



COUNCIL REGULAR SESSION

Wednesday, May 07, 2025

APPROVED MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT

Mayor Jennifer Massey
Council President Jessica Chilton
Councilor Russell Hubbard
Councilor Brandon Sundeen

MEMBERS ABSENT

Councilor Mark Gundersen

STAFF PRESENT

John Walsh, City Administrator
Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder
Crystal King, Communications Officer
Joe Hogue, Interim Police Chief
Jacob Graichen, City Planner
Sharon Darroux, Engineering Manager

OTHERS

Dave Lintz, OTAK	Jennifer Shoemaker	Amani Center
Scott	Brady Preheim	Nicholas Hellmich
Paul Carroll	Jenni Gilbert	Lynne Pettit
Jane Garcia	Kit Gardes	

CALL REGULAR SESSION TO ORDER – 7:04 p.m.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

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

- ◆ Kit Gardes. Shared a letter she wrote to the Council expressing her concerns about a dangerous intersection at Gable Road and Highway 30. She described a near-miss incident that occurred on May 6 at approximately 3:30 PM. Gardes explained that she was the first in line in the left-turn lane on Gable Road between Safeway and U.S. Bank. As the light turned green, a semi-truck with a trailer, heading east on Highway 30, entered the intersection, ignoring the red light. Gardes noted that the truck did not slow down at all. If she had entered the intersection a second earlier, she might not have survived to tell her story. She expressed her ongoing distress over the incident and acknowledged the difficulty in continuously monitoring the intersection. She proposed installing a traffic camera at the intersection to hold dangerous drivers accountable, citing the effectiveness of such technology in other cities like Portland in reducing traffic rule violations and potentially saving lives. Gardes emphasized that a camera might be a more cost-effective solution than hiring additional police officers for monitoring purposes.
- ◆ Brady Preheim. Expressed concerns about the selection process for the chief of police, suggesting that Council members should not be involved in it. He believed that the process was being set up

deliberately to avoid selecting a new chief and that it should be outsourced. Preheim expressed his frustration, noting that it had been multiple weeks since any updates had been provided, potentially exacerbating an already existing lawsuit against the Council. Additionally, he addressed several issues with the Waterfront Redevelopment Project. Preheim criticized the cracks already visible in the recently laid pavement and questioned whether these were due to design, construction, or material problems, emphasizing that the improvements were expected to last for decades, not just a few months. He pointed out the poor aesthetics of certain elements, noting, for example, an unsightly black patch of asphalt in front of Lotus that had been used to fill a cut in the concrete, which he felt lowered the overall quality of the development. He also highlighted the rusty appearance of the new guardrails, comparing them unfavorably to something that might have been salvaged from the Titanic. Preheim was also dissatisfied with the landscaping work, suggesting that the job was poorly executed and proposing that he could have done better himself. He assumed that the partially buried plants would eventually have mulch cover them but remarked on their unattractiveness. Additionally, he criticized the guardrails further, noting that they should have been powder-coated to prevent issues such as rust transfer, which currently made them a poor choice for a new, expensive infrastructure project. He offered to spray paint visible cracks throughout the City in orange to further illustrate the extent of the issues.

- ◆ Jenni Gilbert. Criticized the Council's handling of the police station zoning issue, stating that the decision to build on property not owned by the City was illogical. She accused the Council of gaslighting the public by pretending to seek public input after already making up their minds. Gilbert argued against constructing a "Taj Mahal" of a police building when the City evidently cannot afford to hire officers. She suggested the existing site should be reconsidered to save costs. In addition to her criticism about the police station zoning, Gilbert voiced her concerns about potential conflicts of interest regarding Mayor Massey's involvement in Police Department decisions, specifically relating to her husband's role as a police officer in St. Helens. Gilbert noted that Mayor Massey's dismissal of accusations was problematic and that such conflicts should be addressed, especially given the existing lawsuit involving the Police Department.
- ◆ Nicholas Hellmich. Raised concerns about the potential increase in water bills and the significant impact it could have on vulnerable populations, particularly senior citizens and those with limited financial means. He shared insights from his experience working at the Community Action Team, noting that higher water bills could force residents to choose between buying medication or food. Hellmich proposed exploring alternative funding methods for the police station, such as incorporating the cost into property taxes, to lessen the monthly financial burden on residents. He emphasized the importance of making decisions that would not negatively affect citizens, especially the elderly and those most vulnerable in the community. Hellmich also referred to the definition of a conflict of interest, expressing concerns about Mayor Massey's potential to benefit from decisions related to the police station due to her husband's involvement. In closing, he highlighted that even dual-income households like his own would need to make cutbacks if water bills increased, reinforcing the need for thoughtful financial planning by the Council.

