



COUNCIL PUBLIC FORUM

Wednesday, May 19, 2021

APROVED 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
Jenny Dimsho, Associate Planner
Rachael Barry, Government Affairs &
Project Support Specialist

Crystal King, Communications Officer
Cameron Burkhart, Communications Assistant
Margaret Jeffries, Library Director
Mouhamad Zaher, Public Works Director
Tina Curry, Event Coordinator

OTHERS

Shannon Simms, Mayer/Reed
Jeramie Shane, Mayer Reed
Emily Kuo, Mayer Reed
Brady Preheim
Mart
Geri Logan
Autumn Oliver
Amy Scheckla-Cox
Candy Miville, Pack 106
Lynne Pettit
Tom Myers

Erin Salisbury
Serena McCurdy
Sean Long
Carmin Dunn
Becky B.
Mandy Flett
Claire Catt
Rgkwarn
Lenore T.
Meredith Reading
Ashleigh Edwards

Mary Ellen
Fran Pearson
Alan King
Steve Ewoldt
Redshirt 1846
Rhonda
Howard Blumenthal
Jane Drury
Lynda
Mitch Sherer
Charlie Caster

OPEN PUBLIC FORUM VIA ZOOM – 5:59 p.m.

TOPIC

1. Riverwalk Community Meeting #1

City Administrator Walsh introduced Shannon Simms from Mayer/Reed.

Simms presented a PowerPoint presentation which included going over the subject property, its history, and its current condition. A copy is included in the archive packet for this meeting and is also online at <https://www.sthelensoregon.gov/waterfront/page/riverwalk-project>.

PUBLIC COMMENT

How do you use the Riverfront today?

Assistant City Administrator Brown read questions that were in the chat and posted on Facebook.

- ◆ Sean. Has an environmental study been done on the area? Are we clear to do construction or is cleanup needed first?

Simms responded that some environmental work has been done and will continue to be done. Walsh explained the work that has already been done.

- ◆ Ashleigh. Would like roller-skating paths considered.
- ◆ Carmin Dunn. Her family uses the Riverfront to attend community events, purchase to-go food for picnics, part of her running path, family strolls, throw rocks into the water, and her daughter jumps in puddles.
- ◆ Councilor Topaz. He recently talked to a gentleman about Native American artifacts covering the Riverfront and up to Nob Hill with the nearby connection of the Lewis River, the Multnomah Channel, the Columbia River. There are likely graves in the area that may be long gone due to industrialization. Are they doing any work in the undisturbed areas to find evidence of Native Americans?

Simms responded that they do have a portion of their team dedicated to permitting, which includes cultural resources to inventory. The whole site has gone through hundreds of years of disturbance. It is likely that the location of the Riverfront and Columbia View Park represents a lot of fill and disturbance, since the time of Native American existence. Councilor Topaz added that the gentleman he mentioned has found arrowheads in the area.

- ◆ Meredith. She lives on Nob Hill and walks the path daily. Thank you for hosting the forum.
- ◆ Fran Pearson. Uses it extensively for walking and takes visitors to see it.
- ◆ Rhonda. Mostly walks dog along the gravel walkway. Would like to see the walkway ADA accessible.
- ◆ Kristina Saul. A few years ago, there were informational and idea gathering meetings where people added suggestions on little sticky notes. What happened to the ideas? Are we not just going over the same steps that have already been taken?

Simms responded that their team is building on the framework that was done previously. That information has not been lost. They are collecting and building on top of those comments. The design team is new, and the effort is renewed as they move into design and construction. They did not want to miss anything new from the community.

- ◆ Erin Salisbury. Her family does a lot of walking on the Old Mill site. They love the wildlife viewing and the ability to see the river activity.
- ◆ Becky. Goes there for family walks. She has ability to let her kids run and explore without worrying about traffic.
- ◆ Roy Hettinga. He and his wife walk and run the loop. They enjoy the Riverfront during 13 Nights on the River and Spirit of Halloweentown.
- ◆ Jessica Sturdivant. She is grateful for Councilor Topaz's thoughtfulness. Will there be any consideration for the indigenous people who lived here before the land was taken from them, such as a sculpture or memorial?

