



# **COUNCIL SPECIAL SESSION**

Wednesday, January 12, 2022

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## **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  
Kathy Payne, City Recorder  
Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder  
Rachael Barry, Government Affairs Specialist

### **CALL TO ORDER - COUNCIL RETREAT PART 2 – 1:00 p.m.**

Showed the draft Riverfront Project video. It will go live next week with the State of the City presentation.

### **MISSION**

Government Affairs Specialist Barry reviewed the PowerPoint Presentation. A copy is included in the archive packet for this meeting.

Vision:

To provide quality, effective and efficient services to our citizens.

Mission:

- Develop and preserve the highest quality of life for our residents, business, and visitors.
- Provide a safe and healthy environment within a sound economic framework.
- Provide leadership which is open and responsive to the needs of the community and works for the benefit of all.

### **STRATEGIC PLANNING OVERVIEW**

- Reviewed Roles in Plan Development
- Reviewed Strategic Planning Cycle
- Reviewed Goals
  - Effective Organizational Structure
  - Community Engagement
  - Safe and Livable Environment
  - Economic Development
  - Long-Term Planning

### **ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN RESULTS**

#### **1. Community Survey**

- Reviewed Community Input Survey key takeaways

- Purpose: Helps them to better understand what residents think of services, what they expect, and if they think we are heading in the right direction.
- Received 678 responses
- Key takeaways – core services
  - St. Helens does a solid job of delivering core services.
  - 75% positive and neutral rankings for street maintenance, sewer, stormwater management, and communications.
  - Almost 90% were satisfied with the quality of police services, 86% were satisfied with the quality of customer service from City employees, and 82% were satisfied with the value of utility services.
  - Residents were least satisfied with city economic development efforts (57%), including the value of tourism events (61%).
  - A note on “Neutral Responses” a rating of “3” on a 5-point scale indicates that residents are, for the most part, satisfied with City services. They may believe improvements could be made, but they do not have strong feelings of dissatisfaction.
- Satisfaction ratings were generally high for core services.
- Satisfaction ratings were high for public safety services.
- Satisfaction ratings were not as high for the library this year, which is due to the pandemic and reduction in services.
- Satisfaction ratings were high for the Parks & Trails.
- The Recreation Program pivoted with COVID to move primarily outside.
- Elected and staff leadership received positive responses.
- Reviewed how people are getting City information. Discussion of the need to continually find ways to communicate with the public.
- Reviewed the greatest challenges facing the city.

A survey report will be posted on the website. Council requested a copy of the comments submitted.

Discussion of additional ways to engage community members.

- Social media
- Town halls
- Service groups
- Involvement in the parade

## 2. Strength, Weakness, Opportunity, Challenge (SWOC) Exercises

Barry presented the SWOT exercises conducted by Council and staff.

### Council Retreat 2021-22 Part 1: 11/17/21

Strengths	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Different modes of transportation</li> <li>• Connection to water – 2</li> <li>• Planning</li> <li>• Safe city – 3</li> <li>• Passion</li> <li>• Access to nature – 1</li> <li>• Dedicated staff – 2</li> <li>• Visioning – 2</li> <li>• Commission volunteers and friends</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Master plans working together – 1</li> <li>• General connectivity – 1</li> <li>• Industrial past – 1</li> <li>• Passion</li> <li>• Relationship with railroad</li> <li>• Regional meetings - 1</li> <li>• Regionalism in genera.</li> <li>• Culture change -2</li> <li>• Job creation – 4</li> <li>• Ferry</li> <li>• Build in flexibility for staff &amp; Council to make decisions/ take opportunity</li> </ul>

Weaknesses	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hwy 30/Gable Rd Intersection – 2</li> <li>Industrial past – 1</li> <li>Fragments of town – 2</li> <li>Council communications (internal) -5</li> <li>Serial meetings</li> <li>Surface transportation</li> <li>Lack of local jobs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Natural disaster -1</li> <li>Passion</li> <li>Overextended - 3</li> <li>Mis-information – 4</li> <li>Perception of Portland - 1</li> <li>Out commute (time availability) - 1</li> </ul>

