



# **COUNCIL REGULAR SESSION**

Wednesday, April 16, 2025

## **APPROVED MINUTES**

### **MEMBERS PRESENT**

Mayor Jennifer Massey  
Councilor Mark Gundersen  
Councilor Russell Hubbard  
Councilor Brandon Sundeen

### **MEMBERS ABSENT**

Council President Jessica Chilton

### **STAFF PRESENT**

John Walsh, City Administrator  
Kathy Payne, City Recorder  
Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder  
Jacob Graichen, City Planner  
Jenny Dimsho, Associate Planner  
Sharon Darroux, Engineering Manager  
Suzanne Bishop, Library Director  
Joe Hogue, Interim Police Chief

### **OTHERS**

KOIN	Kevin McCarter	Amani Center
Beth Goodman	Kathy McCarter	Jim Coleman
Mitzi	Jenni Gilbert	Melody Sexton
Brady Preheim	Judy Thompson	Adam St. Pierre
Reed Hjort		

### **CALL REGULAR SESSION TO ORDER – 7:00 p.m.**

### **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

### **PROCLAMATIONS**

1. National Library Week: April 6-12, 2025

Mayor Massey read the proclamation into the record. The proclamation highlighted the importance of the St. Helens Public Library in sparking creativity, fueling imagination, and inspiring lifelong learning. It emphasized the library's role as a community hub, providing free and equitable access to resources, and partnering with various organizations to strengthen the community. Mayor Massey encouraged all residents to visit the library and explore its resources during National Library Week.

2. Child Abuse Prevention Month: April 2025

Mayor Massey read the proclamation into the record. The proclamation highlighted the significant number of child abuse reports in Columbia County and the number of children receiving intervention services. It emphasized that child abuse prevention is a community responsibility and urged citizens to work together to reduce child abuse and neglect in the coming years.

**VISITOR COMMENTS** – *Limited to three (3) minutes per speaker*

- ◆ Brady Preheim. Expressed multiple concerns regarding the memorandum of understanding with Treadway Events & Entertainment, which pertains to the management of the newly named St. Helens Community Day, previously known as Citizens Day. Preheim argued that the management cost of \$8,500 was excessive, especially considering the City's current budget crisis. He emphasized that the event was originally intended to be organized by the Council as a way to give back to the citizens, and spending this amount purely on management did not align with that purpose. Last year's event was estimated to have cost approximately \$35,000, considering staff time, and he questioned the prudence of adding another \$8,500 to that for management alone. He suggested this was not a justifiable expense, particularly in a year when the City is facing significant budgetary challenges. Preheim expressed dissatisfaction with the financial transparency surrounding the contract with Treadway. He noted that there had been promises of greater clarity and financial benefit when transitioning from E2C to Treadway. However, according to Preheim, the City had not received any monetary contributions that were anticipated, despite the contract suggesting that financial contributions were to be a part of the arrangement. Preheim continued by comparing this new arrangement unfavorably to the City's previous contract with E2C, which he claimed had delivered \$120,000 to the City's General Fund. In contrast, he asserted that Treadway had provided nothing financially tangible in return, despite earning \$193,000 over four months and charging high fees for services like a photo booth. He ended his comment by calling for accountability and transparency regarding how funds have been managed and questioning the role of financial oversight in this new partnership.
- ◆ Adam St. Pierre. Commented on a recent complaint and potential investigation that had been brought up earlier in the meeting. He expressed support for Mayor Massey and noted that previous accusations from certain individuals lacked factual basis. St. Pierre emphasized the difference between accusations and fully verified allegations, stating that making a distinction is crucial. He highlighted that while there have been accusations and allegations, there had not yet been substantial facts or evidence provided to back those claims. St. Pierre also mentioned that despite the presence of allegations, there is solid evidence and facts disputing them, which he believed the Council might be aware of due to the involvement of lawyers over the past months. He concluded by urging those present to consider the source of these accusations, hinting at a pattern of behavior from the same group of individuals.
- ◆ Reed Hjort. Spoke as a private citizen, addressing the significance of the Child Abuse Prevention Month proclamation. He emphasized the critical importance of reporting and addressing child abuse whenever it is observed, highlighting the community's role in protecting children. Hjort shared his personal experiences as both a parent and a foster parent to convey the profound impact that abuse can have on victims throughout their lives. He noted that childhood trauma often leaves lasting scars and underscored that it is the responsibility of individuals within the community to take action when they suspect abuse. His remarks served as a poignant reminder of the collective duty to ensure the safety and well-being of children in the community.

