor Jennifer Massey***

Mayor Massey pointed out that this was discussed at the joint City Council and Parks and Trails Commission meeting. Councilor Sundeen and Public Works Director Zaher provided an update on the urban trail signage project. The Parks and Trails Commission, particularly led by Jerry Belcher, has been developing a walking trail through the downtown area that visits several city parks. Following the joint meeting, locations for signage were identified, with Columbia View Park selected for the trail's starting point.

Zaher confirmed his department would support the labor and installation of the signage. He noted some delays had occurred because proposed signs were planned for areas under construction in the waterfront. City Administrator Walsh raised concerns about coordinating the trail signage with the existing and planned interpretive signage for the Riverwalk project to prevent cluttering with multiple signs. Zaher agreed to share the proposed signage plan with Walsh and the Council to ensure cohesion.

Parks Commission Vice Chair Howard Blumenthal mentioned that Nob Hill Nature Park would need more detailed signage due to its winding paths, and that many directional markers would be simple stencils on streets.

## **9. Follow-Up on Potential Amendments to the Parks and Trails Master Plan - *Mayor Jennifer Massey***

Mayor Massey reported that the Parks and Trails Commission requested help with amendments to their master plan, which dates back to the 1990s. Public Works Director Zaher explained that a completely new master plan would cost well over \$100,000 and require outside expertise, similar to other recent major planning efforts.

Councilor Sundeen noted that while the current master plan is comprehensive, the Commission would like to add some items without undertaking a full update. Mayor Massey mentioned other Commission requests, including website updates about the process for creating park friends groups and ensuring the Commission is included in discussions about projects affecting parks.

City Administrator Walsh committed to attending more Parks Commission meetings and supporting their priorities within staffing constraints. The Council acknowledged the Commission's value and agreed with the importance of involving them in relevant City projects.

## **10. Report from City Administrator John Walsh**

- Invited Jeff Yarbor to give an update about properties for sale. Yarbor reported:
  - Market is really slow right now.
  - Millard Road property
    - Will be requesting adjustments to stay out of wetlands and move the pond area.
  - S. 10<sup>th</sup> Street property
    - It's on solid rock. It would be beneficial to add topsoil to prepare the property for development.
  - Requested a meeting every couple of months to discuss direction.
- Attended strategic planning workshops and is exploring ways to keep planning fresh with consultant Rachael Barry.
- Attended Columbia Economic Team (CET) Board meeting.
- Working with Romano Capital on waterfront development. Meeting with them tomorrow for a 60-day check-in.
- Attended CET and hydropower partners meetings, which highlighted the benefits of hydropower and salmon habitat initiatives. Mayor Massey would like to attend these meetings as well.
- The Growing Greater Oregon business engagement program continues to be successful.
- Staff presented to the Board of Realtors about infrastructure planning and construction.
- He met with Brad Hendrickson about Sand Island camping operations to address concerns about access, safety, and sanitation. He is working with Chief Smith and the Sheriff on training police officers to respond to incidents on Sand Island using the county's boat. An updated report will be given at the January 21 work session.
- Broadband initiatives have attracted \$9.5 million in federal funding and potential private investment of \$38 million.
- A tourism report from Treadway will given at the next meeting.
- Attended the Wonderland Bazaar on Saturday.
- Meeting with Maul Foster about the Central Waterfront property.
- Bargaining meeting with AFSCME on Friday.
- Toy 'N Joy event on Saturday.
- Parks and Trails Commission meeting on Monday.
- COLPAC meeting next week.
- The police station project is progressing with the Planning Commission meeting scheduled to review the conditional use permit. Mayor Massey asked about police station being locked. Chief

Smith explained that Askelson is doing the job of three different people right now. There is a call button to request assistance.

- There is a pre-application meeting for the Millard Road property development.
- They are getting close to completing Project Arcadia.
- The draft renderings of the new police station were shown, featuring basalt accents and safety features including a panic room.
- A utility rate forum is scheduled for December 11.
- He is meeting with DEQ on December 15 regarding alleged violations. Mayor Massey asked staff to let Council know about these in the future.
- He participated in meetings about inclement weather response for vulnerable populations.
- Budget forecasting shows challenges with reliance on one-time revenues instead of sustainable recurring revenue. The Budget Committee recommended no COLAs and a larger share of tourism revenue. Mayor Massey asked about a strategic plan for forecasting. Walsh said they forecast five years out and it always looks bad. There are more demands for services. He also pointed out that what Graichen is doing right now is unsustainable.
- The Christmas ship event is scheduled for December 13 with Santa appearing at City Hall.

Mayor Massey requested updates on the nuisance fees ordinance (targeted for quarter two 2026).

Referring to Al Petersen’s comments, Mayor Massey has not seen an appeal. She questioned how those are handled and if the City is following the same rules as private developers. Public Works Director Zaher responded that the respond to the first is there was miscommunication and he has responded to Petersen. City Planner Graichen spoke about the Development Code and bicycle parking. Private development creates a longer use of for that need, whereas rights-of-ways are not the same. City Administrator Walsh explained that there is a process for administrative appeals.

**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