



COUNCIL WORK SESSION

Wednesday, June 18, 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
Kathy Payne, City Recorder
Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder
Matt Smith, Acting Police Chief
Shanna Duggan, Parks & Recreation Manager
Sharon Darroux, Engineering Manager

Gloria Butsch, Finance Director
Suzanne Bishop, Library Director
Dylan Gaston, Police Officer
Jose Castilleja, Police Sergeant
Ashley Wigod, Contracted City Attorney

OTHERS

Steve Topaz	Ron Trommlitz	Dominic
Chris Iverson	David Wasylenko	Howard Blumenthal
Brady Preheim	Adam	Mitzi Ponce
Kanale Tumlinson	Brandon Treadway	Brittany Hummel
Stacey Shields	Joel Blanton	Jeff Yarbor
Greg McGreevey	Justin Boyles	Eric Christensen
Nik Sernande		

CALL WORK SESSION TO ORDER – 3:00 p.m.

CLEARING CONFUSION AND SETTING THE FACTS STRAIGHT

1. Response to June 4 Visitor Comments

No responses.

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

- ◆ Steve Topaz. Addressed the Council to make a correction to his previous statement. He clarified that the amount mentioned for investigating services was actually \$2 million, not the \$20 million that had been recorded. Topaz emphasized that there are several \$20 million items, but the specific figure related to investigative services is \$2 million. Additionally, he raised a concern regarding the recent lengthy instructions on how citizens should address the Council, highlighting the word "dialogue" used in the guidelines. According to Topaz, the use of the word "dialogue" implies a form of communication that should occur with the Council, yet the guidelines seem to prevent this type of interaction. He pointed out that state law has emphasized in some court cases that citizens should not report mistakes made by cities in public meetings, suggesting this conflicts with the intended spirit of open dialogue.

- ◆ Brady Preheim. Expressed significant concerns regarding alleged misinformation from the City's finance director. He noted that the director had previously stated that Treadway had contributed \$100,000, which was later corrected by the Council. However, he claimed that another misleading statement remained uncorrected, specifically that E2C had not provided any money. Preheim asserted that this was untrue, citing evidence that he had seen the checks himself. Further questioning the integrity of the City's financial dealings, Preheim asked who was responsible for auditing Treadway's expenses, particularly scrutinizing charges such as a \$10,000 bill for a photo booth, which he argued could have been purchased outright for \$3,000. He also challenged the City on its failure to adhere to RFP rules, questioning why requests for proposals were not issued for expenditures over \$5,000 from the City's accounts. Preheim voiced his dissatisfaction with the process of appointing the new police chief. He specifically took issue with the decision-making process, suggesting that it was biased and lacked transparency. Additionally, he called for an investigation into alleged misconduct within the department, pointing to the potential existence of felonies connected to dishonesty about physical fitness tests. Preheim suggested that this alleged misconduct might be linked to officers threatening to leave and criticized the lack of accountability for these serious allegations.

Mayor Massey responded that the City Council does not support or condone the comments made by the citizen and emphasized that defamatory or inappropriate remarks would not be tolerated.

- ◆ Ron Trommlitz. Spoke to the Council about the Walker Consultants report on the 2MG Water Reservoir rehabilitation. He thanked Contracted City Attorney Ashley Wigod and the City Council for releasing the report after three years of requests, highlighting its detailed timeline of project challenges sourced from City archives. Trommlitz was particularly interested in Councilor Hubbard's summary and surprised at the three-year delay due to client privilege. The March 2022 report detailed construction deficiencies, including ungrouted expansion joints leading to groundwater issues. Trommlitz noted the oversight of starting work during Oregon's difficult weather in October 2016, along with a consultant's critique of inadequate supervision of liner applications. He summarized that water intrusion was worsened by poor geotextile fabric application and fasteners, suggesting the reservoir might need to be abandoned. Trommlitz acknowledged the City's choice of mediation, hoping it results in a new contractor to repair the reservoir.

