



COUNCIL REGULAR SESSION

Wednesday, February 21, 2024

APPROVED MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT

Mayor Rick Scholl
Council President Jessica Chilton
Councilor Mark Gundersen
Councilor Russell Hubbard
Councilor Brandon Sundeen

STAFF PRESENT

John Walsh, City Administrator
Kathy Payne, City Recorder
Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder
Gloria Butsch, Finance Director
Matthew Kahl, Contracted City Attorney
Tina Curry, Contractor Event Coordinator

OTHERS

Howard Blumenthal	Drew Layda	Brady Preheim	TC
Doug Bean	Brandon Staehely	Jon Tuggle	SB
Jenni Gilbert	Michael Sykes	Jacob Woodruff	Mark
Adam St. Pierre	Nicholas Hellmich	Jason Morris	Daryl T.
Paul Vogel	Steve Toschi	Jennifer Massey	Michelle
Tracy Bean	Craig Rogers	Steve LeSollen	Brittney
Janet LeSollen	Daniel Houghtelling	Hunter Vanderwall	Rick Brown
Ron Houghtelling	Jacob Miner	Andrew Weir	Troy Weiss
Jared Blazell	Ceil McKenzie	Robert Halverson	Don Hibbs
James Calhoun	Austin Wheeler	Eric Prochnow	

CALL REGULAR SESSION TO ORDER – 7:00 p.m.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

COLUMBIA RIVER PUD PRESENTATION TO COUNCIL

Columbia River PUD (CRPUD) Director Michael Sykes reviewed his presentation. A copy is included in the archive packet for this meeting. CRPUD is the main power provider in St. Helens, with some provided by Portland General Electric (PGE) and other private entities. CRPUD receives power from Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) as a preferred customer. PGE must generate and buy their own power. Michael talked about costs involved. BPA is required to sell their power at cost and has 15,000 miles of transmission line. He pointed out the transmission lines on maps. They have received a lot of interest for additional power in St. Helens and Scappoose. With development interest, there is a need for over 200 megawatts (MW) of power, but only 35 MW is available. Building a new transmission line is a huge project. To address that need, they have been meeting with BPA and PGE.

Mayor Scholl was unaware of the lack of power prior to working with CPRPUD on Project Sprint. State funding is being sought for a feasibility study. Michael added that CRPUD has \$300,000 in the budget to conduct a study. They are waiting for cost estimates prior to moving forward.

Councilor Hubbard talked about the significant power issue and PGE controlling St. Helens Industrial Business Park. Will the Waterfront have sufficient power? Michael is unsure until the new transmission line is built. Mayor Scholl talked about the time involved for that, including easements, poles, and lines.

ST. HELENS INDUSTRIAL BUSINESS PARK COMMENTS

- ◆ Ron Houghtelling. He is a third generation St. Helens resident. He has worked as a contractor at Boise and Cascades with many of the guys in attendance, all of whom lost their jobs. There is a plan to possibly restart and restructure the paper mill. The community supports bringing them back online. They would like the Council to help them get back there and bring back jobs.
- ◆ Craig Allen. They are interested in restarting the paper mill. The biggest hurdle is the power issue. He encouraged the mill workers to share how they want to keep it operating. The mill has another 100 years of life left.

Mayor Scholl said the Cascade machines are still there. They have a Letter of Interest (LOI) with a company through the end of March that will be honored.

Councilor Sundeen spoke with Craig and Ron and liked what he heard. The mill is dear to him with a history of family working there. He would like to see them get back to work there.

Councilor Gundersen also wants to make it work for them to get back in there. However, they do have an LOI to respect first.

Mayor Scholl reiterated that Project Sprint wanted two plants and to invest \$1.5 billion into the community. If the power was here, they would be here. It's vitally important for them to advocate for power out here. There is a lot of industrial property here but won't happen without power.

Councilor Hubbard agreed it would be amazing to get the paper mill operational again with another 100 years from those machines. He is in favor of having both industries there.

- ◆ Don Hibbs, Union President. He asked if they have discussed powering with steam cogen. There is already natural gas, power lines, and plenty of water. That would give them 14 years.

Mayor Scholl will investigate that. He asked them to share a list of other mills who have used that kind of power source.

Councilor Sundeen said there have been other parties interested in that mill. It makes a difference that the people in attendance are the ones who know the equipment and site.

A member from the audience asked about the power there now. Mayor Scholl said they have been informed that transformer must be replaced because it occasionally arks. They are in the process of bringing in a 35MW transformer.

