



COUNCIL WORK SESSION

Wednesday, December 04, 2024

APPROVED MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT

Council President Jessica Chilton
Councilor Mark Gundersen
Councilor Russell Hubbard
Councilor Brandon Sundeen

MEMBERS ABSENT

Mayor Rick Scholl

STAFF PRESENT

John Walsh, City Administrator	Crystal King, Communications Officer
Kathy Payne, City Recorder	Jenny Dimsho, Associate Planner/Comm. Dev. Project Manager
Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder	Christina Sullivan, Community Development Admin. Assistant
Joe Hogue, Acting Police Chief	Ashley Wigod, Contracted City Attorney
Suzanne Bishop, Library Director	

OTHERS

Jennifer Massey	Michelle Millar	Arthur
Steve Topaz	Stephanie Patterson	Mitz
Brandon Treadway	Adam St. Pierre	Richard Mason
Brittany Hummel	Jen Dougherty	Brady Preheim
Diana Wiener	Dana Lathrope	Marci Sanders
Mary Hubbard	E. Dunton	Jane Garcia
Amy Bynum	Erin Salisbury	

CALL WORK SESSION TO ORDER – 2:00 p.m.

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

- ◆ Brady Preheim. Asked that the Chief of Police report be completed and if the Mayor-elect had been involved. He shared concerns about a lawsuit given many items at Spirit of Halloweentown did not work, Tourism's lack of transparency, City Administrator Walsh getting the permits, and Councilor Hubbard complaining about Tourism not having permits previously, but saying nothing now. He supported leasing the Columbia Center for Makerspace expansion.
- ◆ Steve Topaz. Complained about delays and mishaps in various projects going on in St. Helens. He was concerned about Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) reports on various industrial sites indicating the need to contain toxic waste, making the sites less usable. He noted no explanation had been given for putting the Police Chief on administrative leave.
- ◆ Diana Wiener. Congratulated Associate Planner/Community Development Project Manager Jenny Dimsho and thanked her for the work she had done. She stated Spirit of Halloweentown was well organized with local and mobile businesses integrated into the event, noting many signs directing

visitors away from parking in front of resident's homes. Treadway did an amazing job. She also supported more funding for the Makerspace. She noted construction had unique challenges in the area, but she liked the work the City was doing with historic touches on the planters. She asked if the stage in the park was cut from the current building phase, or if it had been cut entirely.

- ◆ Dana Lathrope. Thanked the Council for choosing Treadway Events to run Spirit of Halloweentown. As a business owner on S. 1st Street, she noted happy patrons had been abundant at businesses and there had been more opportunity to give Tourism input and volunteer at events. She recognized the impacts of prolonged construction, noting Treadway had been able to hold the event anyway, even with the short timeframe. She hoped Treadway would continue to do events, based on the phenomenally positive feedback she received about Spirit of Halloweentown this year.
- ◆ Adam St. Pierre. Noted a meeting had been held with local vendors about improving Spirit of Halloweentown and the businesses were ecstatic about how the event operated this year. Business owners were impressed by Treadway's follow-up to get feedback and address issues.

DISCUSSION TOPICS

1. Employee Length of Service Recognition: Jenny Dimsho (10) and Christina Sullivan (5)

Council President Chilton recognized Associate Planner/Community Development Project Manager Jenny Dimsho and Community Development Administrative Assistant Christina Sullivan and those present thanked them for their service.

2. Tourism Report from Treadway Events & Entertainment - *Brandon Treadway*

Brandon Treadway and Brittany Hummel presented the Tourism Post Event Report on Spirit of Halloweentown, including information on attendance, key attractions, and celebrity guests. Details were provided on vendor, local business, and consumer feedback; marketing campaigns; Google analytics and social media impressions; tourism data highlights; opportunities for improvement; the financial summary; and recommendations for Spirit of Halloweentown in 2025. In addition, they announced Holiday in the Plaza would be held on December 14, 2024, and all were encouraged to attend.

Councilors expressed appreciation for the work done on Spirit of Halloweentown.

3. Review Proposed Changes to Records & Evidence Specialist Job Description

City Administrator Walsh noted the minor changes proposed to modernize the job description.

4. Discussion regarding Leasing Vacant Space at Columbia Learning Center for the Makerspace - *Councilor Gundersen & Councilor Hubbard*

Councilor Gundersen talked about potentially expanding the Makerspace program in the vacancy at the Columbia Learning Center and possibly allowing the Main Street Alliance to use one room as an office. The Makerspace program taught skills like 3-D printing and soldering that kids could use later in the work force, adding the expansion would not cost much.

Councilor Hubbard stated it seemed natural for the Main Street Alliance to share the space as the Makerspace would not need the front office.

Erin Salisbury, Main Street Alliance, noted the Main Street Alliance Board had not discussed the issue yet and they were looking for new space, but not urgently. Though the office was a great size, she believed it would be great to use the office for something else as it was not adjacent to the Main Street Corridor.