**DELIBERATIONS**

## 3. Appeal of Planning Commission Denial of Variances at 35732 Hankey Road (McCarter)

The Council extensively discussed the appeal of the Planning Commission's denial of variances at 35732 Hankey Road. Various Council members shared their perspectives, underscoring the complexities in deciding the matter. Several Councilors noted concerns about the proximity of the existing buildings on the property, arguing that it might affect the property's market appeal. There was also acknowledgment that the applicant had developed the property according to his needs many years ago, and some Council

members felt that the existing configuration supported their purposes then and should continue to do so without requiring a variance.

Councilor Hubbard mentioned that the configuration seems counterproductive as the lack of a garage on the main house might affect its marketability, although that decision is ultimately for the landowners or buyers to make. Councilor Gundersen reflected on the Planning Commission's role and was inclined to support their judgment; similar views were expressed by other Councilors who noted that the Commission possesses detailed local knowledge and oversight.

Mayor Massey highlighted the importance of affording the appellant due considerations, especially the unique nature of the lot in question where no development is possible on the opposite side of Hankey Road, suggesting it might not set a broad precedent if the variance were allowed. She expressed a desire for greater examination of how infrastructure improvements, such as utilities separation, might impact the case if the variances were granted.

Ultimately, the Council found the situation ambiguous but decided in a collaborative manner to remand the case back to the Planning Commission for reconsideration. This remand is contingent upon the acceptance of tolling the clock for the 120-day decision rule, thereby permitting additional examination of arguments regarding the lack of development opportunities across from the property, which might lessen perceived density issues. This path is seen as providing a balanced opportunity for the applicant to address concerns initially raised while ensuring all possible aspects are reviewed in depth before any conclusive decision is reached.

Based on the Council's decision, City Planner Graichen suggested the following motion: Remand the decision back to the Planning Commission, based on the new information being the consideration of the lack of development opportunity on the opposite side of Hankey Road from the subject property. It would be contingent upon the applicant agreeing to extend the 120-day rule accordingly.

**Motion:** Motion made by Councilor Sundeen and seconded by Councilor Hubbard to remand the decision back to the Planning Commission, based on the new information being the consideration of the lack of development opportunity on the opposite side of Hankey Road from the subject property. It would be contingent upon the applicant agreeing to extend the 120-day rule accordingly. **Vote:** Yea: Mayor Massey, Councilor Gundersen, Councilor Hubbard, Councilor Sundeen

#### 4. Economic Opportunities Analysis

**Motion:** Motion made by Councilor Sundeen and seconded by Councilor Gundersen to approve the Comprehensive Plan Amendment to include the St. Helens Economic Opportunities Analysis and related economic goals and policies revisions and amend the Comprehensive Plan to include the St. Helens Wastewater Master Plan, St. Helens Water Master Plan, and St. Helens Stormwater Master Plan, as recommended by the Planning Commission and staff. **Vote:** Yea: Mayor Massey, Councilor Gundersen, Councilor Hubbard, Councilor Sundeen

### APPROVE AND/OR AUTHORIZE FOR SIGNATURE

#### 5. Amendment No. 4 to Agreement with Mackenzie Engineering Inc. for Public Safety Facility Services

**Motion:** Motion made by Councilor Sundeen and seconded by Councilor Gundersen to approve '5' above. **Vote:** Yea: Mayor Massey, Councilor Gundersen, Councilor Hubbard, Councilor Sundeen

#### 6. Extend Agreement with Aaron Martin for Pro Tem Judicial Services to April 30, 2026

**Motion:** Motion made by Councilor Sundeen and seconded by Councilor Gundersen to approve '6' above. Discussion clarifying the purpose and duration of the agreement.