A member from the audience asked if this would happen quickly after the contract ends March 31. Mayor Scholl said it's dependent on the time it takes attorneys.

VISITOR COMMENTS – Limited to three (3) minutes per speaker

- ◆ Howard Blumenthal. He reminded everyone of the need to conserve power and turn off lights and TVs. Speaking to past discussions about rate increases, it's a huge impact to increase a utility fee from \$10 to \$25. He is in favor of police, but it should be done by a levy.

- ◆ Brady Preheim. He agreed with Howard. The levy was too rushed and he doesn't agree with adding it to the utility bill. He hopes the levy fails and they come back with an increase in November to pay for a remodeled police station. Speaking about the tourism RFP, he disagrees with it being done in the middle of 13 Nights on the River. The new contract should begin in January. He hopes they also see that E2C is way underpaid. Tina created an internationally known event from nothing and this is how they thank her.
- ◆ Adam St. Pierre, representing FAFFODS. It appears that his organization would qualify as news media since they gather and disseminate information publicly. However, their organization discussed it and doesn't plan to move forward with an application. They don't want there to be any confusion about where their information is coming from. Since Jennifer Massey has announced her mayor candidacy, they don't believe any candidates should be permitted as a member of the media. He apologized for all the public records requests submitted. They are submitting them due to the lack of transparency and trust in the organization. When they send emails they are trying to reduce the rumor mill, but they're not always getting responses. They wouldn't have to submit as many public records requests if they had free access to emails.
- ◆ Jenni Gilbert. She recommends press only be allowed to attend executive sessions in person. She also recommends they deny Steve Toschi's request to attend as press since he is going to run for mayor. It has potential for conflicts of interest and ethical issues. She sent an email to the Council requesting they make a public apology to Chief Greenway about the Halloween parade misunderstanding. As far as the Kaster Road location for a police station, she suggests fighting LUBA and believes they will win. There was discussion and vote at a past Special Session for the \$10 public safety utility fee to remain allocated for the new police station. She understands they have discussed amending it to allow the money to be used for police services. She supports that if there is an increase in the fee. There was another vote to explore the public safety \$15 increase. Citizens do not understand that St. Helens has the lowest tax rate in Columbia County. It's shocking that they went from exploring the fee to rushing a levy that will be voted on in May. She would like them to investigate the fee more.
- ◆ Steve Toschi. He listened to the Work Session and Special Session. He agreed that the Planning Commission should be involved in the site selection for the police station. There is a beautification plan for the Houlton Business District (HBD) and siting the police station in the HBD would help eliminate blight. He does not believe administration should be involved in the project. As far as his application to attend executive sessions as media, he more than qualifies. He is only attending as a watch dog to make sure nothing is discussed that shouldn't be. The fact that he may or may not run for political candidacy has no bearing whether he can be a member of the press.

REQUEST FOR APPROVAL TO ATTEND EXECUTIVE SESSIONS

1. Consideration of the Application of Steve Toschi of Town Talk Cafe to Qualify as a Representative of the News Media to Attend Council Executive Sessions

Council President Chilton asked for clarification of whether candidates for an elected position can attend as media or if it is a conflict of interest. Contracted City Attorney Matthew Kahl reported that there is nothing in the Attorney General's rules or Statutes that discuss whether a political candidate can attend when they are also a member of the news media. The question is whether the Council will allow that. Council President Chilton heard earlier that there is not much they can do. Councilor Sundeen said he is qualified based on what they heard this afternoon. Kahl talked about the difference between attending virtually versus in person. When the State's language was updated for public meetings during COVID, it said that all meetings except for executive sessions must provide a way for the public to attend virtually.

Council could request that news media attend in person. He pointed out that a complaint could be filed against individual Council members with the Oregon Government Ethics Commission if they don't allow media to attend.

Councilors Sundeen, Chilton, and Gundersen all expressed their preference for in-person attendance. They don't know what is on the other side of the camera. Mayor Scholl does not like that there are no repercussions if executive session information is shared. Oregon is the only State that does this. It has nothing to do with whether Steve qualifies. Kahl reminded them to always announce at the beginning and end of each meeting that information discussed cannot be disclosed.

Motion: Motion made by Councilor Sundeen and seconded by Council President Chilton to approve the application for Steve Toschi to attend executive session as a member of the news media.

Discussion. Mayor Scholl does not like that someone running for mayor can attend executive sessions, but he did meet all the qualifications. Walsh reminded them they could add the language about attending in-person.