DISCUSSION TOPICS

2. Length of Service Recognition - Dylan Gaston for 10 Years

Acting Police Chief Matthew Smith presented Officer Dylan Gaston with a certificate and pin to commemorate his 10 years of service with the St. Helens Police Department. Smith praised Gaston as one of the finest police officers he has had the pleasure of serving with. The Council and attendees congratulated Gaston, and photographs were taken to mark the occasion.

3. Quarterly Reports from City Departments/Divisions (Informational)

Mayor Massey commented on the 30% increase in usage of the Makerspace compared to 2024. She expressed appreciation for the variety of projects offered for youth and the social media efforts by Communications Officer Crystal King. The mayor also noted the improved timeline and standardized format of the reports.

4. Presentation by Potential Waterfront Developer

Greg McGreevey, Vice President of Development for Romano Capital, introduced the team members present: Eric Christiansen (Chief Operating Officer), Nick Sernande (founder and partner of SLYworx Architecture), and Stacey Shields (Director of Entitlements).

McGreevey highlighted the unique potential of the waterfront site and emphasized their commitment to enhancing downtown, creating an active district, stewarding the environment, and embracing the community vision and heritage. He presented examples of Romano Capital's previous projects, including Palisades (a 15-acre master plan in East Vancouver) and Riverside townhomes.

Eric Christiansen emphasized Romano Capital's flexibility in adapting to different project sizes and scopes. Nick Sernande from SLYworx Architecture discussed their experience with master planning and place-making projects.

The team outlined their approach to the project, including:

1. Acting as a master developer to ensure consistency and efficiency
2. Conducting regional market demand analysis
3. Developing a flexible funding plan
4. Creating a detailed site plan and construction sequencing

Council members asked questions about the ratio of build-and-hold versus for-sale properties, parking considerations, and the importance of maintaining cohesiveness in the development. The Council expressed appreciation for Romano Capital's presentation and looked forward to seeing more detailed plans in the future.

5. Annual Report from City's Insurance Agent of Record - *Chris Iverson & David Wasylenko from Hagan Hamilton Insurance*

Chris Iverson and David Wasylenko from Hagan Hamilton Insurance presented the annual insurance report for the city. Key points included:

1. The City remains with City County Insurance Services (CIS), an insurance pool used by 98% of cities and counties in Oregon.
2. Overall premium increase of about 6% compared to the previous year, with property coverage seeing the largest increase.
3. Claims history review showed no repetitive issues over the past six years.
4. Workers' compensation experience rating improved, resulting in a premium decrease.
5. Cyber liability policy premium decreased slightly.

The presenters discussed options for increasing deductibles to potentially save on premiums and answered Council members' questions about various aspects of the coverage. Mayor Massey inquired about risk mitigation services and high-risk areas that may need attention.

6. Review Request from Hudson Garbage to Increase Garbage & Recycling Rates - *Hudson Site Manager Kanale Tumlinson*

Kanale Tumlinson, Site Manager for Hudson Garbage Service, presented a request for a 3.5% rate increase. He cited increased costs for containers, trucks, fuel, and wage pressures as reasons for the request. Tumlinson also mentioned the County's 2.2% disposal increase effective July 1.

Council members asked questions about the frequency of rate increases, potential cost reductions, and comparisons with other municipalities. Council President Chilton expressed hesitation about approving the rate increase without additional information or added services.

Mayor Massey requested clarification on the service differences between St. Helens and other municipalities, noting that St. Helens receives weekly garbage and recycling pickup, while some other areas only get bi-weekly recycling service.

The Council did not make a decision on the rate increase during this work session, with further discussion to be scheduled for a future meeting.

7. Report from Treadway on Tourism Events - *Brandon Treadway and Brittany Hummel*

Brandon Treadway and Brittany Hummel provided updates on various tourism events:

1. 13 Nights on the River: The event has moved back to the park, with good vendor and band participation. Alcohol revenue is promising.
2. St. Helens Community Day in the Park: Scheduled for June 28, 2025, with food donations secured for about 1,000 people. Various activities and entertainment are planned.
3. Independence Day Celebration: Scheduled for July 4, 2025, 4:00 – 10:00 p.m., featuring fireworks, tailgating, live music, and family entertainment.
4. Spirit of Halloweentown: Set to run from September 27 to October 31, 2025, on weekends. Plans include expanding and enhancing activities, renovating the haunted house and gift shop, and adding a hop-on, hop-off trolley to connect downtown and uptown areas.
5. Christmas in the Plaza: Scheduled for December 13, 2025, in partnership with the Christmas Ships event. Plans include free hot chocolate, photos with Santa, Christmas lights, and live entertainment.

