



COUNCIL REGULAR SESSION

Wednesday, February 18, 2026

APPROVED MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT

Mayor Jennifer Massey
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
Sharon Darroux, Engineering Manager
Ashley Wigod, Contracted City Attorney

OTHERS

Steve Toschi	Adam St. Pierre	Eddie Dunton
Melissa Warner	Mike Warner	Nick Flory
Emily Riley	Paul DeShazer	Mercedes Massey
Levi DeShazer	Jeff MacDannald	Brady Preheim
Jason Moon	CR	Art Leskowich
Jim Coleman		

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

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

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

- ◆ Nick Flory. Expressed continued support for the UTV ordinance, calling it fun and good for the city. However, he voiced concerns about the sewage reservoir project, stating that given the City's current financial situation, he didn't believe it was appropriate to move forward with such a large capital investment at this time. He agreed with postponing the project until the budget was in better shape, noting he appreciated the democratic process that allows citizens and taxpayers to voice their opinions.
- ◆ Steve Toschi. Commended Council President Chilton's decision to press the "no go button" on the lagoon project, calling it a non-starter. He argued that St. Helens should not be taking sludge from the Willamette and Portland to solve their own problems, warning about "golden handcuffs" where others help with planning but tie the City to their solutions. He expressed concern that the Public Works Department wasn't working on a plan B, noting they have 10 more years of sewer capacity. Toschi suggested using the engineering plans already provided but tasking Public Works to solve St. Helens' problems without taking on Portland's waste. He also raised concerns about

the upcoming development work and potential litigation, emphasizing the need for flexibility in development options.

- ◆ Jason Moon, former Columbia County Small Business Resource Center Director, thanked the Council for their support and announced that grants from the dissolved CET were being transferred. He shared that he would continue running the Northwest Innovation Hub through the Oregon Entrepreneurs Network, serving Columbia, Clatsop, and Tillamook counties. Moon noted that Scappoose had agreed to take over some grants, including the Growing Rural Oregon Ford Family Foundation grant, and hoped St. Helens would support this transition.
- ◆ Brady Preheim. Criticized the mayor extensively, calling the ATV ordinance another failed "moneymaker scheme." He listed what he characterized as the mayor's failures, including moving public comments to the end of meetings, canceling town halls, and budget problems. Preheim criticized the proposed \$47 water bill fee, predicting it would not pass. He referenced being on the Budget Committee three years ago when the current crisis was predicted, arguing that a 5% cut then (equivalent to closing City Hall two hours early on Fridays) could have prevented the current need for 20% cuts. He questioned where \$300,000 from tourism funds had gone and criticized the lack of action on budget problems.
- ◆ Levi DeShazer. Spoke in support of the UTV ordinance, emphasizing that the UTV community understands when to follow rules both recreationally and on public roads. He noted UTV users follow campground rules, federal land regulations, and safety requirements including flags, fire extinguishers, seat belts, and helmets for children. DeShazer offered to donate his time and materials to install up to four road signs, noting his employer is 3M and ODOT certified for road sign installation following the Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices.
- ◆ Mercedes Massey. Responded to suggestions that her opinions shouldn't matter because she's the mayor's daughter, asserting her right as a resident to express views about ordinances affecting her community. She addressed claims of being "attacked," suggesting such claims arise when baseless online accusations are met with facts and evidence. Massey noted that a public post about the ordinance had generated 106 supportive comments, reflecting community desire. She emphasized that productive dialogue should be grounded in facts rather than personal feelings, clarifying that neither she nor her significant other own a side-by-side vehicle.
- ◆ Jim Coleman. Thanked Mercedes Massey for her "tirade" and stated he was opposing the ordinance without needing to be attacked for his opinion. He referenced earlier signage discussions where he felt the mayor had signaled he wasn't telling the truth. Coleman pointed to contract language requiring the City to post signs and insurance requirements without verification mechanisms, arguing these would cost the City money and tax the understaffed Police Department. He concluded the City wasn't ready for this expense given budget constraints.
- ◆ Jeff MacDannald. Supported the ATV ordinance and offered to personally cover any costs for the few signs needed if the City faced fees. He emphasized that UTV owners maintain full coverage insurance on vehicles worth \$20,000 to \$100,000, not just liability coverage. MacDannald noted all vehicles have required safety equipment and road kits including blinkers and horns.
- ◆ Adam St. Pierre. Thanked Council for their work and noted the ordinance demonstrated overwhelming local support. He expressed support for the General Services Fee to return to 20% reserves quickly, then removing the fee. St. Pierre emphasized the need for additional detective

positions, particularly for investigating child abuse and sexual assault cases. He made concerning allegations about an individual's comments regarding children, suggesting additional detectives were needed to investigate such behavior.