Amended Motion: Motion made by Councilor Sundeen and seconded by Council President Chilton to approve the application for Steve Toschi to attend executive session as a member of the news media, adding that news media may only attend executive sessions in person. **Vote:** Yea: Mayor Scholl, Council President Chilton, Councilor Sundeen; Voting Nay: Councilor Gundersen, Councilor Hubbard

Mayor Scholl voted yes to avoid complaints to the Ethics Commission.

City Recorder Payne recommended Council add the in-person language to the policy as well.

ORDINANCES – First Reading

- 2. Ordinance No. 3299:** An Ordinance Amending the St. Helens Municipal Code Chapter 13.30 Regarding the St. Helens Public Safety Fee, to Expand the Use of the Fee to Public Safety Operations

Mayor Scholl read Ordinance No. 3299 by title. The final reading will be held at the next meeting.

RESOLUTIONS

- 3. Resolution No. 2001:** A Resolution of the Common Council of the City of St. Helens Adopting an Executive Session News Media Attendance Policy and Application

Mayor Scholl read Resolution No. 2001 by title. **Motion:** Motion made by Councilor Sundeen and seconded by Councilor Gundersen to adopt Resolution No. 2001 with the amendment that all news media must attend executive sessions in person. **Vote:** Yea: Mayor Scholl, Council President Chilton, Councilor Gundersen, Councilor Hubbard, Councilor Sundeen

APPROVE AND/OR AUTHORIZE FOR SIGNATURE

4. [Ratify] Business Oregon Application for Kaster Road Substation
5. Amendment No. 2 to Agreement with Columbia County for Columbia Blvd. Sidewalk and Safety Improvements
6. Personal Services Agreement with Consor for Professional Engineering Services for Wastewater Collection System Capacity Improvements, Project No. S-679
7. Extension of Agreement with Mayer/Reed, Inc. for Riverwalk Project Phase I and Columbia View Amphitheater

Motion: Motion made by Council President Chilton and seconded by Councilor Gundersen to approve '4' through '7' above.

Discussion. Councilor Sundeen requested clarification of number seven. City Administrator Walsh explained that it is for an extension of time and not a dollar increase.

Vote: Yea: Mayor Scholl, Council President Chilton, Councilor Gundersen, Councilor Hubbard, Councilor Sundeen

APPOINTMENTS TO CITY BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

8. Appoint Brooke Sisco and Scott Jacobson to the Planning Commission

Motion: Motion made by Councilor Gundersen and seconded by Council President Chilton to appoint Brooke Sisco to the Planning Commission. **Vote:** Yea: Mayor Scholl, Council President Chilton, Councilor Gundersen, Councilor Hubbard, Councilor Sundeen

Motion: Motion made by Councilor Gundersen and seconded by Councilor Hubbard to appoint Scott Jacobson to the Planning Commission and find it in the public interest to waive the limitation that individuals cannot be on more than one City board, committee, or commission during the term of their appointment. **Vote:** Yea: Mayor Scholl, Council President Chilton, Councilor Gundersen, Councilor Hubbard, Councilor Sundeen

CONSENT AGENDA FOR ACCEPTANCE

9. Library Board Minutes dated December 11, 2023
10. Parks and Trails Commission Minutes dated December 11, 2023 and January 8, 2024
11. Planning Commission Minutes dated January 9, 2024

Motion: Motion made by Council President Chilton and seconded by Councilor Sundeen to approve '9' through '11' above. **Vote:** Yea: Mayor Scholl, Council President Chilton, Councilor Gundersen, Councilor Hubbard, Councilor Sundeen

CONSENT AGENDA FOR APPROVAL

12. Request for Proposals for Realtor Services
13. Council Minutes dated December 13, 2023, December 20, 2023, December 28, 2023, and January 3, 2024
14. OLCC Licenses
15. Accounts Payable Bill Lists

Motion: Motion made by Councilor Sundeen and seconded by Councilor Gundersen to approve '12' through '15' above. **Vote:** Yea: Mayor Scholl, Council President Chilton, Councilor Gundersen, Councilor Hubbard, Councilor Sundeen

WORK SESSION ACTION ITEMS

Chamber of Commerce Sponsorship

Mayor Scholl would like to support small businesses and the Chamber of Commerce. He recommends purchasing two tables. Council President Chilton and Councilor Sundeen suggested one table. Council President Chilton will be sitting with Avamere.

