



COUNCIL WORK SESSION

Wednesday, November 06, 2024

APPROVED MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT

Mayor Rick Scholl
Council President Jessica Chilton
Councilor Mark Gundersen
Councilor Russell Hubbard
Councilor Brandon Sundeen

STAFF

John Walsh, City Administrator	Joe Hogue, Acting Police Chief
Kathy Payne, City Recorder	Jose Castilleja, Police Sergeant
Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder	Evin Eustice, Police Sergeant
Gloria Butsch, Finance Director	Jeremy Howell, Police Officer
Suzanne Bishop, Library Director	Ashley Wigod, Contracted City Attorney
Sharon Darroux, Engineering Manager	

OTHERS

Richard Leever	Stephen Topaz	Jason Morris
Howard Blumenthal	Brady Preheim	Jennifer Massey
Elliot Levin	Katie Dougherty	Adam St. Pierre
Gina Sisco	MM	Holcombe
Lacey Tolles	TC	Jenn
Sean Clark	Adam	Arthur

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

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

- ◆ Stephen Topaz. Spoke about the Port of Columbia County's Pope & Talbot property leaching high-grade pollution into the water supply and contamination at the St. Helens Waterfront.
- ◆ Richard Leever. Complained about log trucks using Jake brakes on Sykes Road and requested "No Exhaust Brakes" signs be posted inside city limits. The Code Enforcement Officer had told him that St. Helens does not have an ordinance against Jake brakes, but other cities do have them.
- ◆ Howard Blumenthal. Spirit of Halloweentown looked like a great success and described concerns about where event visitors had parked. More than two officers should be on duty during the event if it draws 2,000 to 6,000 visitors. He suggested traffic control at the S. 4th Street intersection during the event.
- ◆ Brady Preheim. Spirit of Halloweentown was a disaster this year and requested records for the final numbers on attendance, noting the idea of 12,000 attendees was ridiculous. Additionally, the speculation about involvement between the Mayor-Elect and Police Chief needed to be

addressed before the new Council was seated. The City did not enforce the Sign Ordinance for political signs, which was not okay.

- ◆ Holcombe. Reported that his business was economically damaged by the Friday 5:00 pm street closures during Spirit of Halloweentown. He hoped the City would look at the permit. The businesses were not informed of 5:00 pm closures, and there was no detour. He implored the City not to shut down the economic zone in the area on a Friday evening and hoped for a better strategy next year.

DISCUSSION TOPICS

1. Employee Length of Service Recognition: Matt Molden (25), Jeremy Howell (20), Sharon Darroux (15), Scott Harrington (10)

Mayor Scholl presented length of service awards to Matt Molden, Jeremy Howell, Sharon Darroux, and Scott Harrington.

2. Port of Columbia County Update on the Former Pope & Talbot Wood Treating Site Brownfield Cleanup and Reuse Plan - *Elliot Levin and Sean Clark*

Elliot Levin, Operations and Terminal Manager, Sean Clark, Executive Director, Port of Columbia County, updated via PowerPoint on the plan to clean up and reuse the former Pope & Talbot site. Key highlights included an overview of the site, the extent of the contamination, priority action areas, the estimated \$30 million cost to clean all the areas, the proposed St. Helens Milton Creek Trail Development Project they would like to include on the grant application as part of redevelopment, and clean-up funding.

Questions were addressed and comments from Council were as follows:

- If funding is secured, Upland Area 1 could be cleaned up within a year.
- Pope & Talbot cleaned the site and buildings in the 1970s, which took until 1974.
- Mayor Scholl and Councilor Sundeen described the beautiful piece of property, which the community could enjoy through the proposed trail.
- Council President Chilton commended the Port for its work on the site.
- The Department of Environmental Quality's (DEQ's) Record of Decision (ROD) was finalized about a year ago. DEQ started with preliminary work investigating the site in the late 1980s, which picked up in the 1990s and 2000s.

Katie Daugherty, DEQ's manager of the Pope & Talbot property, added DEQ and the Port were working collaboratively to fund the Pope & Talbot clean-up. DEQ was also involved in some in-water cleanup work at Armstrong World Industries and the Boise property.

3. Police Department Semi-Annual Report - *Acting Police Chief Joe Hogue*

Acting Police Chief Hogue explained the Police Department's three goals pertaining to staffing and hiring, which were to restore or change policies and partnerships, optimize coverage to achieve 24-hour coverage without compromising investigations or wellness, and to identify a targeted number of people to hire. Currently, the Department needed to fill four patrol positions to replace officers who had left. The current hiring process would only yield one hire, or in rare cases two, so more hiring would be needed throughout the year. The Department could build its own hiring process, potentially a full day to recruit candidates and utilize the high school's classrooms and the gym for the physical fitness tests.

