



# COUNCIL WORK SESSION

Wednesday, January 19, 2022

## APPROVED MINUTES

### MEMBERS PRESENT

Mayor Rick Scholl  
Council President Doug Morten  
Councilor Patrick Birkle – 1:06 p.m.  
Councilor Stephen R. Topaz  
Councilor Jessica Chilton

### STAFF PRESENT

John Walsh, City Administrator  
Kathy Payne, City Recorder  
Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder  
Matt Brown, Finance Director  
Brian Greenway, Police Chief  
Mike De Roia, Building Official

Rachael Barry, Government Affairs Specialist  
Crystal King, Communications Officer  
Amy Lindgren, Municipal Court Judge  
Bill Monahan, City Attorney  
Tina Curry, Event Coordinator

### OTHERS

|                 |                     |
|-----------------|---------------------|
| Sarah Lu Heath  | Ben Tiscareno       |
| Ayreann Colombo | Art Leskowich       |
| Lydia Ivanovic  | Stephanie Patterson |

### CALL WORK SESSION TO ORDER – 1:03 p.m.

### VISITOR COMMENTS - *Limited to five (5) minutes per speaker*

No visitor comments.

### DISCUSSION TOPICS - *The Council will take a break around 3:00 p.m.*

#### 1. **Presentation by Columbia-Pacific Economic Development District (Col-Pac) - Sarah Lu Heath**

Executive Director Ayreann Colombo, Programs Manager Sarah Lu Heath, and Lydia Ivanovic introduced themselves and reviewed their presentation. A copy is included in the archive packet for this meeting.

- Regional role
  - Facilitate regional partnerships and collaboration
  - Maintain strong federal relationships
  - Provide tailored, on the ground services
- Region coverage
  - Clatsop County
  - Columbia County
  - Tillamook County
  - Western part of Washington County
- Support offered
  - Grant administration
  - Funding strategies

- Research and forecasting
  - Low interest business loans
  - Strategic planning
- Community Development Block Grants
  - St. Helens Food Bank
  - Astoria Covid Relief
  - Vernonia Sewer System
  - Clatskanie Wastewater
- Northwest Oregon Transit Alliance
  - Working on additional bus stops for people in need
- USDA Regional Food Partnership Grant
  - Increase availability of local food
  - How to purchase
  - How to price
- Bringing Broadband to rural communities
  - Different than the City's Broadband project
  - Pointed out areas on a map that it would bring service to
- Loan program for business start-up or expansion
- Upcoming initiatives
  - EPA Brownfield Cleanup RLF application
  - EDA Revolving Loan Fund application
- 2022-2027 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy
  - Requesting feedback for priorities and strategies

Councilor Chilton asked if the City is partnering with COLPAC for the Broadband project. City Administrator Walsh responded that there is a county-wide Broadband Committee that is working to make sure the projects align. Council President Morten asked if broadband is close to the airport. Does it include 5G? Ayreann said they are not looking at 5G specifically, although some of their project may enable 5G away from airports. Councilor Birkle appreciates them focusing on rural areas that lack services. There are students in rural areas who have no access when virtual learning is being held.

Councilor Birkle asked how they are established as a District? Ayreann explained that they are designated through the Economic Development Administration. It's a federal designation. There are 12 in Oregon, which covers the State. Birkle talked about a book he read last night called, "How to Make Your Community's Economy Sizzle." It's not just about supporting current businesses, but also about developing entrepreneurs and additional sources.

Councilor Topaz asked what they are doing to have the impact of the Oregon Manufacturing Innovation Center (OMIC) spread to St. Helens. Ayreann responded that their influence is minimal. They have not done a lot of work in work force development. However, they are starting to do that by connecting relationships with OMIC and community colleges. Community colleges are starting to work more closely with high schools on CTE and STEM programs. Councilor Topaz asked if they have an inventory of technical skills in the County. Ayreann said that is something Workforce or PCC does. They are both working to expand that programing in Columbia County. PCC's campus officially opened last spring. She hopes to see improvements in the next year or two.

Mayor Scholl asked how a small business would obtain a loan. Ayreann said they would need to contact them, and they would walk them through the process. Scholl talked about Opportunity Zones and using those to entice businesses here. Paul Vogel is doing more research on them as well.