Council discussion on the Makerspace expansion was as follows with comments and responses from staff as noted:

- Makerspace was not stable enough for expansion, and funding was still uncertain. It was not the right time to expand the program without having a plan for funding and sustaining the expansion.
- The location and cost of the vacant space could be a good opportunity for a new business.
 - Some business owners had expressed they did not feel the library situation would be conducive to starting a business, though it was possible someone would like the idea.
- Support was expressed for expanding the Makerspace, noting Youth and Makerspace Librarian Jana Wiersma had brought more stability to the Makerspace program.
- Library Director Bishop noted expanding would allow the program to spread out equipment Makerspace already owned, and not much new equipment or infrastructure would be required. Some equipment took up a lot of space, like the long arm quilting equipment, but there was a lot of community interest in using it.
 - She could return with foot-traffic data for the Makerspace program, and explained the Library Budget did not currently have money for program expansion.
- The City was getting ready for a new budget cycle, and having a discussion with the Budget Committee about including Makerspace expansion in the Library Budget would be good.
- Library Director Bishop clarified the maximum rent cost would be \$8,892 if both vacant spaces were rented. The Columbia Foundation Board had given Councilor Gundersen the go-ahead to reduce the rent cost by as much as half.
- City Administrator Walsh noted \$8,892 was not much money considering the City's \$84 million budget.
- Considering the upcoming Council changes, it may be better to gather more information and data about the Makerspace and not take the opportunity from a business who could use that space to start up.
- Jason Moon or the Main Street Alliance could be asked to publish information about leasing the space to a small business.
- Library Director Bishop stated the vacant space had some parameters for use, which would not be good for retail. The Columbia Economic Team and Small Business Development Center's use of the space had been ideal for that building.
 - She had talked with Library Board members about fundraising and finding funding for programs. Charging for programs was not a practice of the Public Library, which had talked about finding funding to pay presenters, but not charging individuals for participating.
- Perhaps the Library could partner with the Recreation Center, which did charge for programs, and collaborate to find funding.
- Expanding the Makerspace was a good idea, and a good use of the space.
- City Administrator Walsh noted the convenience of not having to leave the building to go between the Library and Makerspace areas, adding that the low-cost lease included utilities and use of restrooms.
- Library Director Bishop explained the Columbia Foundation Board would make the decision whether to reduce the rent cost by up to half, which they had offered as a possible option.

The Council consented to revisit the matter at a future meeting after staff and Councilor Gundersen gathered more information.

5. Agreement with Port of Columbia County for Access to Industrial Properties - *City Administrator John Walsh*

City Administrator Walsh reviewed the intergovernmental agreement (IGA) with the Port of Columbia County securing access to the Port from the north end of the site for five years to repair the bridge on

the Pope and Talbot site. He confirmed this would not interfere with Project Arcadia. The IGA would be on the agenda for the regular session tonight.

6. Report from City Administrator John Walsh

City Manager Walsh presented his report with updates on the following items:

- He had visited the Senior Center and met Joanne, who was on the Senior Center Board. He would attend the upcoming Senior Center Board meeting on Monday.
- He attended the League of Oregon Cities (LOC) Elected Essentials workshop yesterday and was impressed with the Oregon Government's Ethics Commission's (OGEC) expanded role around public meetings and public records oversight and plans to provide a call line where callers could ask questions about public records and ethics.
- Toy 'n Joy would be this weekend. The City contributed two utility bill credit certificates to the raffle.
- Christmas Ships decorations would be put up tomorrow.
- The City was supporting Project Arcadia's efforts to restart the mill, including keeping permits open. The permitting agency was excited about the opportunity for the mill to come back.
- The Millard Road sale was moving forward. Escrow had released the non-refundable portion of the earnest money to the City.
- The timber sale paperwork was moving forward.
- Confirmation had been received from FEMA on the City's choice regarding flood plain management on a case-by-case basis, rather than making extensive changes to the City's flood plain regulations. He believed litigation at the federal level may change the outcomes.
- He reviewed items on tonight's agenda for approval including:
- Talking to Rachel Barry about coming back to do some community surveys, Council Goal setting, and doing a retreat.
- A Council retreat by SSW scheduled for January 31, 2025.
- Mayor Elect Massey had been invited and was able to attend the retreat on that date.
- He looked forward to team building and reviewing goals for the new year.
- Christina Sullivan would be leaving. There was a lot of transition in the City with people coming and going.
- No Executive Session would be held today.

ADJOURN – 3:06 p.m.

EXECUTIVE SESSION – None

Respectfully submitted by Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder.

ATTEST:

/s/ Kathy Payne

Kathy Payne, City Recorder

/s/ Jessica Chilton

Jessica Chilton, Council President