



COUNCIL WORK SESSION

Wednesday, April 02, 2025

APPROVED MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT

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

STAFF PRESENT

John Walsh, City Administrator	Gloria Butsch, Finance Director
Kathy Payne, City Recorder	Jacob Graichen, City Planner
Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder	Mike De Roia, Building Official
Joe Hogue, Interim Police Chief	Amy Lindgren, Contracted Municipal Court Judge
Mouhamad Zaher, Public Works Director	Ashley Wigod, Contracted City Attorney

OTHERS

Sheriff Brian Pixley	Adam St. Pierre
Reed Hjort	Joe
Steve Topaz	Dave Lintz
Brady Preheim	Wayne Mayo

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

CLEARING CONFUSION AND SETTING THE FACTS STRAIGHT

1. Response to March 19 Visitor Comments

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

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

- ◆ Brady Preheim. Provided comments heavily criticizing Mayor Massey, directly calling for her resignation due to what he described as disgustingly unethical behavior. He argued that the mayor and council were involved in criminal activities by helping her lie, cover up information, and hide damaging reports. Preheim warned that Mayor Massey would face a recall if not removed first by legal action. He advised that if she cared about the city, she would apologize and resign immediately, although he doubted she would do so due to what he described as narcissistic tendencies. He urged the council to do their research on dealing with a clinical narcissist.

Preheim also pressed the Council to hire Chief Hogue permanently as the police chief and insisted that Mayor Massey should recuse herself from any police-related discussions. If she refused, he called on the Council to force her out of such discussions and possibly censor her. Additionally, he demanded the release of the full unredacted report, arguing it would eventually come out during the lawsuit, and emphasized that withholding it only enabled Mayor Massey further. He concluded by calling for the initiation of a full investigation into these issues.

Mayor Massey ended Preheim at his three minutes and directed Sergeant Eustice to remove him after repeatedly telling him his time was up.

- ◆ Steve Topaz. Raised concerns about the City's infrastructure and development, many of which have persisted over several years. He began by addressing ongoing problems with the sewer systems, noting that there have been issues with faulty drainage and an inadequate separation between stormwater and sewer systems. This lack of separation has contributed to frequent flooding in the area. Topaz expressed dissatisfaction with how drainage projects have been managed, citing examples of prolonged closures and significantly increased project costs due to unforeseen challenges, such as encountering rocks that were not identified during planning.

Furthermore, he raised alarms regarding the handling of toxic waste, pointing out that the accumulation of industrial toxic waste in the sewer lines has significantly influenced property development. This mismanagement has resulted in the City losing valuable industrial and waterfront properties, which could have provided economic growth opportunities. Topaz also referenced specific instances where projects ran over budget, such as the drainage system project that doubled in cost from \$2 million to \$4 million.

He criticized the City's missed opportunities and errors, such as failing to properly investigate toxic waste impacts before purchasing industrial properties. These oversights, Topaz argued, have prevented the development of potentially lucrative waterfront areas and hampered the community's economic and social growth. Overall, his comments called attention to the need for more rigorous planning and execution of infrastructure projects to prevent such inefficiencies and losses in the future.

- ◆ Adam St. Pierre. Commented on the recently filed lawsuit, urging everyone to remember that the allegations are not proven facts but merely claims that will be contested through the legal system. He emphasized that allegations in lawsuits are similar to charges in speeding tickets—they are not final judgments but require a legal process to establish their validity. St. Pierre specifically disputed claims related to Chief Hogue in the lawsuit, noting that upon being named acting chief, Chief Hogue was credited with restoring 24-hour police coverage, reinstating mutual aid, and increasing the number of St. Helens Police Department officers available for major crime scenes. However, St. Pierre shared that he had a direct conversation with Chief Hogue, who told him that he himself had scheduled the 24-hour police coverage initially, and it would be natural for him to do so again when reinstating it, as this was part of his responsibilities. Furthermore, St. Pierre urged attendees to acknowledge that there are many more facts underlying these situations that may not align with the allegations put forth in the legal documents, underscoring the complexities involved.

Wayne Mayo arrived late and requested an opportunity to share an urgent concern. Council agreed to allow him to speak.

- ◆ Wayne Mayo. He shared his appreciation for the recent downtown developments, describing the changes as wonderful and something that beautifully augments everything accomplished over the past century. He expressed pride in the work done and urged the Council to act swiftly in protecting it. Mayo emphasized the urgent need for an anti-graffiti sealer to be applied to the new stonework, explaining that without such a protective measure, graffiti left on the surfaces would become permanent and difficult to remove. He cited a recent incident involving the tagging of a bathroom nearby and expressed his dislike for the damage, describing the graffiti as ugly and noting that it could not be removed from the rock. Mayo strongly recommended that the Council declare this an emergency and act immediately. He suggested soliciting bids and using readily available products that could provide a clear seal, capable of preventing graffiti from bonding to the stonework, thereby allowing it to be washed away easily.