It was the consensus of the Council to do one Partner table and to not be an award sponsor due to the City's financial position.

PROCLAMATION

16. Government Communicators Day - February 24, 2024

Mayor Scholl read the proclamation and thanked Communications Officer Crystal King and Communications Support Specialist Cameron Burkhart for their work.

Government Communicators Day
February 24, 2024

WHEREAS, the role of government communications professions is to inform, educate and engage their communities; and

WHEREAS, robust communication in government creates trust and inspires residents to take action and be involved; and

WHEREAS, government communications creates relationships and calls to action, builds awareness and understanding through storytelling, engages and fosters engagement on civic issues, and uses all channels to include people in critical decisions; and

WHEREAS, it is essential to have strong communications in government because it is a foundational element of living in a democracy where citizens have the freedom to make their voices heard; and

WHEREAS, the City is proud and has deep gratitude and recognition for government communicators' professionalism, dedication, hard work, commitment, enthusiasm, and sacrifice.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Rick Scholl, the Mayor of the City of St. Helens, do hereby proclaim February 24, 2024 as

GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATORS DAY

in St. Helens, Oregon and encourage all residents to thank the members of the City's Communications Team, Communications Officer Crystal King and Communications Support Specialist Cameron Burkhart, who have dedicated their careers to ensure the City has effective, impactful, and successful communication strategies that resonate and are relevant.

COUNCIL MEMBER REPORTS

Council President Chilton reported...

- Thanked Victorico's for sponsoring Community Meals. Volunteering is a great way to be involved in the community.
- Attended the Urban Renewal Agency meeting and accepted the Chair position. She is excited to see it grow and learn how to use it to its full potential.
- Budget Committee is active. She is happy to see good participation and interest in solutions.
- Attended the Community Advisory Council for the Health Coalition. They participated in the regional health assessment from Columbia Pacific CCO, which is the organization who manages Oregon Health Plan in our community. They represent residents who use Medicaid in the County. They are significantly understaffed for doctors. She was able to share some of the difficulties citizens and government agencies face with expanding housing. More housing brings a need for more infrastructure and resources.
- The open house for Avamere's remodel is tomorrow. She invited everyone to celebrate the beautiful new building.
- South Columbia County Elected Leadership meeting is next week. It's a good way to collaborate with others in the County. There will likely be discussion about power.

Councilor Sundeen reported...

- Thanked Communications Officer Crystal King and Communications Support Specialist Cameron Burkhart for their hard work.
- Excited about a possible opportunity to bring industry back to the mill site.
- Parks & Trails Commission met last week. A few highlights discussed were the Sand Island contract, improvements at Dalton lake, and plans for the Urban Trail.
- Budget Committee meeting last week. He thanked Finance Director Gloria Butsch for her hard work.

- Attended the Employee Recognition potluck last Friday. It was a fun event. Congratulations to Associate Planner/Community Development Project Manager Jenny Dimsho for being honored as the Employee of the Year.
- Police update
 - Met with police station designers to review potential sites.
 - Introduced himself at their union meeting.
 - Met with Chief Greenway yesterday. Things are going well and he encouraged Council members to participate in ride-alongs.
- The tourism contract has not been forgotten. It is in review with the City attorney right now. The attorney recommended the RFP and said is not negotiable.

Councilor Gundersen...

- The two new Planning Commission members will be a great addition.
- He attended the Columbia River Fire & Rescue Board meeting last night. Interim Chief Smythe is planning to do a monthly update. They are doing a great job.
- Congratulations to Dimsho!
- Thank you to King and Burkhart.
- Thank you to Butsch for her work with the Budget Committee.

Councilor Hubbard...

- Thanked staff for all they do.
- It's great to see the energy on the Budget Committee.
- He is working on avenues to bring businesses to St. Helens. Power is the biggest issue.

MAYOR SCHOLL REPORTS

- Congratulations to Dimsho for receiving Employee of the Year! It was a nice event.
- Thanked King and Burkhart for their work.
- There are budget issues but good things will happen.
- Power is a struggle but they are working with partners on solutions.
- There is progress on Project Sprint.
- Butsch and staff did great at the Budget Committee meeting. They made it easy to get answers. April 25 is the first official meeting.

OTHER BUSINESS**ADJOURN – 8:38 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted by Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder.

ATTEST:

/s/ Kathy Payne
Kathy Payne, City Recorder

/s/ Rick Scholl
Rick Scholl, Mayor