



# **COUNCIL WORK SESSION**

Wednesday, June 04, 2025

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## **APPROVED MINUTES**

### **MEMBERS PRESENT**

Mayor Jennifer Massey  
Council President Jessica Chilton – arrived at 3:14 p.m.  
Councilor Mark Gundersen  
Councilor Russell Hubbard  
Councilor Brandon Sundeen

### **STAFF PRESENT**

John Walsh, City Administrator  
Kathy Payne, City Recorder  
Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder  
Matt Smith, Police Sergeant Detective  
Kolten Edwards, Police Detective  
Ashley Wigod, Contracted City Attorney

### **OTHERS**

Brady Preheim	Mitzi Ponce
Steve Topaz	Arthur
Adam	KOIN 6
Joe	

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

### **CLEARING CONFUSION AND SETTING THE FACTS STRAIGHT**

#### **1. Clarification Memo to May 21 Visitor Comments**

Mayor Massey provided clarification regarding the tourism contractor payment of \$200,000 to the City. She explained that Treadway Events, the current tourism contractor, had paid back the City \$200,000 using revenues generated from the 2024 events. The funds were paid from the Wauna tourism bank account to the City's primary operating bank account.

Mayor Massey highlighted the difference between the current and previous tourism contracts, noting that the City now has access to the tourism bank account where all generated revenues are deposited. She detailed that when the current tourism contractor pays back the City, checks are issued via the new Wauna bank account and deposited into the City's primary operating account.

The mayor provided specific details about recent payments:

- A check for \$200,000 was issued on December 6, 2024, from the Wauna tourism account to the City of St. Helens and deposited in the City's primary operating account, posted to the Community Development Fund.
- An additional check for \$14,078.01 was issued on the same date to reimburse the City for staff time used to assist with the Spirit of Halloweentown 2024 events.

Mayor Massey concluded by stating that the remaining revenue generated by the City's current contractor remains in the Wauna tourism bank account and is being used for ongoing tourism events and activities. She informed that this clarification was available in the meeting packet and on the City's website.

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

- ◆ Brady Preheim. Addressed the Council, expressing appreciation for the clarification memo, which he stated verified his previous claim that the repayment was indeed a repayment. He asserted that the City had received no revenue from tourism, highlighting a distinction made in the memo regarding Treadway Events' repayment of \$200,000 and an additional \$14,078.01 for staff time assisting with the Spirit of Halloweentown 2024 events. Preheim criticized the Council's tourism strategies, claiming they had cost the City about \$600,000. He argued that due to these decisions, the City lost out on \$300,000 last year from E2C and could have benefitted similarly this year, suggesting that these revenues could have been reflected in the budget. Preheim expressed skepticism about the projected tourism revenue for the next year, labeling it "smoke and mirrors" and "ridiculously stupid." He doubted the City's claim to generate \$1.5 million, predicting it would not materialize as expected. Regarding the budget, Preheim raised concerns about its dependence on removing a cost-of-living adjustment, which he noted required union consent. He questioned what the Council's plan was if the Union disagreed, speculating on potential budget balancing challenges. On the police chief recruitment front, Preheim was critical of the process's conclusion, suggesting it was predetermined. He discussed the recruitment procedures, in which Sergeant Smith emerged as the highest-scoring candidate. Instead of this outcome, Preheim advocated for the appointment of Chief Hogue, emphasizing that Smith lacked community support, which Hogue held. He criticized Mayor Massey for the recruitment, insinuating corruption due to her alleged mob influence. Preheim implied that despite warnings of a flawed process, the predicted outcome occurred, and he advised the Council to consider community backing when deciding on the police chief. He concluded with a warning against any disappearance of scoring sheets, ensuring transparency and accountability.

Mayor Massey responded, stating that the City does not support or condone the comments made by the citizen. She emphasized the City's commitment to transparency and accountability, and that defamatory and inappropriate remarks would not be tolerated.