- ◆ Art Leskowich. Supports the Council's work and commented on the lagoon studies. He noted over \$1 million in grant funding had been spent and remaining funds should be utilized since Council appeared to oppose filling the lagoon with external sediments. Leskowich emphasized the lagoon contains contaminated sediments from previous mill operations and the Wastewater Treatment Plant will need future upgrades. He noted some contaminants were appearing in drinking water intake downstream, though below concern limits. Leskowich advocated for information-based rather than emotional decisions, noting the project's economics had shifted from a "golden goose" to requiring \$50-80 million in private partnerships that no firms had pursued over three years.

ORDINANCES – Final Reading

Before proceeding, Contracted City Attorney Wigod addressed conflict of interest concerns raised during public comments. She explained Oregon ethics law regarding actual and potential conflicts of interest, noting these focus on financial benefits or detriments to officials or relatives. Wigod provided examples and asked if any Councilors wished to declare conflicts on agenda items. None were declared.

1. **Ordinance No. 3319:** An Ordinance to Annex and Designate the Zone of Certain Property Located Between the Northern Terminus of Morten Lane and the South Side of Sykes County Road

Mayor Massey read Ordinance No. 3319 by title. **Motion:** Motion made by Council President Chilton and seconded by Councilor Gundersen to adopt Ordinance No. 3319. **Vote:** Yea: Mayor Massey, Council President Chilton, Councilor Gundersen, Councilor Hubbard, Councilor Sundeen

2. **Ordinance No. 3320:** An Ordinance Authorizing the Operation of Class IV All-Terrain Vehicles on Streets located within the City of St. Helens, Oregon, and Providing a Penalty for the Violation Thereof

Mayor Massey read Ordinance No. 3320 by title. **Motion:** Motion made by Council President Chilton and seconded by Councilor Hubbard to adopt Ordinance No. 3320. **Vote:** Yea: Mayor Massey, Council President Chilton, Councilor Gundersen, Councilor Hubbard, Councilor Sundeen

Mayor Massey congratulated supporters, noting they would be "very lucky."

APPROVE AND/OR AUTHORIZE FOR SIGNATURE

3. Amendment No. 1 to Contract with Hasa, Inc. to Extend Contract for Delivery of Bulk Sodium Hypochlorite to the Wastewater Treatment Plant

Motion: Motion made by Council President Chilton and seconded by Councilor Gundersen to approve '3' above. **Vote:** Yea: Mayor Massey, Council President Chilton, Councilor Gundersen, Councilor Hubbard, Councilor Sundeen

4. Ratify AFSCME Collective Bargaining Agreement for 7/1/25-6/30/28

Motion: Motion made by Councilor Gundersen and seconded by Councilor Hubbard to approve '4' above. **Vote:** Yea: Council President Chilton, Councilor Gundersen, Councilor Hubbard, Councilor Sundeen; Nay: Mayor Massey

5. First Amendment to Keller Associates, Inc. Agreement for the Reservoir Siting Study Project No. W-484

Motion: Motion made by Councilor Sundeen and seconded by Councilor Gundersen to approve '5' above. **Vote:** Yea: Mayor Massey, Council President Chilton, Councilor Gundersen, Councilor Hubbard, Councilor Sundeen

- 6. Intergovernmental Agreement with the Oregon Department of Transportation for the Transportation System Management Plan Update

Motion: Motion made by Council President Chilton and seconded by Councilor Sundeen to approve '6' above. **Vote:** Yea: Mayor Massey, Council President Chilton, Councilor Gundersen, Councilor Hubbard, Councilor Sundeen

- 7. Right-of-Way Dedication Deed for 80 S. 21st Street

Motion: Motion made by Councilor Sundeen and seconded by Councilor Gundersen to approve '7' above. **Vote:** Yea: Mayor Massey, Council President Chilton, Councilor Gundersen, Councilor Hubbard, Councilor Sundeen

- 8. Subgrant Agreement with City of Scappoose for Continued Implementation of the Growing Rural Oregon (GRO) Initiative Grant

Motion: Motion made by Councilor Gundersen and seconded by Council President Chilton to approve '8' above. **Vote:** Yea: Mayor Massey, Council President Chilton, Councilor Gundersen, Councilor Hubbard, Councilor Sundeen

Council thanked Jason Moon and wished him good luck with his future endeavors.