### Management Team Organizational Development 10/26/21

Strengths	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Team Oriented – 2</li> <li>Leadership Team -4</li> <li>Communication</li> <li>Flexible</li> <li>Visionary</li> <li>Action-oriented/mission</li> <li>Partners/relationships – 7</li> <li>Customer service – 3</li> <li>Transparency/trust/credibility</li> <li>Employee Compensation/benefits/valued</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communications (internal &amp; external) – 3</li> <li>Efficiencies</li> <li>Job creation</li> <li>Technology/Intranet – 6</li> <li>Economy/revenue/grants/funding</li> <li>Inclusive CIP/Strategic Plan</li> <li>Community priority setting</li> <li>Training</li> <li>Relationship building</li> <li>Internal vs. contracting talent</li> <li>URA Growth</li> <li>Community trust/buy in - 4</li> </ul>
Weaknesses	Threats/Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communication</li> <li>Technology</li> <li>Facilities – 5</li> <li>Revenue/economy</li> <li>Form of Gov't (liaisons, Admin vs. City Manager)- 4</li> <li>Staffing plans long term</li> <li>Tone at the top with Council – 7</li> <li>Employee lack of trust in management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Economy/recession - 7</li> <li>Council dynamics – 6</li> <li>District reps/political changes</li> <li>Natural disasters/pandemic</li> <li>Out-commuting</li> <li>Low civic engagement - 3</li> </ul>

### BREAK – 6:23 p.m.

### GOAL 1 - Effective and Efficient Organization Focus

Barry reviewed the Goal 1 handout. A copy is included in the archive packet for this meeting.

- COUNCIL: Improve Council Dynamics/Council working relationship improvement
  - Attend Professional Development trainings/opportunities
  - Workshops and legal briefing on Council function
  - Review governing policy to include behavior expectations and consequences
- STAFF: Recruit and retain talented staff
  - Support professional development and certifications
  - Team building retreats
  - Develop intranet for improved staff support, business functions

Council core values to practice:

- Single target/vision
- Long range time horizon

- Peer support in role
- Honor each other
- Listen to each other
- Respect professional staff
- Questions in advance
- Respect each person's time and input

Walsh talked about the need for improvements with how Council communicates with each other. They can bring in facilitators but there has to be a willingness to participate. Mayor Scholl agreed and is willing. They need to feel comfortable communicating outside of meetings. It would help them from blowing up in a meeting. They can discuss ideas and concerns prior to a meeting, they just can't make decisions. He knows he can improve in that area.

Barry said targeted workshops and trainings could be helpful. A few of them recently attended the PSU new councilor training. One point was, "Try for no surprises. Never surprise your fellow councilors. Be prepared for surprises, but always try to give a heads up if you're aware of something that will come up."

Councilor Topaz expressed that they have a habit of not allowing people to speak. This Council does not have a master plan with an end goal. All the master plans need to connect. He came from a background of "mud meetings" in New England where you were able to interrupt with ideas. The formality of having everything on agendas kills a good meeting. He has tried to add items to agendas and was cut off, so he gave up. Mayor Scholl responded that they should not yell at each other in meetings. Barry is trying to help with solutions and should be respected. Councilor Topaz disagrees with her solution.

Councilor Chilton talked about the lack of communications with each other. They can't get through a meeting without someone getting offended and yelling. She would like to hear from other cities and governments to find out how they operate.

Mayor Scholl said there's one councilor who came in on an agenda and continues to trash anything staff and Council is doing. It's frustrating and he wants to move on. Councilor Topaz said he's wrong. Mayor Scholl addressed what Councilor Topaz brought up at the last meeting. It was all about himself and not about the staff members. Council President Morten tried to give him opportunities to apologize, and he didn't take it. Councilor Topaz argued that it was a bribe. Mayor Scholl pointed out that Topaz always has a problem. They have an opportunity to do great things, but Topaz doesn't want to. He continues to disrespect the citizens by not showing up and getting involved.

