



# COUNCIL WORK SESSION

Wednesday, April 16, 2025

## APPROVED MINUTES

### MEMBERS PRESENT

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

### MEMBERS ABSENT

Councilor Brandon Sundeen

### STAFF PRESENT

John Walsh, City Administrator  
Kathy Payne, City Recorder  
Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder  
Joe Hogue, Interim Police Chief  
Suzanne Bishop, Library Director  
Mouhamad Zaher, Public Works Director

Shanna Duggan, Parks & Recreation Manager  
Crystal King, Communications Officer  
Sharon Darroux, Engineering Manager  
Evin Eustice, Police Sergeant  
Ashley Wigod, Contracted City Attorney

### OTHERS

Nancy Whitney	Jenni Gilbert
Steve Topaz	David Wasylenko
Beth Pulito	Brady Preheim
Chris Dahlgren	Steve Toschi
Matt Alexander	Adam St. Pierre

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

### CLEARING CONFUSION AND SETTING THE FACTS STRAIGHT

1. Response to April 2 Visitor Comments

After review by legal counsel, there are no responses to visitor comments.

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

- ◆ Nancy Whitney, identifying herself as Brady Preheim's aunt. She expressed concerns about Mayor Massey's behavior towards her nephew, specifically accusing the mayor of expounding numerous lies about her nephew on Facebook and attempting to shut him down during public speaking engagements. Whitney also alleged that Mayor Massey had confronted Brady outside a meeting room, following him down the street, screaming, and attempting to threaten him, an incident that her nephew found laughable, though she did not. Additionally, Whitney addressed a particular accusation made by Mayor Massey on Facebook, where it was claimed that Brady was peeking in her windows, a claim that Whitney deemed personal, unacceptable, and potentially grounds for a second lawsuit. To support her statements, Whitney brought copies of her speech for anyone in the audience interested and informed attendees that further material would soon be published online at [columbiacountydirectory.com](http://columbiacountydirectory.com).

- ◆ Steve Topaz. Expressed concerns about two items on the agenda. He challenged the claims made about the availability of industrial property and the waterfront in St. Helens. Topaz cited DEQ reports that contradicted the statements on these topics, specifically mentioning the lack of dredging of the channel and the unresolved removal of toxic waste as issues that prevent development of the waterfront. He noted that these complications had been ongoing for 25 years, with the State halting progress. Additionally, Topaz expressed dissatisfaction with how his comments from the previous meeting were recorded in the minutes, describing the record as an inaccurate representation. He emphasized that his statements about industrialization in St. Helens and the inadequacies in the meeting records were substantial, reflecting issues presented by other community members over time.
- ◆ Brady Preheim. Expressed his gratitude towards Chief Hogue for his efforts in transforming the atmosphere and attitude of the Police Department over the years. He emphasized the need for an immediate change in the hiring process for the Police Chief position. Preheim argued that none of the current Council members were qualified to make the selection due to their involvement in a lawsuit regarding the Chief's employment status and a whistleblower complaint. He suggested employing outside HR professionals to handle the hiring process to ensure neutrality and professionalism. Preheim also urged the Council to initiate investigations into Mayor Massey in the interest of accountability and transparency. He emphasized that no one should be more willing to have an investigation than Massey herself. Furthermore, he called for the release of the full, unredacted reports concerning the Mayor and associated individuals, including reports by former Police Chief Greenway and other officers, to provide clarity and truth to the ongoing situation.

Contracted City Attorney Ashley Wigod arrived at 3:11 p.m.