The Council provided feedback and suggestions, including potentially expanding Christmas decorations to the Houlton District.

8. Review of New Pavement Cut Moratorium on Newly Constructed or Resurfaced Streets Code - *Engineering Manager Sharon Darroux*

Engineering Manager Sharon Darroux presented information on the new pavement cut moratorium for newly constructed or resurfaced streets. The moratorium aims to preserve new pavement by implementing more stringent repair requirements for any necessary cuts. Key points included:

1. The moratorium requires a waiver from the public works director for any cuts on newly paved streets.
2. Repairs will require wider patches and full-depth repair, especially on major arterials and collector streets.
3. The moratorium has a 5-year limit on affected streets.
4. The new requirements will result in higher costs for developers but will help maintain the quality of city streets for longer periods.

Council members asked questions about the impact on new construction and utility connections. Darroux explained that the process allows for necessary work while ensuring better long-term street conditions.

9. Discussion regarding Chronic Nuisances/Excessive Use Fee - *City Attorney Ashley Wigod*

Contracted City Attorney Ashley Wigod presented information on a potential chronic nuisance code to address properties with excessive calls for service. Key points included:

1. The code would define chronic nuisance activities, primarily focusing on criminal activities.
2. A property could be designated as a chronic nuisance if it has three or more nuisance activities within a 30-day period.
3. The code would require property owners to work with the police to develop a plan to reduce nuisance activities.
4. Enforcement would be progressive, starting with fines and potentially escalating to property closure in extreme cases.

Council members discussed the potential benefits of such a code and requested more data from the Police Department to determine if there is a need for this tool in St. Helens.

Mayor Massey asked about the availability of example ordinances from other municipalities. Wigod confirmed that she had researched multiple examples and could provide them to the Council.

10. Report from City Administrator John Walsh

City Administrator Walsh provided updates on various City matters:

1. Romano Investments: Discussed the potential for moving forward with Romano Investments on the waterfront development project.
2. Hudson Garbage Rate: Suggested reconsidering the Hudson Garbage rate increase request and exploring potential trade-offs.
3. Upcoming Events: Mentioned upcoming events, including the Kiwanis Community Prade and the Waterfront ribbon-cutting ceremony. Council discussed representation at the upcoming ribbon-cutting ceremony and how to handle the mayor's absence due to work obligations.
4. Sandcastle Festival: Noted that the sandcastle festival and water taxi were facing logistical challenges, with the need to address the potential cancellation at a future meeting.
5. Proclamation Discussion: Looked forward to the proclamation supporting local businesses and residents after the extended impact on their lives due to construction.
6. Senior Center discussion: Attended a meeting at the Senior Center to discuss their financial challenges and the potential for City liaison support.
7. Economic Development: Praised the economic development efforts of Paul Vogel's team at Columbia County Economic Team.
8. Server Issues: Mentioned ongoing server issues affecting city operations.

Mayor Massey inquired about the process and transparency of the recent police chief recruitment. Wigod provided an overview of the recruitment process, including the involvement of the Oregon Association of Chiefs of Police in developing interview questions and evaluation criteria. Wigod explained that certain aspects of the process, such as applications and scoring, are generally exempt from public disclosure to protect applicant privacy and encourage participation.

ADJOURN – 5:06 p.m.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

- Labor Negotiations, under ORS 192.660(2)(d)
- Real Property Transactions, under ORS 192.660(2)(e)
- Exempt Records/Confidential Attorney-Client Privileged Memo, under ORS 192.660(2)(f)
- Consult with Counsel/Potential Litigation, under ORS 192.660(2)(h)

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