Questions were addressed as follows with comments from Council as noted:

- The Department was working on a hiring plan and process for the vacant Records & Evidence Specialist position.
- The Department currently has 11 patrol officers, but having 15 was ideal for a sustainable schedule. The funding for the four officers currently needing to be hired was already in the budget. The goal was to concentrate on filling the vacancies, before hiring any additional officers.

- Mayor Scholl added the City had funded for more than four officers, noting the issue was difficulty in finding officers to hire.
- The City received approximately 40 completed officer applications, 14 of which would be interviewed.
- Having the funding to hire an officer when a current officer is retiring, essentially funding two officers simultaneously, was a problem, and the retiring officer changing their mind also presented challenges. Delays within the police academy made the lengthy hiring process even worse.
- Mayor Scholl noted the hiring process and the City's financial commitment to send new hires through the academy knowing they may not make it and may not meet the City's standard. Police officers could not just be hired.
 - Other movements, such as promotions, can incentivize senior officers to stay. The Department has a number of officers eligible to retire.
 - Perhaps senior officers did not want to commit to retiring until a good plan and timeline to replace them was in place.
- The Department's existing policy manual was Lexipol. When making changes to policy, best practices are used and police chiefs in the state are consulted. Only four or five in-house policies would be implemented, but nothing that would need to come before Council, such as job descriptions.

Mayor Scholl liked the Department's approach, noting that taking care of the physical and mental wellness of everyone was critical and could be attractive to other officers outside the area.

4. Discussion regarding 4th of July Fireworks Display

City Administrator Walsh reported the fireworks contract was in the packet for approval tonight. With last year's event being cancelled, the City had a \$5,000 rollover for the 2025 fireworks display. Previously, about \$20,000 had been spent on fireworks and discussions had occurred about a bigger and better event. He addressed clarifying questions about the display in prior years and clarified that the City did not specifically budget for the fireworks display but used the Tourism Revenue Fund for the event.

Key comments and suggestions were as follows:

- The Spirit of Halloweentown profits should be assessed before deciding how much to spend on the display.
- A \$30,000 show was suggested given inflation, as \$25,000 would equate to the \$20,000 show two years ago, especially since St. Helens skipped last year.
- Having a bigger show in 2026 to coincide with the United States' 250th birthday made more sense.
- Get input from the contractor, Western Display, requesting an estimate of what the City had typically done and what would constitute more or a bigger display, such as an extended duration, for example.
- Staff had not yet discussed the fireworks display with Treadway as Christmas was the current focus of the weekly meetings.
 - Mayor Scholl noted he personally talked with Treadway about the schedule with 13 Nights on the River on July 3 and July 4 being on Friday and people could celebrate the new waterfront park. He suggested a two-day festival, shutting down Strand Street along the waterfront.
 - The completion date for Columbia View Park is May 1, which gives them a two-month buffer.
 - Treadway would report on Spirit of Halloweentown at the December 14 meeting, including the finances.
- Community fundraising for the display made a large contribution in the past and could be used again with the possibility of a bigger display.
 - Fundraising had not been done with the vendors and beer garden with the Elks doing the vending for Tourism. The vendors make revenue. The idea could be discussed with Treadway, which was already contracted to get sponsors.
- Western Display was the biggest driver for a decision due to the long waiting line for getting fireworks and the need to ensure the City got the fireworks show it wanted.

Council consented to wait for a discussion with Treadway before making a decision on how much to spend on the fireworks display.

5. Report from City Administrator John Walsh

- Debriefing the election, he noted the failure of the Jail Levy could impact services to the community, and failure of the 911 C-Com Levy would cause a closer margin on its reserves, so it would likely be on the ballot again.
- A facilitated discussion on the community survey to update Council goals and strategic plans was in the works, which would also involve the newly elected.
- He reported on Trunk-or-Treat and Council’s Spirit of Halloweentown debrief on December 4, noting next year, the City would look at a back way out of the event area to prevent traffic issues for residents.
- Treadway would decorate the Plaza for Christmas at the end of November and the Christmas Ships would be on December 14 with the usual accompanying events.
- Work continued on siting the police station at the Gable Road School District property with information being gathered on environmental impacts, geotech, the wetlands, a drainage survey, land use zoning components, etc.
- Like the City, the County was also working with Strategic Networks Group and recently issued a Request for Proposal (RFP) for a network operator and service provider to help with the Broadband Initiative investment. He reported on how the City's front work helped the County and established the business case to make the investment.
- He reviewed key agenda items for Council’s regular session, addressing clarifying questions and confirming Agenda Item #9, the Display Agreement for purchasing fireworks would be removed from the agenda.

ADJOURN – 3:20 p.m.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

- Real Property Transactions, under ORS 192.660(2)(e)
- Consult with Counsel/Potential Litigation, under ORS 192.660(2)(h)

Respectfully transcribed by ABC Transcription Services LLC and submitted by Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder.

ATTEST:

/s/ Kathy Payne
 Kathy Payne, City Recorder

/s/ Rick Scholl
 Rick Scholl, Mayor