- ◆ Steve Toschi. Provided comments remotely, expressing concerns about alleged criminal activity involving Mayor Massey and former Chief Greenway. In October of 2024, then acting Chief Hogue reported what he believed was a crime being committed by then candidate Jennifer Massey conspiring with Chief Greenway for the police to hold a mini strike and to go off of 24-hour patrol, which was publicly announced in October. Toschi described the crime as a "corruption of process," and emphasized that there was substantial evidence supporting his claim. He called for an investigation and prosecution by the Department of Justice, stating that the punishment for that crime would be the loss of office for Massey. Additionally, Toschi addressed the Council, stating that he had made legal requests for information involving these allegations but had been stonewalled, urging that the City Council clearly demonstrate their desire for all information to be released to the public. He warned that without information being fulfilled by Friday per his public records request, he would be bringing legal action against the City to obtain it.
- ◆ Adam St. Pierre. Spoke remotely, defending Mayor Massey and questioning the accuracy of claims made by other speakers. He addressed allegations regarding Mayor Massey's interaction with Brady Preheim as well as comments about police staffing issues. According to St. Pierre, the interaction between Massey and Preheim was inaccurately portrayed on social media. He mentioned that the incident, which involved Massey telling Preheim to "get over his obsession with her," was misconstrued online. Regarding police staffing, St. Pierre suggested that the issues had been a known problem for years, citing ongoing concerns raised by the police union and past police chiefs about the possibility of losing 24-hour patrol coverage without additional staffing. He criticized the dissemination of information online, cautioning against letting conspiracy theories and misinformation overshadow the facts.

**DISCUSSION TOPICS****2. Request to Support New Amani Center Building - *Beth Pulito, Deputy Director***

Beth Pulito, Deputy Director of the Amani Center, presented information about their ambitious project to construct a new 8,000 square foot facility located at the corner of McNulty and Industrial Way. Pulito explained that the Amani Center, Columbia County's child abuse assessment center, provides crucial intervention for cases of child abuse and neglect, and is now expanding into prevention and mental health support. The current facility, a 3,000 square foot building, limits the Amani Center's capacity to assist children effectively. Pulito emphasized that the new facility would allow them to double their annual capacity from 250-300 children to nearly 600, while also providing two separate forensic interview spaces to facilitate sensitive and child-friendly environments.

The total project cost was estimated at \$5,200,000. In light of the financial demands, Pulito sought financial support from the City and proposed various forms of assistance such as fee relief, discretionary budget allocations, or help in identifying potential funding opportunities. She highlighted the pressing need for these services, noting that they had provided support to 248 children in the last year alone, with 84 coming from St. Helens.

Council members expressed their appreciation for the critical work done by the Amani Center. They were attentive to the urgency and significance of the project, engaging in discussions regarding potential ways to support the initiative. Councilor Hubbard, along with other council members, acknowledged the challenge of obtaining the requested funds but assured Pulito that they would explore every possible avenue to assist, including the exploration of grant opportunities and consideration during budget deliberations. They recognized that any contribution from St. Helens could set a precedent and encourage other municipalities to contribute similarly. Additionally, they discussed possibly incorporating the Amani Center into community events such as Spirit of Halloweentown, to aid in fundraising and raise awareness about their mission.

Council President Chilton mentioned the community grant program as an immediate but smaller funding opportunity to consider in the interim, while also discussing larger-scale sponsorship opportunities during community events. Pulito appreciated the feedback and expressed the importance of having City support to potentially lead the way for other funding bodies to follow their example in supporting such an essential facility for the community's children.

**3. Presentation by Arcadia Paper Mills LLC - *City Administrator John Walsh***

Craig Allen from Arcadia Paper Mills provided an update on their progress towards reopening the paper mill. He reported that they had reached an agreement with DEQ on legal documents for a prospective purchaser agreement, which would provide indemnification against past environmental issues at the mill. This was identified as the number one concern for them in the process of reopening the mill, and the agreement was set for public comment on May 1. Allen emphasized that they had six full-time employees currently working to commission all of the assets at the mill, focusing on resolving damage that occurred over the last year and a half to two years since the shutdown.

He elaborated that orders were in place to replace equipment that Cascades had taken from the property upon their exit, with deliveries of the new equipment expected within the next two months. Additionally, Allen noted ongoing collaboration with PGE to conduct a cold shutdown of the substation and address any issues, ensuring the mill would be adequately powered. This issue had been a topic of discussion within the community, and they expected the resolutions to proceed smoothly.