DELIBERATIONS

1. Zone Map Amendment (ZA.1.25) to change portion of property at 1771 Columbia Blvd. from General Commercial (GC) to Houlton Business District (HBD), make entire property HBD

Mayor Massey disclosed a potential conflict of interest due to her husband being a St. Helens Police Officer but stated she could act objectively in the best interest of the City.

Councilor Sundeen praised City Planner Graichen report and supported the amendment, noting it would clean things up regardless of whether a police station is built there. Council President Chilton agreed, mentioning initiatives to improve the Houlton Business District.

Mayor Massey noted that the zoning change would allow a broader range of residential uses. Councilor Hubbard pointed out that RV use would be prohibited but overall supported the change.

Motion: Motion made by Council President Chilton and seconded by Councilor Hubbard to approve the Zone Map Amendment to change a portion of property at 1771 Columbia Blvd. from GC to HBD. **Vote:** Yea: Mayor Massey, Council President Chilton, Councilor Hubbard, Councilor Sundeen

ORDINANCES – First Reading

2. **Ordinance No. 3308:** An Ordinance Adopting the Economic Opportunities Analysis, Stormwater Master Plan, Wastewater Master Plan, and the Water Master Plan as Addendums to the St. Helens Comprehensive Plan and Amending the St. Helens Municipal Code Chapters 19.08 and 19.24, and Adding Chapters 19.38, 19.40, and 19.42

Mayor Massey read Ordinance No. 3308 by title. The final reading will be at the next meeting.

AWARD BID/CONTRACT

3. Award Bid and Authorize Mayor to Sign Contract with Keller Associates for Reservoir Siting Study, Project No. W-484

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

4. Award Bid and Authorize Mayor to Sign Contract with T.F.T. Construction for Gable Road Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacon (RRFB) Installation, Project No. R-721, in the amount of \$42,190

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

APPROVE AND/OR AUTHORIZE FOR SIGNATURE

5. City Council Minutes dated April 16, 2025
6. Amendment No. 2 to the Financing Contract with Oregon Business Development Department for the Waterfront Redevelopment Project
7. Amendment No. 3 to Agreement with Otak CPM for Public Safety Building Construction Project Management
8. Letter of Support on behalf of RSG Telecom for Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Grant Program for Columbia County-led Broadband Project
9. Letter of Support on behalf of Astound Broadband for Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Grant Program
10. Letter of Engagement with CDR Labor Law, LLC for Legal Services related to Labor and Employment Law
11. Contract with Grayling Engineers for Belton Sewer Step System Capacity Study, Project No. S-685

Motion: Motion made by Council President Chilton and seconded by Councilor Sundeen to approve '5' through '11' above.

Discussion.

Councilor Hubbard expressed concerns about the Belton Sewer Step System Capacity Study, noting the cost seemed high at approximately \$200,000 for potentially connecting three lots. Council President

Chilton noted that the funds were already budgeted and that the Engineering Division claimed they lacked the capability to perform the study internally. She emphasized the importance of having a budget that can roll over funds to the next year if not used. City Administrator Walsh confirmed that delaying the study was within the Council's authority but warned potential cost increases later. Councilor Sundeen stated he was comfortable delaying the study if it was not urgent. Engineering Manager Darroux, speaking remotely, clarified that the actual cost of the contract with Grayling Engineers was around \$170,000 and reaffirmed the benefit of signing the contract now due to budget availability. Mayor Massey noted they did not have enough information to confirm the system's capacity for new connections when last inquired about a year and a half ago.