- ◆ Brady Preheim. Walks the path almost every day with his dogs. He hopes they continue to have an off-leash area for dogs. He and a lot of other people with well-behaved dogs use it that way. What is going on with the lagoon? There was a plan to fill the lagoon with stuff from the Portland Harbor. Does that have to happen before you proceed with development?

Walsh explained that the City's wastewater lagoon repurposing is part of the Central Waterfront Project. It is not part of the Riverfront development.

- ◆ Unknown. Can more parking be added since they lost the spaces behind the Courthouse? Or can employees park in the front and allow for public to park above the river at the docks?
- ◆ Tom Myers. He is down there regularly bird watching. 114 bird species have been seen from Columbia View Park. He also sees plenty of seals, sea lions, and otters on the river. What are the project teams thoughts on preserving, and ideally building up, wildlife habitat?

Simms responded that their team is very interested in making the river edge a better habitat for those species. There will be on-street parking with the street extension project. Those designs are not far along yet, but it is part of the discussion.

- ◆ Alan King. Hopes they make this a place for the community to come together. So much of the public land is parceled off for baseball and dog use. Use this magnificent resource to welcome everybody.

Simms continued her presentation with the future of the site. A fundamental component is a trail. It will also include spaces to pause and participate in water related activities.

Which riverfront activities are most important to you?

What feelings or experiences do you want to have on the Riverwalk?

- ◆ James Shober. Boat ramp!!!
- ◆ Unknown. Kite boarding.
- ◆ Unknown. What will the width of the boardwalk be and how close will it be to the river? Is there a plan for one path for walking and then another one for wheels, bikes, skates, etc.?

Simms explained that it is not overly determined at this time. The planning work that has been done envisions a single multi-use path, but they would like to hear from the community about that. They envision that the path will be wider near Columbia View Park. The rest of the old mill property will be developed in the future. This is only to define the space for the Riverfront.

- ◆ Unknown. Walking, running, wading, and picnicking. Loves the quiet and history, including Native American history and modern industry.
- ◆ Unknown. Is there beach area along there? If so, easy beach access would be wonderful.
- ◆ Schnea Richardson. Local artisan shops and booths.
- ◆ Becky. Swimming. There is a lot of water but nowhere to swim and wade except for the creek at McCormick Park.
- ◆ Unknown. Water access.

- ◆ Unknown. All those things mentioned are amazing and exactly what our community wants. Paying homage to our native community and culture should be important.
- ◆ Rhonda. Kayak launching, fishing, walking, and sightseeing. Calm and serene, do not envision a noisy environment.
- ◆ Howard Blumenthal. He hopes they stay with the early versions of what the group put together several years ago. He was very involved at that time. His favorite times are walking out there when the rain is pouring, the winds are blowing sideways, and he does not have to share it with many people. Everyone's ideas are all really good. It is very important to create space for the osprey to nest. There is only one there now and, in the past, there were several. He would like them to keep in mind light pollution and interference with bird migration since it is so close to Ridgefield Wildlife Refuge and Sauvie Island. Lighting should be friendly to birds.

Simms acknowledged the good point about lighting. That will be addressed in a later phase. Best practices are to provide enough lighting for pedestrians, but also incorporating shielding to not impact migratory birds.

- ◆ Charlie Caster. Walking, dog walking, and watching the wildlife are all important. He really wants it to be a space for the whole community to use and not just sectioned off for one use. Access for paddling and kayaks needs to be considered. They need to take advantage of the natural resources.
- ◆ Rosemary Plymouth. Thanked the person who spoke about the osprey nests. The pilings are all leaning now where they used to nest. Does the plan include fixing them for the birds to nest again?
- ◆ Erin Salisbury. She would like to see non-motorized access to the river. Her favorite place to kayak is up into the channel. The most stressful part of accessing the channel, is getting through all of the motorized boats, launches, and the shuttle back and forth to Sand Island.
- ◆ Fran Pearson. She likes the idea of sectioning off areas for walking and wheels, bicycles, skating, etc. There can be conflicts between the types, especially when walking with littles.