When asked about a potential opening date, Allen did not provide a specific timeline but emphasized the company's eagerness to start up as quickly as possible once environmental hurdles were cleared. He expressed appreciation for the support they had received from the community and mentioned that they

were working with local vendors, machine shops, and suppliers. Allen concluded by highlighting Arcadia's commitment to being an industrial asset to both the community and the country, underscoring their aim to provide the best made product and the benefit to the community and the state.

In summary, the discussion underscored the positive progress being made by Arcadia Paper Mills, as well as the complexities involved in reopening the mill. Allen expressed optimism about the process and reiterated the company's readiness to contribute positively to the local economy.

#### **4. Monthly Reports from Departments/Divisions (Informational)**

Mayor Massey noted that everyone had read the monthly reports provided by various departments. She commended Communications Officer King for her work on updating information about closures, which was highly appreciated by the Council as it provided clear answers to inquiries they encountered.

A discussion ensued regarding the frequency of these department reports. Mayor Massey emphasized the importance of balancing the need for information with the workload it placed on staff. She actively sought feedback, asking the departments if the existing process was cumbersome and if there were ways to improve it while maintaining clarity and efficiency.

Council President Chilton highlighted feedback from a few staff members who felt the current monthly reporting schedule was demanding, particularly in providing new reports promptly after the previous submission. As a compromise, Chilton suggested considering a shift towards bi-monthly or quarterly reporting schedules. City Administrator Walsh also expressed openness to this adjustment, adding that it would lighten the load for staff and allow for more comprehensive reports reflecting larger time frames.

The discussion underscored the Council's attentiveness to staff concerns while ensuring that the necessary information flow from various departments continued. Mayor Massey and the Council collectively recognized the need for these reports to be not only useful but also sustainable for the departments producing them. They agreed that exploring a quarterly reporting cycle was a suitable agenda item for further discussion in the evening meeting.

#### **5. Belton Sewer Step System Capacity Study, Project No. S-685, Presentation & Discussion - *Engineering Manager Sharon Darroux***

Engineering Manager Sharon Darroux presented comprehensive information about the Belton Sewer Step System Capacity Study to the Council. She outlined that this system, constructed in 1990, is a unique hybrid sewer system that currently serves 11 known properties, with several other properties having the potential for future connection. During her presentation, Darroux highlighted the existing challenges posed by this system, including maintenance complexities, jurisdictional confusion concerning ownership and responsibility for upkeep, and the critical absence of reliable data regarding the system's overall capacity.

Darroux detailed that the step system, characterized by its pressurized 2-inch pipeline, had several notable drawbacks. The system requires the use of septic tanks where solids are deposited, while the effluent is pumped into the pipeline, leading to multiple maintenance points and higher long-term costs for both the City and private owners. With only eight of the eleven pumps identified, there's a significant information gap, complicating decisions about future development.

She emphasized that the proposed study aims to address this lack of information by providing an in-depth analysis of the system's current capacity, condition, and feasibility for expansion. This would facilitate informed decision-making when considering future connections and enhance the overall management of the step system.

Given the specialized expertise required for this initiative, Darroux explained the rationale for engaging a consultant to carry out the study. The consultants are expected to use advanced software for hydraulic

monitoring and conduct detailed surveys and field evaluations, including coordinating with property owners to access various sites.

Council members engaged with Darroux, asking questions about the potential for further development in the vicinity served by the system and the ordering of this project against other pressing City concerns. Darroux assured the Council that this study would not detract from other projects, as it was designed to proactively equip the City with the necessary data and insights into the system's capabilities. She noted that while other cities avoided step systems due to their complexities, St. Helens had a unique situation that needed to be thoroughly understood to prevent future developers from facing unforeseen restrictions or connections. Darroux wrapped up her presentation by reaffirming the need for a specialized assessment, emphasizing the importance of obtaining a detailed and reliable framework to guide future expansions and ensure the current system remains efficient and operable over the long term.