APPOINTMENTS TO CITY BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

- 9. Appoint Lori Baker to the Parks & Trails Commission

Motion: Motion made by Councilor Sundeen and seconded by Councilor Gundersen to appoint Lori Baker to the Parks & Trails Commission. **Vote:** Yea: Mayor Massey, Council President Chilton, Councilor Gundersen, Councilor Hubbard, Councilor Sundeen

CONSENT AGENDA FOR ACCEPTANCE

- 10. Library Board Minutes dated January 12 and 28, 2026
- 11. Parks & Trails Commission Minutes dated January 12, 2026
- 12. Planning Commission Minutes dated January 13, 2026

Motion: Motion made by Council President Chilton and seconded by Councilor Hubbard to approve '10' through '12' above. **Vote:** Yea: Mayor Massey, Council President Chilton, Councilor Gundersen, Councilor Hubbard, Councilor Sundeen

CONSENT AGENDA FOR APPROVAL

- 13. OLCC Licenses
- 14. Accounts Payable Bill Lists

Motion: Motion made by Councilor Sundeen and seconded by Council President Chilton to approve '13' and '14' above. **Vote:** Yea: Mayor Massey, Council President Chilton, Councilor Gundersen, Councilor Hubbard, Councilor Sundeen

WORK SESSION ACTION ITEMS

None

COUNCIL MEMBER REPORTS

Councilor Sundeen reported...

- Attended the annual Police Awards Banquet, praising officers and recognizing Officer Luke Marshall as officer of the year.
- Lori Baker was welcomed to the Parks and Trails Commission, highlighted for her decades of parks experience.
- The Wind Phone dedication on February 19 at the McCormick Park Veterans Pavilion was funded by Columbia Health Services with private donations, not City funds. He addressed misinformation about the Wind Phone and stressed the importance of factual information.
- Reported on America 250 celebration planning, led by Judy Thompson, involving local groups and organizations.
- Shared St. Helens' history of winning a national competition in the 1950s and the 1976 development of Columbia Botanical Gardens.
- Encouraged the Parks & Trails Commission and community to create lasting projects for the nation's 250th anniversary.

Council President Chilton reported...

- Attempted to share a Waterfront project video but was faced with technical difficulties. Council agreed to play it at the next meeting.

Councilor Hubbard reported...

- There is a meeting with the Waterfront developer in March to finalize agreements.
- The police station construction will begin in June.

Councilor Gundersen reported...

- Announced his upcoming attendance at the Eagle Scout ceremony.

MAYOR MASSEY REPORTS

- Thanked City staff, including City Recorder Payne, Deputy City Recorder Scholl, and Communications Officer King, for supporting Council meetings.
- Criticized misinformation regarding the UTV ordinance, particularly a Facebook post claiming it was for her daughter and son-in-law, calling it "BS" and "false information."
- Emphasized her daughter's rights as a taxpaying citizen to support or oppose ordinances, condemning the post as bullying and harassment.
- Clarified that someone offered to donate and manufacture UTV signs and mentioned she would connect them with the Public Works Director.
- Explained the decision to eliminate fees for the ordinance, stating administrative costs would exceed potential revenue, thus benefiting citizens.
- Addressed lagoon project funding, stressing that work was funded by grants, not City funds, and remaining grants should be used efficiently with potential future wastewater treatment needs in mind.
- Reported attending the well-attended Library event for Columbia County authors and committed to writing something for the 250th-anniversary celebration.
- Promoted Columbia County Stories by the River Festival events, featuring a whodunit mystery event on February 24 with former Councilor Birkle.
- Highlighted the Library's cultural passes offering free admission to ten locations, like the Japanese Gardens and Evergreen Aerospace Museum.
- Described visiting McBride Elementary classrooms for the "If I Were Mayor" Student Contest, noting students' love for parks and desire for a local arcade and Panda Express.
- Praised student feedback about the waterfront, splash pad, and parks.

- Announced upcoming school visits to Lewis and Clark and Columbia City, and her planned attendance at the Eagle Scout ceremony.

PROACTIVE ITEMS

OTHER BUSINESS

ADJOURN – 7:54 p.m.

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