Walsh talked about the information, resources, and services that COL-PAC provides. He appreciates their support, especially with grant writing.

Councilor Chilton is a counselor in her other job. Transportation is very lacking. It's a constant struggle to connect people to resources. People rely on neighbors and family for transportation. Mayor Scholl added that employees get taxed for transit, one-third is for CCRider, and two-thirds is for Tri-Met. It should be the opposite. Sarah will investigate that more.

Councilor Topaz asked how they are involved with improving the Waterfront. Ayreann talked about other jurisdictions that they are partnering with for grant funding and staff support.

Councilor Topaz said the State does not typically advertise in magazines and journals promoting businesses relocate to Oregon. Are they allowed to advertise in magazines and journals promoting Oregon? Ayreann said that would typically be Business Oregon, Columbia Economic Team, or Port of Columbia County.

Council President Morten asked if there is anything they are working on to encourage tourism? Ayreann responded that they track tourism in the region, although it's not a focus. They have a very small staff and stay focused on infrastructure, which supports tourism, and work force.

Councilor Topaz talked about the railroad that used to get you to Astoria. The railroad lines in Portland have increased in crime. As they look at tourism transportation, do they include increased security? Sarah can't speak for how rail yards are being abused in the Portland-metro area. She loves the idea of reinstating the rail line between the Metro and Astoria. However, the last estimate she received for that was \$1 million per mile.

## **2. Building Division Semi-Annual Report - *Mike***

Building Official Mike De Roia reviewed his report. A copy is included in the archive packet for this meeting.

- Customer service
  - Provides resources and education
  - Appreciates staff and their commitment
- E-Plan Review project
  - Goes live next month
  - Will significantly reduce staff turnaround time
  - Appreciate collaboration from other departments
- Coordination with Fire Marshal to create a partnership agreement
- Updates to Operational Plan
- Training and continued education completed
- 298 permits issued since July
- 166 plan reviews since July
- 3,038 inspections since July
- Reviewed building projects in town

Council President Morten thanked De Roia for the report. He really appreciates the great news about permitting time being cut in half.

Councilor Chilton appreciates the thorough update.

Councilor Topaz talked about contractors needing the ability to apply for permits during the lunch hour. What would it take for the front desk to stay open during lunch? De Roia said they would have to alternate lunches. They handle more than just the Building Department. There may be other staff gone during that time as well. He and his inspector are available any time for consultation. With the new E-Plan Review, there will be fewer reasons for customers to come in.

Mayor Scholl acknowledged De Roia's work. He has worked hard and is a good leader.

Walsh talked about the efficiency improvements being put in place. Going digital will add a technology fee to permits. De Roia confirmed that there will be a 3% fee added to each permit, which was added to the fee schedule in 2020. That fee will fund the digital services.

Councilor Topaz said that some as-builts are only kept for one year. De Roia confirmed that they follow the State's retention schedule for building plans; residential is two years, commercial is 10 years, and public buildings are kept for the life of the building. Topaz said that is inadequate. He wants to see a secondary storage location in case of damages to the building. Does the fire department have a copy of resident and commercial records? De Roia said they have access to all building records. He does not know if they carry copies on their truck.

Wash said that the building department is part of the General Fund but operates out of something like an Enterprise Zone. The fees are based on covering the department expenses.

### **3. Semi-Annual Finance and Municipal Court Report - Matt**

Finance Director Brown reviewed the presentation. A copy is included in the archive packet for this meeting.

- Reviewed Municipal Court accomplishments and upcoming projects
- Judge Lindgren reported
  - Testing with DMV for similar dispositions with traffic cases
  - Transitioning to e-tickets with Police, reducing manual entries for PD and Court
  - Hired new bailiff
  - Will be attending Judicial Conference in March. It's been on pause for two years.
  - Talked about truancy court quite a bit in the past. Legislature eliminated all penalties or fees associated with not sending your children to school, which basically eliminated all truancy courts in the state. It was part of a juvenile reform. It was disappointing for courts that had an established program.
  - Recently only had two failures to appear and issued two warrants. In Oregon City and Gladstone, where she also works, she gets about 30 per court day. She believes that is because of the jail and their willingness to hold people right now. Although, they are not able to right now with the Omicron surge.
  - Everything is going well. The staff is very dedicated and committed.