**6. Request from Comcast for Letter of Support for Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Grant Program to Address Broadband Challenges in St. Helens School District - *City Administrator John Walsh***

City Administrator John Walsh explained that Comcast was requesting a letter of support for their application for BEAD funding. He noted that this funding was part of a larger initiative to improve internet access in underserved areas. Walsh mentioned that the City might receive similar requests from other providers and suggested the Council could authorize support for multiple applications.

Council members expressed support for improving broadband access in the area. They discussed the differences between private and public network models, with Walsh explaining that the County was proposing an open access network while Comcast would keep theirs private.

**7. Timber Insurance Proposal of \$3 Million Coverage Limit - *City Administrator John Walsh***

David Wasylenko from Hagan Hamilton presented information about a potential timber insurance policy for the City. He reported that while a formal proposal was not yet available, preliminary indications suggested a premium range of \$75,000 to \$90,000 per year for \$3 million in coverage with a \$200,000 deductible. Wasylenko noted that the estimation was an indication, based on the current information, and expected the actual cost to be towards the lower end of the given range. However, he acknowledged the possibility of deviations in the final numbers.

Council members expressed interest in understanding the specifics of the policy and asked questions regarding potential restrictions on land use, salvage and replanting coverage, and fire break requirements. They inquired about any possible limitations that would affect access or usage of the land and whether the insurance policy would cover costs associated with salvaging timber and replanting after an incident. Additionally, the Council wanted to know if there were any required fire breaks that the insurance would necessitate around the insured property to mitigate risk.

Wasylenko acknowledged the absence of detailed specifics at the time and agreed to follow up with more comprehensive information once the formal proposal was available. He committed to return with answers concerning the policy's terms, including coverage details on salvage and replanting, access restrictions, and required preventive measures such as fire breaks.

The Council also engaged in discussion about the value of the City's timber resources, recognizing the long-term nature of forestry investments. Walsh noted that the \$3 million coverage was not intended for a catastrophic fire that would destroy all 2,400 acres but rather for partial losses. He highlighted the challenges associated with forestry, emphasizing the long maturation period, which can span 30 to 40 years, before timber yields a financial return. This long-term consideration was a key factor in evaluating

the cost-effectiveness and practicality of the insurance proposal. The Council weighed the proposed premiums against the potential risk and impact of fire damage.

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

- The Riverwalk project was making significant progress towards completion, with the installation of new railings and landscaping, enhancing the area's aesthetic appeal and usability.
- Preparations for 13 Nights on the River were underway, with alternative locations being considered to adapt to the ongoing construction disruptions, ensuring the event's success.
- The streets and utility project continued to advance steadily, with crews working diligently on the intersection at S. First Street and St. Helens Street, addressing infrastructure needs and improving traffic flow.
- A company expressed strong interest in developing within the riverfront area, demonstrating the potential for economic growth and community revitalization.
- The Boards and Commissions appreciation event was set for the upcoming Monday, aiming to recognize the valuable contributions of various volunteers and leaders within the community.
- Discussions were being held regarding the City's participation in the Kiwanis parade scheduled for June 21, focusing on showcasing the City's representation and community spirit.
- Budget preparations with Finance Director Butsch were advancing efficiently, laying groundwork for detailed discussions at the upcoming May 1 budget meeting, ensuring fiscal responsibility and planning.
- Continued meetings with PGE regarding the substation project were taking place, working through the fine details of agreements and aiming for successful collaboration on this essential infrastructure project.
- The sandcastle festival was projected to make a comeback, with organizers diligently working on logistics to ensure the event's smooth execution and enjoyment for attendees.
- Participated in the Growing Rural Oregon Mixer event, which was notably attended by local entrepreneurs, fostering networking and the exchange of innovative ideas within the community.
- Productive discussions with the Senior Center Board led to a mutual agreement to renew their lease under the current terms, reinforcing the continuation of valued senior services.

Council members actively engaged in questions and discussions, contributing inputs on several topics, particularly focusing on aspects of parade participation and the planning of various community events, reflecting their commitment to fostering community engagement and participation.

### **ADJOURN – 4:17 p.m.**

#### **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

- 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