Vote: Yea: Councilor Sundeen; Nay: Mayor Massey, Council President Chilton, Councilor Hubbard

Motion: Motion made by Council President Chilton and seconded by Councilor Sundeen to approve '5' through '10' above. **Vote:** Yea: Mayor Massey, Council President Chilton, Councilor Hubbard, Councilor Sundeen

Motion: Motion made by Council President Chilton and seconded by Councilor Sundeen to approve '11' above. **Vote:** Yeah: Councilor Sundeen; Nay: Mayor Massey, Council President Chilton, Councilor Hubbard

APPOINTMENTS TO CITY BOARDS & COMMISSIONS

12. Appoint Erin Wheeldon to the Library Board

Motion: Motion made by Councilor Sundeen and seconded by Council President Chilton to appoint Erin Wheeldon to the Library Board. **Vote:** Yea: Mayor Massey, Council President Chilton, Councilor Hubbard, Councilor Sundeen

CONSENT AGENDA FOR ACCEPTANCE

13. Library Board Minutes dated March 10, 2025
14. Library Board Special Meeting Minutes dated May 10, 2025

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

CONSENT AGENDA FOR APPROVAL

15. Accounts Payable Bill Lists

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

WORK SESSION ACTION ITEMS

Responses to Visitor Comments

Mayor Massey confirmed that the Council would direct Walsh to verify any public comments or information, ensuring that King would be directed through Walsh for these tasks.

Proactive

Council members agreed to discuss individual or collective Council Goals under a Proactive line item at the end of Regular Sessions, promoting transparency and accountability.

Amani Center Request for Financial Assistance

Council members acknowledged the invaluable services provided by the Amani Center, particularly its work with vulnerable children in the community. However, given the City's current financial constraints

and the impending budget cuts, they unanimously decided against providing monetary support at this time.

Councilor Sundeen mentioned the importance of revisiting the request after the completion of the budget process, suggesting that this might offer a more favorable financial landscape for considering such support. In the meantime, Council President Chilton proposed a creative approach to assist the Amani Center, recommending that they collaborate with Treadway for possible fundraising opportunities during large tourism events hosted by the City. This suggestion aimed to help the Center raise the necessary funds without directly impacting the City's budget. Mayor Massey expressed a desire to keep the Amani Center's request in consideration, suggesting it be placed in a "parking lot" for future evaluation post-budget discussions. The Council collectively emphasized the importance of supporting local organizations within their capacity, highlighting a commitment to maintaining dialogue with entities like the Amani Center to explore potential opportunities for assistance in the future.

COUNCIL MEMBER REPORTS

Councilor Sundeen reported...

- Offered condolences to former Public Works Director Dave Elder's family.
- Recognized City Recorder Kathy Payne and Deputy City Recorder Lisa Scholl for Municipal Clerk's Week.
- Police chief candidate interviews are scheduled for May 29.
- Reaffirmed the need for a new police station but expressed hesitancy about the Columbia Blvd. site.

Council President Chilton reported...

- Praised the St. Helens Girls Softball League for their contributions to the community.
- Welcomed new businesses to St. Helens:
 - Glazed and Confused
 - Northwest Plumbing Services
 - Sass at Home

Councilor Hubbard reported...

- Expressed support for the police station project and acknowledged the financial challenges involved in moving forward.

MAYOR MASSEY REPORTS

- Thanked City staff for their work.
- Attended lunch for "Take Your Child to Work Day." It was a great event.
- Commended Library Director Bishop for her dedication.
- Raised concerns about an abandoned RV on Port Avenue. City Planner Graichen confirmed it's on private property.
- She was also seriously injured at the Gable Road and Highway 30 intersection. It's unsafe and they need to do something if it's in the City's jurisdiction.
- Expressed excitement about the new flashing beacon crosswalk near WalMart.

OTHER BUSINESS

King shared feedback from Beth at the Amani Center, who appreciated the Council's discussion and informed them that they had paid their permit fee and were moving forward with their project.

ADJOURN – 7:55 p.m.

Respectfully transcribed by ClerkMinutes and submitted by Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder.

ATTEST:

/s/ Lisa Scholl
Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder

/s/ Jennifer Massey
Jennifer Massey, Mayor