DISCUSSION TOPICS**2. Request to Support Jail Levy - *Sheriff Brian Pixley and Judge Amy Lindgren***

Sheriff Brian Pixley and Municipal Court Judge Amy Lindgren presented information on the upcoming jail levy renewal measure. Sheriff Pixley explained that the measure would renew the existing levy at the same rate of 58 cents per \$1000 assessed value. He emphasized this was not a tax increase but merely a continuation of the current levy that would allow the community to maintain the jail's operational status without increasing taxes. Pixley outlined how this funding is crucial for supporting rehabilitation programs, mental health care, and substance abuse counseling, thereby significantly contributing to community safety and reducing repeat offenses. He stressed the broader implications, highlighting that a safe and stable community benefits everyone, not just a few.

Pixley also conveyed the dire consequences if the levy fails, stating there is a very real possibility of a full jail closure. He mentioned the logistical and contractual issues that would arise without the local jail, such as having to transport inmates to other facilities, which may involve significant costs and complications. He described how the previous sheriff had only managed to secure a contracting facility in Polk County, which underscores the challenge of finding alternative housing for inmates.

Judge Lindgren clarified her neutral position, explaining she cannot advocate for or against the measure as a sitting judge. However, she did answer questions regarding potential impacts on the Municipal Court should the levy fail. Without sufficient jail beds, Lindgren explained that the Court would likely be unable to process criminal cases effectively, potentially leading to a situation where lower-level crimes go unprosecuted. This could create a scenario akin to having traffic court without the ability to impose fines or order traffic safety classes.

During their presentation, Councilors inquired about various details, showing a vested interest in understanding the complexities involved. Mayor Massey, in particular, sought clarity on the jail matrix system and the specific challenges related to transporting inmates if the jail were to close. Pixley responded by detailing the potential cost implications and staff reductions that would accompany a jail closure, further underscoring the urgency of the situation. He also pointed out that the current levy expires by the end of June, stressing the time-sensitive nature of the renewal measure.

Councilors expressed support for the levy, recognizing its importance in maintaining local justice infrastructure and public safety. The discussion highlighted that voting in favor of the levy was not only a financial decision but an investment in making the community safer, more stable, and more compassionate, ensuring that the City of St. Helens has the infrastructure and services needed to handle its legal and civic responsibilities effectively. Councilor Gundersen emphasized the importance of ensuring the jail's availability for all the cities in the county, noting for the record that without the local jail, even St. Helens residents would be affected, as it is the only jail system available for holding individuals who are not compliant with the law.

3. Review "If I Were Mayor..." Student Contest Entries

Mayor Massey noted that three contest entries were received, all from Columbia City Elementary School students. The artwork submissions were on display in the Council Chambers. Mayor Massey indicated the Council would be voting on and announcing winners that evening. She expressed a desire to do more promotion of the contest next year, including visiting schools to solicit more entries.

4. Review Proposed Amendments to Public Works Supervisor Job Description - *Public Works Director Mouhamad Zaher*

Public Works Director Mouhamad Zaher presented minor updates to the Public Works Supervisor job description, explaining that the position became vacant in January after a retirement. He noted they removed some duties and incorporated safety responsibilities into the role.

Mayor Massey asked several detailed questions about the job description, including clarification on reporting structure, FLSA classification, licensure requirements, and physical requirements. Zaher provided responses, noting that some details like annual evaluations are covered in personnel policies rather than individual job descriptions. The mayor offered to provide her written comments with typo corrections and suggestions.

5. Report from City Administrator John Walsh

- A retirement celebration was held for Public Works Construction Inspector Tim Underwood after 26 years of service. He thanked staff for making it special.
- Staff met with Treadway to discuss logistics for upcoming community events and concerts at Columbia View Park, targeting a mid-June start date.
- Plans are underway for a grand reopening celebration of the riverfront streets/utility project in late June.
- Representatives from Project Arcadia requested to present an update on the mill restart at the April 16 meeting.
- Upcoming meetings are scheduled to discuss the senior center lease renewal and police chief position.

6. Monthly Reports from Departments/Divisions (Informational)

Monthly reports were submitted by Public Works, Planning, and Building.

Mayor Massey asked for feedback on the new reporting format. Zaher indicated the streamlined reports were working well so far. There was discussion about placing the reports earlier on future agendas to allow staff to leave after presenting. The Council reached consensus to move the reports up, after any guest presentations.

The mayor noted she found the reports comprehensive and did not have any specific questions on their content.

ADJOURN – 3:48 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 ClerkMinutes and submitted by Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder.

ATTEST:

/s/ Kathy Payne
Kathy Payne, City Recorder

/s/ Jennifer Massey
Jennifer Massey, Mayor