Mayor Scholl acknowledged Lindgren's good work. There was quite a backlog when she first started. She and staff helped catch up. How are they financially now? Brown responded that they are doing well.

Councilor Chilton appreciates Lindgren's comment about the jail.

Mayor Scholl thanked Prosecuting Attorney Erskine for his work as well.

- Reviewed Utility Billing and Business License accomplishments and upcoming projects
- Reviewed Finance Department accomplishments and upcoming projects
- Reviewed IT accomplishments and upcoming projects

Councilor Topaz asked how secure electronic timecards are. Brown responded that they are more secure than the past and have been addressed. Councilor Chilton added that most big employers handle them electronically. Councilor Birkle is glad to hear they are on top of it.

### **4. Review Update of Main Street Memorandum of Understanding**

Walsh reviewed the updated Main Street MOU. A copy is included in the archive packet for this meeting.

- Removing SHEDCO and replacing with new name of St. Helens Main Street Alliance
- Amending language for the staff member to not be a City employee

Councilor Chilton asked about office space. Mayor Scholl responded that they no longer want to utilize City space. They are looking at moving to a space in the Houlton area.

Council will authorize Walsh to sign at tonight's meeting.

### **5. Columbia View Park Expansion Commencement of Permitting**

City Planner Graichen reviewed his report. A copy is included in the archive packet for this meeting. This is the first project for this property. He is requesting consent for the land use application to go to Planning Commission (PC). If approved, they can get notice out in time for next month's PC meeting.

Council President Morten talked about the Parks & Trails Commission wanting to see the park go all the way down to Plymouth Street. He is happy to see this coming to fruition. Graichen confirmed there will be public access along the entire river. They're just not certain about the definite width. Dimsho added that this is only 30% design. Further revisions will be made.

Graichen said it will be very important for the Planning Commission to know their parameters. Their objective is not to design the park. The City is the applicant and property owner.

Councilor Birkle recently visited Independence. It helped him visualize this plan.

Dimsho reviewed what needs to be done at tonight's meeting:

- Motion to sign the land use application on behalf of the property owner
- Two amendments to Mayer-Reed's scope of work

Walsh talked about a playground design that would not use wood chips, works well with the splash pad, and includes all-abilities equipment. Council President Morten wants to keep in mind the possibility of working with Michael Curry to bring in cultural aspects. He was willing to construct a Loo Witt statue. Loo Witt is an ethnic myth, regarding Mt. Hood, Mt. St. Helens, and Mt. Adams as sisters and their collaboration of giving to the tribes.

### **6. City Administrator Report - John**

- State of the City report tonight at 5:30 p.m.
- Main Street is moving along well.
- Loan documents from Business Oregon for the Special Public Works Opportunity Fund that are going to divide the funding for the first stages of the road extensions and riverwalk are in legal review. It is \$14.7 million. The repayment of that will be the Urban Renewal Agency (UGA).
- Dock Use Committee meeting on Tuesday. Working on regulations that change the way they look at docks and waterways. Columbia River Yacht Club (CRYA) sees a lot of value in the project.
- Library Director interviews on Friday. It will be a Zoom screening first.
- Street and utilities design is at 90%.
- Working on the RFP to reengage with the development community. There will be direct targeted outreach.
- The Masonic Building lease is ready.
- Our auditors recommended another company for the tourism audit. It is estimated to take about four weeks.
- Public hearing for acquisition of the tram tonight. They are following the same procedures used to sell a piece of property.
- Port Westward hearing this afternoon. It is potentially a \$2 billion investment in the community.
- Rail Safety Committee proposal for a pedestrian overpass in St. Helens or Scappoose. Based on responses, they have abandoned a pedestrian overpass. There is little benefit with a high expense. They are going to proceed with a rendering at Gable Road.

Councilor Topaz distributed a document that he wants on tonight's agenda. A copy is included in the archive packet for this meeting.

**ADJOURN – 3:03 p.m.**

**EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Respectfully submitted by Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder.

ATTEST:

/s/ Kathy Payne  
Kathy Payne, City Recorder

/s/ Rick Scholl  
Rick Scholl, Mayor