

#### **COUNCIL WORK SESSION**

Wednesday, November 17, 2021 at 1:00 PM

#### **COUNCIL MEMBERS:**

Mayor Rick Scholl Council President Doug Morten Councilor Patrick Birkle Councilor Stephen R. Topaz Councilor Jessica Chilton

#### **LOCATION & CONTACT:**

HYBRID: Council Chambers and Zoom (details below)

Website | www.sthelensoregon.gov

Email | kpayne@sthelensoregon.gov

Phone | 503-397-6272

Fax | 503-397-4016

#### **AGENDA**

#### **CALL WORK SESSION TO ORDER**

VISITOR COMMENTS - Limited to five (5) minutes per speaker

**DISCUSSION TOPICS** - The Council will take a break around 3:00 p.m

- 1. Communications Semi-Annual Report Crystal
- 2. Tourism Program Debrief John
- 3. Spirit of Halloweentown Vendor Concerns Nicole Battista
- 4. Discussion regarding Councilor Topaz Censure Resolution
- 5. Strategic Action Plan Updates
- 6. City Administrator Report John Walsh

#### **ADJOURN**

#### **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Following the conclusion of the Council Work Session, an Executive Session is scheduled to take place to discuss:

- Real Property Transactions, under ORS 192.660(2)(e); and
- Consult with Counsel/Potential Litigation, under ORS 192.660(2)(h).

Representatives of the news media, staff and other persons as approved, shall be allowed to attend the Executive Session. All other members of the audience are asked to leave the Council Chambers.

#### FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Upcoming Dates to Remember:

- November 17, 1:00 p.m., Council Work Session, Council Chambers & Zoom
- November 17, 5:30 p.m., Council Special Session, Council Chambers & Zoom
- November 17, 7:00 p.m., Council Regular Session, Council Chambers & Zoom

#### Future Public Hearing(s)/Forum(s):

- PH: December 1, 6:30 p.m., Annex 35480 E. Division Road (Hughes)
- PF: December 1, 6:00 p.m., Public Safety Facility Community Engagement Forum
- PH: December 1, 6:40 p.m., Annex 58471 Columbia River Hwy (Patel)
- PH: December 1, 6:50 p.m., Annex 58284 Old Portland Road (Port of Columbia County)

#### **VIRTUAL MEETING DETAILS**

Join Zoom: https://us06web.zoom.us/j/89983891916

Meeting ID: 899 8389 1916 Dial In: 213 338 8477

The St. Helens City Council Chambers are handicapped accessible. If you wish to participate or attend the meeting and need special accommodation, please contact City Hall at 503-397-6272 in advance of the meeting.

Be a part of the vision...Get involved with your City...Volunteer for a City of St. Helens Board or Commission! For more information or for an application, stop by City Hall or call 503-366-8217.

## Communications Report

November 2021

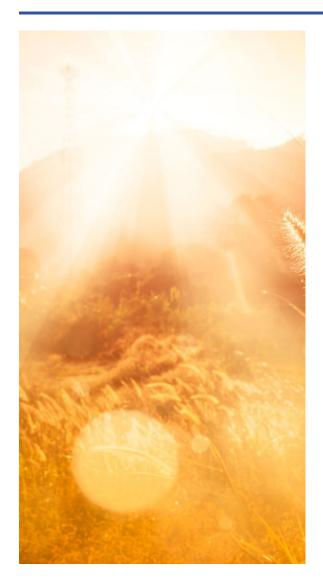


## Major Projects - Summer



- Riverwalk Project Community Engagement
  - Riverwalk Survey
  - Community Meetings
  - Status Updates
- McCormick Park Playground Grand Opening
- Citizens Day in the Park
- 13 Nights on the River
- Independence Day activities
- Facebook Government Webinar Series
- Conversion to Facebook Business
   Platform

# Major Projects - Summer



- Heat Wave Information Coordination
  - Cooling Centers
  - Burn bans
  - Water main break
  - Regional partner agency meetings
  - Fireworks ban information
  - Wildfire messaging
- Increased media inquiries over last year
- Regional PIO Workgroup
- Event videos for Maul Foster project

# Major Projects – Fall



- Makerspace Grand Opening
- Police Department employee photos
- Campbell Park progress updates
- Community Survey preparation
  - Flyer
  - Online Graphics
  - Trackable survey links
  - Paid advertisements

# Major Projects – Spirit of Halloweentown

- Media Inquiries
- Tailored community and visitor information
- Photos and video
- Social media updates
- Partner agency updates





# Major Projects – Spirit of Halloweentown

#### Media Coverage Examples

#### **Media Requests Fulfilled**

Big Scary Show (one hour radio show)

