



COUNCIL WORK SESSION

Wednesday, May 19, 2021

APPROVED MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT

Mayor Rick Scholl
Council President Doug Morten
Councilor Patrick Birkle
Councilor Stephen R. Topaz
Councilor Jessica Chilton

STAFF PRESENT

John Walsh, City Administrator
Matt Brown, Assistant City Administrator
Kathy Payne, City Recorder
Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder
Mouhamad Zaher, Public Works Director
Rachael Barry, Government Affairs &
Project Support Specialist

Crystal King, Communications Officer
Margaret Jeffries, Library Director
Brian Greenway, Police Chief
Mike De Roia, Building Official
Sharron Darroux, Engineering Project Manager I
Tina Curry, Event Coordinator
Bill Monahan, City Attorney

OTHERS

Art Leskowich	Autumn Oliver	Melisa Gaelrun-Maggi
Aurora Biggers	Brady Preheim	Nicole, BSA Unit 106
Natasha Parvey	Bob Brawand	Amanda Heynemann

CALL WORK SESSION TO ORDER VIA ZOOM – 1 p.m.

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

- ◆ Nicole, BSA Unit 106 of St. Helens. She is seeking assistance to bridge the gap in funding required to service the community during Spirit of Halloweentown. The total cost for them to participate is \$2,300. They are only able to come up with \$500 and are seeking assistance with \$1,800. These fundraiser events are crucial to operate their unit. It allows them to help Scouts that may not have funds to attend camp, register for membership, or get camping supplies. They have been participating in this event for the past few years. They were not fully prepared for the volume of sales the first year and were not in correct placement to gain substantial earnings. Last year was their second year and they were just a little over their costs and earnings due to low volume of visitors. This year, they believe they will be able to make back the total cost as anticipated with a larger crowd. Scouts have worked hard to purchase a new trailer for this year. The trailer was purchased as a shell and the kids have created a nice, full-size trailer with a window, lights, and electricity, so they are no longer hit by the cold winds and wet rain. They are reaching out to the City because Scouts participate in local service projects that serve our community and help keep our parks looking beautiful. Every December, Scouts go door-to-door collecting food for the Food Bank, participated in the first-annual Christmas Parade collecting food for the Food Bank, and prepare about 600 hot meals and deliver with donated gifts to families on Christmas Eve. Every Memorial Day, Scouts set out flags for Veterans at local cemeteries. When Scouts participate in community events, they are showing visitors that our City supports our local

Scouts. Scouts learn valuable customer service skills working as a vendor, including math, speech, responsibility, and teamwork. They would like to continue participating in the event. Assistance from the City will help close the financial gap and invest in the future of scouting.

Councilor Topaz asked if Scouts are nonprofit. Nicole said yes.

Council President Morten appreciates the presentation. What projects have they done in the parks? Nicole responded that they have helped clean Nob Hill during their workdays and helped with plantings in the Square. Unfortunately, there has not been as many opportunities over the last year. Council President Morten told her about a cleanup day at the Botanical Gardens on Saturday.

Councilor Birkle thanked Nicole for their work. He is a former Eagle Scout. He would like more background information before deciding. Mayor Scholl explained that they were not set up correctly nor were they in a very good location their first year. Last year, they barely broke even due to the limited number of people. If Council can help them this year, they will likely not need assistance next year with COVID restrictions reducing. The cost is charged to all nonprofits participating as a vendor. She is requesting a sponsored donation this year and will hopefully be sustainable next year.

Discussion of vendors during Spirit of Halloweentown. The fee will include being a vendor at 4th of July this year. A decision will be made at tonight's meeting.

◆ Brady Preheim. He reviewed several concerns.

- Councilor Chilton made comments on May 5 saying she was being bullied.
 - That is part of the job being in public office.
 - He did not make fun of her last name. He asked her what her last name was. She created a Jessica Chilton for City Council page and then posted as Jessica Fuhrer-May. He first thought it was a different person. She should use only one name.
 - He tried to call her at the phone number listed on her election form and it was disconnected, which is a felony.
 - She attended a meeting where she said she was "blindsided" when Councilor Topaz was asked to resign. The City Charter says the only way to remove a Councilor is for him to resign.
 - He does not appreciate her Scarlet O'Hara routine saying she relies on people being kind to her when she has been a blatant bully online to the Tourism Director and other City staff. She lied and misrepresented information and continued to do so even after she was given correct information.
 - He is not concerned about softball.
- The only way to remove Councilor Topaz from office, besides asking him to resign, is having him evaluated for diminished capacity. After a recent meeting adjourned, but was still live, Topaz answered a phone call and was heard saying, "The meeting just ended, and boy did they put their foot in their mouth." Saying that while broadcasting live is a sign of diminished capacity. Topaz enjoys making the Council look like a fool. Council needs to take action against Topaz. They need to turn in their keys and make City Administrator Walsh the single point of contact.
- He would like to know where Code Enforcement is. St. Helens has a lack of retail space. Topaz is living in a commercial building that is an eyesore. If they do not already have an ordinance to address the issue, they should develop one.
- Urged the Council to allow the people of St. Helens to vote on a police station. It is criminal that they can get around voter approval to spend \$25 million. They can just add a fee to clean up anything. Why bother with pesky citizens they were elected by when they can just add a fee to water bills. They should have a voice in the process. He voted for a majority of the City Council and will not make that mistake again if they go forward with

a Police Station without a vote of the people. He does not see how the process is legal. Agnes Petersen is not the only person who knows how to file a lawsuit against the City.

◆ Ginny Carlson. (Read into the record by City Recorder Payne)

"I would like to thank all the public employees for perseverance through the past year.