**Vote:** Yea: Mayor Massey, Councilor Gundersen, Councilor Hubbard, Councilor Sundeen

7. Award the Belton Sewer Step System Capacity Study, Project No. S-685, to Grayling Engineers

**Motion:** Motion made by Councilor Gundersen and seconded by Councilor Sundeen to approve '7' above.

The Council had an in-depth discussion about the significance of the study for understanding the system's capacity and condition. It was highlighted that the study would not only assess system capacity but would also examine the structural integrity of approximately 1,760 linear feet of PVC piping. This is essential since the City owns the pumps, valves, lines, and all other appurtenances connected to the step system, even if they are located on private property. Although ownership of these components lies with the City, the maintenance responsibility currently rests with the property owners, which presents a gray area that may not be legally favorable for the City.

Councilor Hubbard suggested that it is crucial for the study to clarify ownership and maintenance logistics, thereby providing the tools necessary for staff to make informed decisions about system connections. Meanwhile, Councilor Massey questioned the potential liability for the City under this arrangement and recommended legal clarification.

It was noted that Grayling Engineers is prepared to conduct the capacity study, which has seen a four-week delay. Concerns were shared about the potential scarcity of resources if further delayed. The study is regarded as a proactive move towards understanding the system's condition rather than reacting to eventual issues, an opinion strongly emphasized by Councilor Massey.

Councilor Hubbard proposed that the study should also identify who maintains the pumps within private properties, considering the City's ownership of the components. This clarification would inform liability discussions and ensure precise allocation of maintenance responsibilities. Ultimately, the Council decided to proceed, recognizing the importance of resolving these ownership and liability nuances through the study.

**Vote:** Yea: Mayor Massey, Councilor Gundersen, Councilor Hubbard, Councilor Sundeen

8. Letter of Support for Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Grant Program to Address Broadband Challenges in St. Helens School District

**Motion:** Motion made by Councilor Sundeen and seconded by Councilor Gundersen to approve '8' above.

**Vote:** Yea: Mayor Massey, Councilor Gundersen, Councilor Hubbard, Councilor Sundeen

#### **CONSENT AGENDA FOR ACCEPTANCE**

9. Planning Commission Minutes dated March 11, 2025

**Motion:** Motion made by Councilor Gundersen and seconded by Councilor Sundeen to approve '9' above.

**Vote:** Yea: Mayor Massey, Councilor Gundersen, Councilor Hubbard, Councilor Sundeen

#### **CONSENT AGENDA FOR APPROVAL**

10. City Council Minutes dated March 12 and April 2, 2025
11. Memorandum of Understanding with Treadway Events & Entertainment, LLC for St. Helens Community Day (formerly "Citizens Day")
12. OLCC Licenses
13. Accounts Payable Bill Lists

**Motion:** Motion made by Councilor Gundersen and seconded by Councilor Sundeen to approve '10' through '13' above. **Vote:** Yea: Mayor Massey, Councilor Gundersen, Councilor Hubbard, Councilor Sundeen

**WORK SESSION ACTION ITEMS****Amani Center Request**

Council engaged in a thorough discussion about the Amani Center's presentation during the Work Session. Council members contemplated the Amani Center's vital role within the community and the necessity for the Center to provide a more comprehensive budget and fee structure before the Council considers any specific monetary requests. This approach was proposed to ensure that any financial decisions align with both the City's budget constraints and its support for community initiatives. Staff were directed to request a detailed proposal from the Amani Center outlining their budget and fee structure to facilitate further consideration by the Council.

**Staff Reports**

Council agreed on shifting the schedule for staff reports from a monthly to a quarterly basis. The decision was driven by a desire to alleviate the reporting burden on staff while ensuring that Council remains well-informed. When relevant developments or urgent issues arise, staff retain the flexibility to present more frequently, ensuring that critical information is still communicated effectively.