**KOHI The Chronicle** 

The Spotlight

The Oregonian

Portland Living on the Cheap

Oregon Film

Oregon podcast

#### **Media Coverage**

KGW

KOIN AM Extra

KATU - News this Morning

**KPTV** 

The Oregonian

Passport Magazine

Willamette Week

#### **Online Coverage**

That Oregon Life

Only in Your State

Screen Rant

Oregon Patch

Travel Oregon

Passport Magazine

Yahoo News

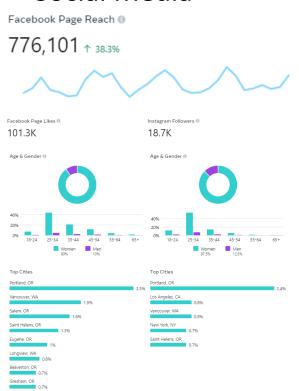
Ohio News Time

Roadtrippers



# Major Projects — Spirit of Halloweentown

#### Social Media



Instagram Reach ()

22,836 14.7%



# Major Projects – Spirit of Halloweentown

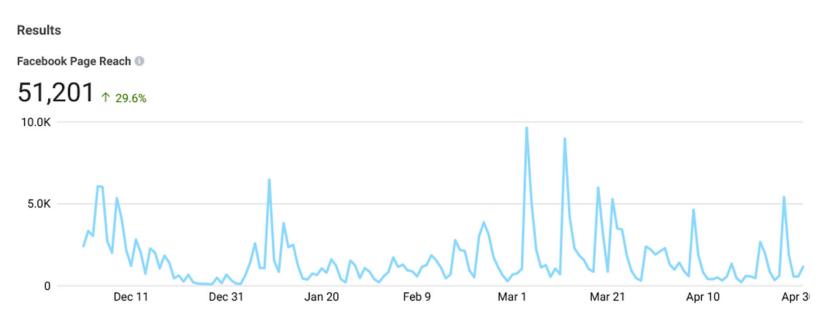
#### Social Media

| Recent content ↑↓               | Туре        | Reach ↑ | ↓ Likes<br>↓ a | ↑↓ Comment: | †↓ Shares | ↑↓ Results | t↓ Cost per result | †↓ Link clicks |
|---------------------------------|-------------|---------|----------------|-------------|-----------|------------|--------------------|----------------|
| We have so<br>Fri Oct 8, 2:11   | <b>()</b> § | 86.4K   | 2.6K           | 698         | 229       |            |                    | 5.7K           |
| Jackson wa<br>Sun Oct 24, 5:    | 0           | 63.9K   | 1.4K           | 113         | 38        |            |                    | 2.8K           |
| Tickets at h<br>Fri Oct 15, 6:2 | <b>6</b> \$ | 62.1K   | 1.5K           | 205         | 155       |            |                    | 4K             |
| So much g<br>Fri Oct 15, 7:0    | € €         | 60.4K   | 1.8K           | 415         | 111       |            |                    | 3.1K           |
| Coming to<br>Sun Oct 3, 8:5     | 0           | 45.2K   | 557            | 35          | 16        |            |                    | 937            |



# City Social Media

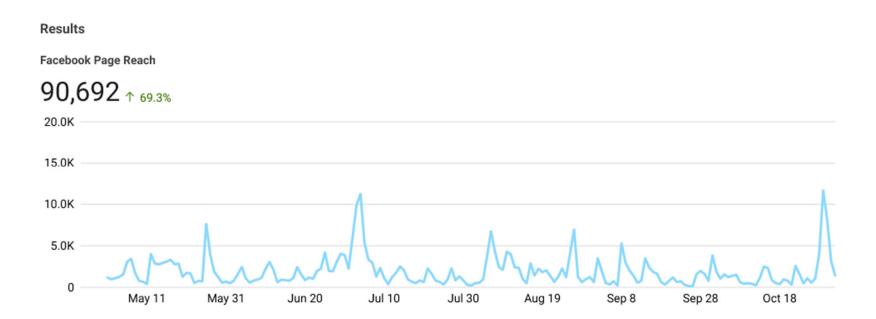
### **Statistical Overview** — December 2020 through April 2021



# City Social Media

### **Statistical Overview** – May 2021 through October 2021

- Views and interactions are up!
- Reach is consistently higher
- Several high-engagement posts