- ◆ Steve Topaz. Presented information about the lagoon project. He stated that there was no record of the Council authorizing City Administrator Walsh to make a presentation to the Portland Harbor Superfund in November 2014. Topaz discussed a range of issues related to the project, including the absence of records detailing the Council's approval of St. Helens as a toxic waste site and the lack of documentation from DEQ informing the City of the Boise Mill contamination study prior to the City purchasing the property. Furthermore, Topaz highlighted that DEQ did not permit docks at the Boise Mill to be repaired for the satellite tugboat staging area. He mentioned DEQ's recommendation for a remediation plan that involved removing all dockage from the site and covering the entire shallow water area with activated charcoal. He pointed out significant decisions made by DEQ, such as the announcement to forego channel cleaning from the river to the Scappoose Landing area and leaving contaminated areas along the channel in place, covered. Topaz also brought up concerns about a consulting company's assessment of the potential risks of landslides and liquefaction affecting the sewer line updates and mentioned a significant contrast between this assessment and the map findings, which indicated no problem with the sewer project but did show a major issue with the present lagoon and potential future toxic waste. He was critical of the ongoing funneling of \$20 million from FEMA funds to Moore Foster and ultimately turning the cooling sewer lagoon into a toxic waste zone. He emphasized that no public meeting had been held in the last 14 years to seek citizen approval for this project, and he underscored Columbia County's troublingly high cancer rates as a point of concern. He concluded

by stating that all his points were supported by State records and urged the Council to consider the compiled documentation on this issue.

## **DISCUSSION TOPICS**

### **2. Quarterly Reports from City Departments/Divisions (Informational)**

There was no discussion on this agenda item.

### **3. Chief of Police Recruitment Process - *City Administrator John Walsh***

City Administrator Walsh provided an update on the police chief recruitment process. He reported that interviews were held on May 29, with a panel consisting of two police chiefs from outside communities (Wilsonville and Canby), Sheriff Ryan Pixley, Councilor Hubbard, Walsh himself as a non-voting member, and a member of the St. Helens Police Association.

Walsh announced that Sergeant Smith emerged as the highest-scoring candidate from the evaluation process. He presented two options to the Council: approve Sergeant Smith as the next police chief (contingent upon a successful background check) or decline and opt for an external recruitment process.

Contracted City Attorney Ashley Wigod provided additional context on the recruitment process, mentioning the involvement of the Oregon Association of Chiefs of Police in developing the recruitment procedure. She highlighted the expertise of the interview panel and congratulated Sergeant Smith on being the highest-scoring candidate.

### **4. Review Lease with Columbia Learning Center for Makerspace Expansion - *City Administrator John Walsh***

City Administrator Walsh presented the lease agreement between the Columbia Learning Center and the City for the Makerspace expansion. He addressed some confusion about the lease amount, clarifying that it includes the existing lease of \$400 plus the balance for the additional space. Walsh confirmed that the amount is correct and reflective of the budget, and has been accepted by the Columbia Learning Center.

Walsh encouraged Council members who hadn't visited the space to do so, praising its layout and accessibility. Mayor Massey echoed this sentiment, describing the space as "remarkable" and noting the diverse age range of visitors engaged in various activities.

### **5. Review Proposed Senior Center Lease - *City Administrator John Walsh***

City Administrator Walsh presented the proposed lease for the Senior Center, noting that while the administrative person had accepted the lease terms, it still needed to go before their Board. He explained that the lease terms were similar to before, including a five-year term and commitments to run the building as a senior center and provide space for the meal program.

Walsh highlighted the importance of the meal program, which serves both the St. Helens and Scappoose communities. He mentioned obligations for semi-annual reports and building maintenance, praising the Senior Center as a good partner and expressing the City's desire to see them succeed.

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

- Congratulations to Matt Smith on being the top candidate in the police recruitment process, pending Council acceptance and a successful background check.
- Joe Hogue will retire from the City effective June 4, after nearly 27 years of service.
- Recommended appointing Matt Smith as acting chief to address the police department's immediate operational needs.
- Upcoming community events include:
  - 13 Nights on the River begins tomorrow
  - Kiwanis Community Parade on June 21

- Ribbon-cutting ceremony for the Waterfront project on June 26
  - Community Day in the Park on June 28
  - Sandcastle Festival is tentative
- Ongoing projects and challenges include:
  - Waiting on a PGE side agreement for a business grant for a substation
  - The need to rebuild budget reserves
  - Supporting industrial and commercial development to improve the tax base
- Councilor Gundersen's appointment to the Columbia Foundation Board expired on May 31. He is willing to continue serving.
- Mayor Massey asked about discussing the fee for service initiative in a Work Session. Walsh clarified that the current year's budget does not include a fee for service, but exploring it as an advisory vote has been recommended. Wigod will review the existing code and provide recommendations for implementation at the next Council Work Session.
- Mayor Massey mentioned plans to start working on hiring policies, and requested background information on current practices to inform future discussions.

**ADJOURN – 3:29 p.m.****EXECUTIVE SESSION**

- Deliberations with persons appointed to carry out Labor Negotiations, under ORS 192.660(2)(d)
- 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