



COUNCIL SPECIAL SESSION

Monday, August 04, 2025

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
Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder
Kolten Edwards, Police Detective
Ashley Wigod, Contracted City Attorney
Chris Dolan, Contracted City Attorney

OTHERS

Joe
Brady Preheim
Adam St. Pierre
Shober

CALL SPECIAL SESSION TO ORDER – 6:01 p.m.

RECESS SPECIAL SESSION

Prior to entering Executive Session, the Council addressed a request from Brady Preheim to attend as a representative of the news media. City Attorney Wigod advised the Council that she had previously provided a legal memorandum explaining why Preheim did not qualify as a representative of the news media. No new information had been received from him since then.

Motion: Motion made by Council President Chilton and seconded by Councilor Gundersen to determine that Brady Preheim is not considered media and not allowed to attend the executive session. **Vote:** Yea: Mayor Massey, Council President Chilton, Councilor Gundersen, Councilor Hubbard, Councilor Sundeen

EXECUTIVE SESSION – 6:14 p.m.

- Consider Information or records that are Exempt by Law from Public Inspections, under ORS 192.660(2)(f); and
- Consult with Counsel Concerning the Legal Rights and Duties of a Public Body with Regard to Current Litigation or Litigation Likely to be Filed, under ORS 192.660(2)(h).

RESUME SPECIAL SESSION – 6:58 p.m.

1. Discuss Possible Charter Amendment Requiring Voter Approval Prior to the Establishment of any New Fees on the Utility Bill that are Unrelated to Utility Services

City Administrator Walsh provided a presentation explaining that Mayor Massey had introduced this concept at the July 16 meeting, and that the Budget Committee had also discussed this topic. He explained that to refer a measure to the November 4 ballot, the Council would need to make a decision by August 5.

Walsh explained that the City has three types of fees: full service fees, fees for specific services (such as utility services), and impact fees (associated with development and System Development Charges). He noted that the current Public Safety Fee was established in Chapter 13.30 of the Municipal Code, with approximately \$6 million in financing obtained in 2021 for the police station. The fee generates approximately \$750,000 per year with a rate of \$10.30 per month per unit.

Walsh presented three options for the Council to consider:

1. Do nothing
2. Adopt an ordinance to require voter approval for new utility bill fees
3. Proceed with a charter amendment requiring voter approval

Contracted City Attorney Wigod clarified that the resolution would refer a measure to voters to decide whether to require voter approval of new fees, while an ordinance option would have the same effect but could be implemented more quickly (within 30 days of passage) and could be modified by future councils if needed. She explained that a charter amendment would need voter approval to be modified in the future.

Council President Chilton asked about the difference in timing between the ordinance and resolution approaches. Wigod confirmed that an ordinance could be implemented faster.

Councilor Sundeen expressed concern that a future council could easily repeal an ordinance, whereas a charter amendment would be more permanent.

Mayor Massey acknowledged she was torn between the approaches, noting there was a lack of trust in government that a charter amendment might address, but also that an ordinance approach could be implemented quickly while gauging citizen response.

2. Public Comment

No public comment.

The Council discussed the status of a citizen petition that might address similar issues. Wigod explained the process for handling a citizen petition if sufficient signatures were gathered by August 6, including the Council's options to accept it or provide a counter-petition.

Motion: Motion made by Council President Chilton and seconded by Councilor Sundeen to direct staff to prepare an ordinance to require voter approval before any new fees are established or increased on the utility bill, unrelated to utility fees. **Vote:** Nay: Mayor Massey, Council President Chilton, Councilor Gundersen, Councilor Hubbard, Councilor Sundeen

Motion: Motion made by Council President Chilton and seconded by Councilor Sundeen to direct staff to prepare an ordinance to require voter approval for any new fees, increased fees, or change of purpose as outlined on item number three, exhibit A of the council agenda.

During discussion, Councilor Sundeen stated he believed this was a good starting point. Council President Chilton noted that while she had never been a fan of adding fees to utility bills, the frozen tax rates in Oregon meant cities needed to find ways to fund expected services for a town of 15,000 people.

Mayor Massey expressed she was still torn about whether an ordinance would be sufficient to address citizens' trust concerns, but hoped this approach would show good faith while allowing for potential future action if needed. She also wants to use this opportunity to improve communication with the public.

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

- 3. ~~Resolution No. 2050:~~** ~~A Resolution of the St. Helens City Council to Submit a Proposed Charter Amendment to the Registered Voters of the City of St. Helens at the November 4, 2025, Election to Require Voter Approval Before the Establishment Of New Fees on Utility Bills Unrelated to Utility Services~~

4. Discuss Adding a Sunset Provision for the Public Safety Fee

City Administrator Walsh explained that the Public Safety Fee, established in Chapter 13.30 of the Municipal Code, was used to secure a 30-year bond for the new police station. The fee generates approximately \$750,000 per year, which covers debt service for the bond through 2052. He noted that once the debt service is paid off, the fee would no longer be needed.

Mayor Massey clarified for the record that the City's reserves were at approximately 7% of what the policy guideline recommended (20%), with approximately \$700,000 in reserves.

The Council discussed adding a sunset provision to make it clear when the fee would end. Walsh presented proposed text for a sunset clause that would establish a specific end date of December 31, 2052, when the bond financing matures.

Council President Chilton asked for clarification that the date was firm, wondering if anything could cause the date to change. Walsh confirmed that early payoff could shorten the timeline but would not extend it.

Councilor Sundeen expressed preference for including a specific date rather than language about "until paid off," as it would be clearer for citizens to understand.

No public comments were received on this item.

Motion: Motion made by Councilor Sundeen and seconded by Councilor Gundersen to direct staff to prepare an ordinance to add a sunset clause to the public safety fee. **Vote:** Yea: Mayor Massey, Council President Chilton, Councilor Gundersen, Councilor Hubbard, Councilor Sundeen

OTHER BUSINESS

Mayor Massey requested the following items be added to the August 20 meeting agenda:

1. Discussion on Budget Committee recommendations regarding event permits and associated fees
2. Update on human resource assistance for the City Recorder and Deputy City Recorder
3. Status of evaluations for department heads
4. Update on the water taxi

ADJOURN – 7:41 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