**Boards/Commissions Reports**

Council recognized the success of their joint meetings with the Planning Commission. As a result, they decided to adopt a similar twice-yearly joint meeting format with each board and commission. This new structure aims to provide a richer and more comprehensive opportunity for engagement, allowing Council members and board or commission members to delve deeper into discussions and celebrate achievements. During the Council's discussions, there were mentions of the members of the Parks and Trails Commission expressing a desire for more frequent meetings given their limited interaction with the Council. Councilor Sundeen suggested that the Parks and Trails Commission, in particular, might benefit from this new format as they seek to engage more robustly with Council and the community.

The consensus among Council members was that these changes would enhance communication and collaboration while providing a structured format for comprehensive updates and interactions.

**COUNCIL MEMBER REPORTS**

Councilor Sundeen reported...

- Acknowledged the dedication and efforts of various staff members and groups.
- Acknowledged Interim Police Chief Hogue's contributions:
  - Highlighting the successful implementation of a new assessment center for identifying promising new applicants, which has effectively enhanced the hiring process.
  - Commended the Department's continued focus on wellness, both physical and mental health, under Chief Hogue's leadership.
- Highlighted the Parks and Trails Commission meeting:
  - New assessment tool trial aimed at streamlining park evaluations.
    - Each Parks & Trails Commission member will regularly visit different parks.
    - They will note usage, restroom conditions, and other factors to assist park maintenance efforts.
  - Expressed gratitude for the volunteer work parties at Nob Hill Nature Park and the Japanese Gardens area at McCormick Park. Volunteered over 50 hours of labor.
  - Thanked the Kiwanis Daybreakers Club for over 20 years of maintaining Walnut Tree Park.
- Appreciated Associate Planner Jenny Dimsho's tour of Columbia View Park, showcasing recent improvements.
- Provided a history lesson about the McCormick family and their significant contributions to St. Helens:

- The McCormick brothers, Charles and Hamlin, revitalized the local economy after a devastating fire in 1904 by rebuilding the lumber mill and establishing various enterprises:
  - Shipyard
  - Broom handle factory
  - Paper mill
- Hamlin McCormick lived on Nob Hill with his wife, Nellie. They also established a country estate at McCormick Park.
  - McCormick Park once hosted a Japanese-style garden, which the Parks & Trails Commission is keen on restoring.
  - Emphasized the importance of community participation in revitalizing the Japanese Gardens area and expressed hope for greater volunteer turnout for future restoration efforts.
- Boards and Commission appreciation reception on Monday. Mayor Massey noted that she is unable to attend.

Councilor Gundersen reported...

- Nothing to report

Councilor Hubbard reporting...

- Nothing to report

#### **MAYOR MASSEY REPORTS**

- Expressed gratitude towards City Recorder Payne and Deputy City Recorder Scholl for their organization and always having everything ready for meetings.
- Thanked the Police Department, Public Works, and all the City staff for their continued hard work.
- Brought attention to the recent water test results that have been posted on the City's website, reassuring residents of water quality and transparency in communication.
- Special appreciation was given to Communications Officer King for her diligent efforts in ensuring effective communication about the ongoing construction projects, highlighting the importance of keeping the public well-informed.
- Attended the Oregon Tourism Governor's Tourism event, where she engaged with tourism officials and gathered insights on advancements and collaborations in the tourism sector.
- Participated in a recent Library Board meeting, gaining updates and offering support for library initiatives amid funding and grant challenges.
- Provided an update on the development of the proposed police station, noting the project's progress and expected contributions to community safety. A public forum will be held on May 7.
- Touched on potential waterfront development opportunities, indicating positive momentum and anticipations of future developments enhancing the City's appeal.
- Emphasized the importance of citizens verifying information through credible sources, encouraging reliance on the City's official communications for accurate and up-to-date news.

#### **OTHER BUSINESS**

Mayor Massey expressed interest in revisiting the topic of Council liaisons and potentially adjusting the allocation of Council members' time to focus on action items. She also requested a presentation on the finances related to the contract with Treadway Events & Entertainment, emphasizing the need for transparency in tourism-related expenditures.

#### **ADJOURN – 8:04 p.m.**

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