I appreciate all you do even more as a citizen, from the Police patrols I am seeing all over town. Public works and parks I don't get a chance to call in before you have fixed the issues, call me impressed. To all the folks at admin and library that have been so helpful during the Covid with my questions. You all deserve a positive and safe work environment free of harassment and intimidation, I sincerely hope this council has the courage to make changes not just for you but for ALL its citizens so you can focus on your jobs.

To the council do not forget your oath to the citizens not just your friends or those who agree with you, but to all. Please remember we are all vested tax paying, rate paying customers and ultimately you owe it to us.

Not everyone will write a letter or make public comments, but I can't stay silent while our leadership is sitting by as long as they get their way on their pet issues not caring about the future of the whole community.

Please take actions that protect the cities and its citizens assets before it's too late.

Best Regards."

Mayor Scholl stated that Councilor Topaz emailed a statement to the Council at 5:15 p.m. yesterday requesting Mayor Scholl read a public comment for him. That is not something they do for one another. They have the ability to speak during Council reports at the Regular Session. Councilor Topaz responded that he plans to read it tonight.

DISCUSSION TOPICS

1. Annual Report from the Library Board - *Melisa Gaelrun-Maggi, Chair*

1:20 p.m.

Library Board Chair Melisa Gaelrun-Maggi presented the Library Board report. A copy is included in the archive packet.

Councilor Topaz talked about the Library having to constantly change with State rules. They have done a good job with what is going on.

Councilor Birkle is impressed by the Board and staff members. Even during economic downturns, the Library continues to operate. Melisa led a great presentation.

Councilor Topaz talked about how much more the Library is than just books. It is an "information connection to the world center." They have to deal with so much as a public building.

Council President Morten appreciates the cultural hub the Library represents.

2. Discuss Reappointing Councilor Birkle to Columbia Learning Center Board of Directors

1:34 p.m.

Discussion of reappointment. The Black Tie & Blue Jeans event is cancelled again this year, but they still plan to issue several thousand dollars' worth of scholarships. No objection from Council to reappoint Councilor Birkle. Council will vote on it at tonight's meeting.

3. Review Proposed Amendments to Library Assistant Job Description - Margaret

1:37 p.m.

Library Director Jeffries thanked the Council for their kind words about the Library. She also thanked Melisa for presenting on behalf of the Board. Jeffries is proposing revisions to the Library Assistant job description. Once modified, her plan is to have the salary schedule reviewed. She reviewed the increase in duties, skills, knowledge, and minimum wage. A copy of the proposed amendments is included in the archive packet for this meeting.

4. Discussion regarding Public Safety Facility Funding Plan - Matt

1:45 p.m.

Assistant City Administrator Brown reviewed the presentation. A copy is included in the archive packet for this meeting.

- Timeline
- Monthly Rate Comparison
- Utility Rate Comparison
- Other Funding Sources
- Financing Options
 - Option 1: 30 Years
 - Recommended by Ad-hoc Committee
 - Dedicate revenue and tax sources
 - Recommend a \$2 monthly fee. It will replace the \$2 Recreation fee when it sunsets in December.
 - Based on a 3% interest rate
 - Option 2: 20 Years
 - Only difference is a recommendation of \$4.25 monthly fee.

Discussion ensued. It can be paid off early to save on interest fees. It does take revenue away from the General Fund and could affect next year's budget. Brown will review more of that at the next Budget Committee meeting.

Consensus of Council to direct staff to proceed with the 30-year funding option. It will be on tonight's agenda for approval.

5. Utility Billing Administrative Rules Update - Matt

2:09 p.m.

Brown reviewed the proposed amendments. A copy is included in the archive packet for this meeting.

Discussion ensued. Councilor Topaz suggested changing the word "COVID-related" to something else in case it is needed for an emergency issue in the future. Walsh explained the need to be specific this time. Brown added that he does review the rules annually for changes.

6. Strategic Action Plan Updates

2:16 p.m.

Brown reported...

- New windows are being installed on the Bennett Building.

7. City Administrator Report

2:17 p.m.

- Public Forum tonight at 6 p.m. for the Riverwalk Project. There is a survey online and available in the Columbia View Park Gazebo. They have received great responses.

- A task of the Waterfront project was to look at the roadway alignments. They have had five developers look at the property and are excited about the development opportunity. He talked about prevailing wage adding a lot of cost. The City's role right now is the master developer. Discussion ensued about the property. Mayor Scholl encouraged staff to look at private property partnerships with Opportunity Zones. Council President Morten talked about Seaside leasing property to continually pay the bills.
- The June 2 meeting should include the Smith Timber Sale bids.
- Making progress on the Main Street Program. Government Affairs & Project Support Specialist Rachael Barry took the lead on creating a job description.
- Will be receiving \$2.8 million from the American Recovery Plan Act over the next two years. There is guidance for what it can be used for.
- There was a nice article above the fold in the Chronicle about the City's investment in Parks & Recreation.
- There is a resolution on tonight's agenda for censorship. He asked the Council to think about the Council liaison for that Library and what they want that to look like.
- There is a Public Hearing for an annexation at 6:45 p.m. tonight. It should only take about five minutes. If the Public Forum goes long, they can delay the Public Hearing start time.

Councilor Chilton asked if there was an update on fireworks funds. Mayor Scholl spoke with Tim. He said the funds are there and they need to submit the request. The fireworks are proceeding. They are in a unique position to have the funding and ability to hand it over. Walsh added that Comcast wanted the ordinance approved before the funding. Mayor Scholl talked about how Comcast stepped up.

ADJOURN – 2:31 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