Councilor Topaz said they are planning too small. He wants to enlarge the waterfront by five times. He's been in long-range planning with medical and federal government agencies for a long time. He's giving advice with what he has experience with, but they are always undercutting what they can do and yelling at him. He's not going to change. He's had presidents of companies that he's had to tell they were wrong. Those presidents may have been upset, but they hired him back because he had the correct data. If someone doesn't agree here, it's an obstruction. He has people who want him to do this. Free discussion should be allowed. Mayor Scholl pointed out the staff SWOT. Is he not affected by that? Councilor Topaz said he would have fired some of those people he upset because they did things wrong. Mayor Scholl said that Topaz is disruptive and gets in the way of running a professional meeting. Councilor Chilton pointed out that it just continues when their leader responds in a frustrated manner. Mayor Scholl asked for their input of how it should be handled. Councilor Birkle also feels frustrated when comments take them off track. He's very bothered by staff being undermined. That deserves intervention. Even though it wastes their time, he suggests letting Topaz ramble on. Is Topaz presenting his questions and information to Walsh or Zaher prior to the meeting? It frustrates him when they are moving forward, and Topaz holds up the process. This isn't New England. He has an issue with the right and wrong. He doesn't have experience working with doctors and the federal government. Birkle works with children.

His work and opinion is just as important. Topaz makes statements that discredit staff in public meetings. That's a line that should not be crossed and needs to be stopped.

Mayor Scholl apologized for his comments. They need to honor and respect each other, even when they disagree. He doesn't dislike Topaz. He dislikes when he discredits staff and the work done.

Councilor Topaz said long before he was on the Council, he told Walsh about engineering problems and they never got fixed. Some of the personnel allowed it to happen and it cost the City a lot of money. He didn't just dump it onto the Council. It was communicated a long time ago. Sometimes they have to junk the work they have put a lot of time and effort into. Mayor Scholl said they need to consider they may not have the capacity or finances for something five times bigger. Councilor Topaz argued with that. Money has never been a problem. He knows they can find financing.

Council President Morten sees the need for respect. They need to allocate their time. If one person takes up 50% of the time, there's not much left for others. This is the mayor's meeting. He runs the meeting and approves the agenda. They get sidetracked every time. What the mayor says should be respected and they should move forward. They should not be squabbling. Unfortunately, they don't have good federal and state role models. This isn't a two-party system at the table. There are no allegiances to anyone. They need to allocate time and respect each other's time.

Councilor Topaz pointed out that not all questions can be in asked in advance. Discussion of tabling items that come up during meetings to have the opportunity to get more information. Mayor Scholl reminded them that they have hired professional staff. They are not working against the Council and citizens. Councilor Topaz argued that some of the staff are not as good as Scholl says they are. Mayor Scholl does not want staff to feel that council thinks they are incompetent. The comments made by council members have followed staff members. Councilor Chilton pointed out that the people hired represent the Council. If Topaz says they are doing a bad job, he's doing a bad job as well. Councilor Topaz agreed. Councilor Birkle talked about Topaz bringing up historical lines during a meeting, which should have been brought up to staff in advance of the meeting. Councilor Topaz said he has done that several times.

Mayor Scholl is thinking about running with an iron fist. It's his meeting to run and he can call point of order immediately. He doesn't want to do that. Council President Morten agreed. He's heard that our meetings look like a filibuster. The meetings go on and on about nothing. It needs to end.

Mayor Scholl wants a solution before the next meeting. How can they be better team players in serving the community? It's "give and take" just like a friendship. You can give criticism but always give positive comments. He asked for Council to help watch if the meeting is swaying from the agenda and call for point of order. Councilor Birkle acknowledged that they need to practice and live it. Councilor Chilton said Councilor Topaz has to be willing. Councilor Topaz wants them to listen to him. If they don't understand him, they need to ask.