Simms continued her presentation talking about possible stories and themes to incorporate, as well as access to the property.

Which themes are important for visitors to understand?

Which types of access are important?

- ◆ Sean Long. Geology and geography of the area is fascinating. They have a huge ability to highlight the history that St. Helens has had in Oregon over the past 150 years; including timber, ship building, transportation, etc. He would like access to connect to downtown. There are already established sidewalks to connect to and access existing businesses.
- ◆ Council President Morten. Great comments tonight! They need to be balanced in the way it is designed. He has not heard much talk about artwork, sculptures, and celebration of three-dimensional art. He does like the idea of informational signs to learn about historical significances. However, world renowned artist Michael Curry is in the area and very much wanted to do a mythological sculpture of Loo Wit. It incorporates the three mountains and is a myth from Native Americans who inhabited this land before Lewis and Clark. Those myths need to be acknowledged.

Simms acknowledged that art is an important component to consider. It is a layer they will be looking at.

Simms continued her presentation and focused on Phase 1 of the project in Columbia View Park, where the project will be building the Riverwalk along the river's edge.

What should the character of the new amphitheater stage be?

What activities should be included in Riverwalk Phase 1?

- ◆ Alan King. The amphitheater is a very important part of this. It should be celebrated where it is. The unique thing about Columbia View Park is in its name. The stage protects the performers and provides a sound shell. Concrete over other paving is uncomfortable when it is hot. Turf grass is very durable and would be much more comfortable. It is not convenient to bring in sound equipment every time. Lighting is not addressed. Some aerial brackets by the trees would help light the stage. There is a cautionary tale on the Portland Waterfront where there was a deeded path for the public. The people living in apartments nearby would close and lock a gate, making it a constant battle involving the police to tell apartment residents that it is not their land. It needs to be wide enough that people understand it is a public way.
- ◆ Charlie Caster. Phase I ends in an awkward area. Why does it not mirror the current end of Strand Street?
- ◆ Rosemary. She would like to see Strand Street widened. Parking is a huge issue, and the road is narrow.

Simms acknowledged that the team is studying different concepts for Strand. At this time, the Phase I area extends to about the end of Cowlitz Street. That is likely due to a limitation of funding.

- ◆ Ashleigh Edwards. She thanked the consultants, staff, and Council for holding this meeting. She wanted to speak about roller-skating. She is a member of Rose City Rollers and has been skating for about six years. She enjoys trail skating but there is a lot of obstacles with what is available now, such as rocks, cracks, etc. It is a challenge for experienced skaters and can knock down new skaters.
- ◆ Councilor Topaz. Wheelchairs need to be able to access the gazebo. He agrees they need grass to sit on but wants them to keep mobility issues in mind. Attention needs to be made for ADA access in the area.
- ◆ Unknown. Less is more. Natural access, accessibility, familiar, and community friendly. Does not mind artwork and history reader boards but this is a space about natural resources, not huge works of art. The landscape is amazing. We do not need expensive artwork.
- ◆ Unknown. Would like to see a unique amphitheater but flow with the Courthouse design. Love the 360 access to see a stage with grass surrounding. Limit the structure so it is not blocking views but enhancing them. It should be appealing to look at from all angles.
- ◆ Margaret Jeffries. Often handrails can create a view obstruction for people in wheelchairs and sitting in their vehicles. Safety is important but they should keep the line of site in mind.

Simms thanked everyone for attending. She appreciates all the feedback. She encouraged everyone to complete the survey online or at Columbia View Park.

CLOSE PUBLIC FORUM – 7:02 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder.

ATTEST:

/s/ Kathy Payne
Kathy Payne, City Recorder

/s/ Rick Scholl
Rick Scholl, Mayor