Barry encouraged everyone to build relationships with each other. Do not deliberate and do not make any decisions. She will coordinate a legal briefing regarding serial meetings. Practice the bullets listed above and build relationships.

Discussion of the need for a Charter review. It is a two-year process and would rely heavily on public engagement. The annexation section needs to be amended to reflect current practice.

Discussion of the low tax base. To increase the rate would take a vote of citizens. They have to look at other revenue opportunities.

Councilor Chilton requested a list of reasons why a Charter review is needed. Is it needed now and why? Councilor Birkle does not believe it's a high priority. Council President Morten explained that the last Charter review changed language from Council overseeing departments to being a liaison. He visits Public Works Director Zaher to get updates. There were times in the past that Council had to fire staff members.

That's not a good feeling. Mayor Scholl clarified that the department head, liaison, and Walsh would all need to agree upon termination of a staff member. Otherwise, it would need full Council vote.

## **GOAL 2 - Community Engagement Focus**

Barry reviewed the Goal 2 handout. A copy is included in the archive packet for this meeting.

- Encourage and build collaboration with organizations in the community
  - Main Street partnership
  - Explore issue-focused stakeholder conversations
  - Cultivate and sustain program level partnerships
- Expand Civic participation
  - Explore town halls
  - Youth Council advising City
  - Refocus and restart Arts & Cultural Commission (ACC)

Council President Morten said Youth Council wasn't set up to be sustainable. He suggested the Civics teacher at the high school coordinate it, rather than two councilors advising them. Mayor Scholl likes that idea but encouraged a councilor to get involved if they want.

Councilor Chilton pointed out that Parks & Recreation Manager Duggan has an active Parks and Recreation Youth Leaders Club. It's important to include her in that conversation. Councilor Birkle pointed out the differences between a Youth Council and Youth Leaders Club. Youth Council would have a seat at the dais with Council. Barry acknowledged that it's about including more voices.

Discussion of ACC. It can be brought back. They may have taken on too much and burned themselves out. The leadership may have fallen apart because they didn't have the time to deal with all of it. Councilor Topaz said the "freeloaders" overwhelmed the "good guys," and the "good guys" left. They didn't understand what they were supposed to do. They need to bring it back and include something to do.

Discussion of ways to engage community:

- Fireside meeting on the Waterfront
- Booth at 13 Nights on the River

Council President Morten talked about the hybrid form of government. The oversight of commissions and committees would be overseen by the councilor. Those individuals are not elected. He let the leadership of Parks & Trails Commission fall to the members. It's important for the Council to roll up their sleeves and show leadership in the community.

Barry thanked Council for their input. They have commitment to ground rules and practice. This has been a very active time for the Council and City Recorder team. It's the council's job to allocate priorities.

Mayor Scholl talked about investigating the possibility of hiring a dedicated grant writer. Walsh pointed out the significant amount of work behind obtaining and overseeing grants. Councilor Topaz asked how they can add more staff. Walsh said they've slowly been able to add more. Councilor Chilton mentioned that some grant writers are paid based on how much they bring in. Walsh said compared to peers, they are doing very well. Mayor Scholl wants to make sure they never get rid of the Watershed property.

Walsh pointed out that the Charter establishes the authority to create rules and policies. Council rules and governing policy are all adopted by resolution. They are subject to change with Council approval, as long as it's consistent with the Charter. Councilor Topaz said they have been close with some resolutions conflicting with the Charter. Walsh went on to talk about different forms of government.

Mayor Scholl said this has been a good meeting.

- Need to build better relationships

- Strengths in partnerships will help build relationships

Will discuss Citizens Day in the Park at the next meeting.

**ADJOURN – 8:32 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted by Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder.

ATTEST:

/s/ Kathy Payne  
Kathy Payne, City Recorder

/s/ Rick Scholl  
Rick Scholl, Mayor