# City Social Media

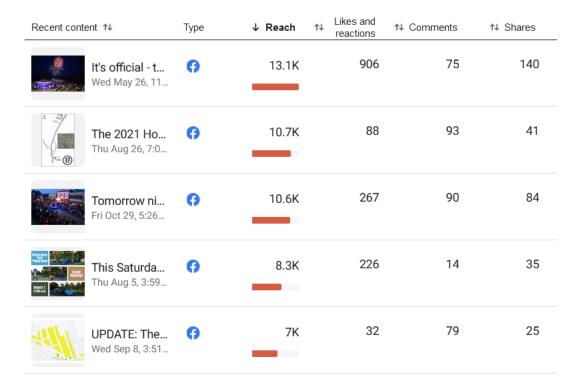
### **Statistical Overview** — May 2021 through October 2021

## What posts are getting the highest reach?

- Events-related posts
- Impacts & updates
   Information
- Visible city projects (Riverwalk)

## Why & What does this mean for other posts?

- Engagement
- Conversation-starters
- Controversy
- Perceived relevance



# City Communications

### "Ch-Ch-Ch-Changes" - David Bowie

City of St. Helens October 7, 2021 e-Newsletter

View this email in your browser



### The St. Helens Strand

City Hall Police Department Public Library Parks & Rec Public Works

#### E-Newsletter

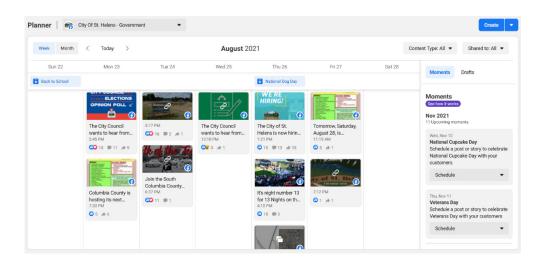
- Researched how other cities format their newsletters.
- Twice-a-month
- Shorter format (Brief articles, links to longer content)
- Spiffy new name
- Better ability to share information about events, not tied to beginning of month
- Less overburdened by content
- · Redirects readers to the website
- Social Media Assistance for Multiple Departments
  - Taking Over Library Social Media
  - Assisting Parks and Rec

## Facebook – Meta – ???

### Big Changes at Facebook

- Emphasis on business suite
- Streamlined interface
- New features
- Pages are like people
- The Revolving Door of Features
- Meta...?





Insights unavailable for this post **1** 

# Major Projects — Current & Future



- Community Survey
- Broadband Survey
- Christmas Ships/Holiday events
- Library social media transition
- Riverwalk Project and Street and Utility Extension Project
- Regional PIO workgroup codification
- Winter weather emergency messaging
- Strategic communications plan for 2022

# Questions?



#### Memorandum

To: Mayor and City Council

From: John Walsh, City Administrator

Subject: Evaluating the City's Tourism Program

Date: November 12, 2021

The intent of this Memo is to offer the Council guidance on evaluating the City's Tourism Program. As Mayor Scholl prides our community in stating "Why not St. Helens?" the same can be said for the City's Tourism Program. The City enacted its Transient Room Fee (TRF or TLT) in 2002 and the program has struggled since inception until recent years. With not much to show for years of investment it may be easy to question Why invest in Tourism? In 2015, the City Council changed its approach to Tourism and made the decision not to hire a Tourism Director and work directly with a third party contractor to produce specific events and activities to leverage the City's limited funds. The Tourism Advisory Committee was disbanded and the Council directly made policy decisions while designating the City Adminstrator to administer the Tourism Program. These decisions have turned the program around and the City is seeing remarkable results from the TLT investment. Our community now believes in itself and can proudly ask Why not Tourism? The City's Tourism Program attracts visitors far and wide while benefitting local business, non-profit partners, and other community partners. The program is fiscally sustainable, with increasingly less support from other City departments.

Tourism is critical to the City's overall Economic Development strategy in creating an active and vibrant community, improving livability, and attracting new growth and investment in the City. In evaluating the program please consider the following outline which defines the City Council's role, embraces the programs goals, strategies to achieve the goals, and explores various business model options to leverage limited resources to achieve amazing results.

#### City Councils Role in Tourism

- Council sets Tourism Program policy
- Staff administers Tourism Program to achieve program goals

#### **Tourism Program Goals**

- Attract visitors to the St. Helens Community
- Support local businesses and non-profit organizations
- Elevate the image of the City and region to the outside world
- Operate a sustainable Tourism Program (revenues meet or exceed expenses)
- Attain a high rate return on TLT investment (Transient Lodging Tax)

#### **Tourism Program Strategy**

Item #2.

The State is divided into seven Tourism Districts and each District has several recognized DMO's (Destination Marketing Organizations) designated by the State. Columbia Economic Team serves as the DMO for the Columbia County Region and the St. Helens Tourism Plan (Towards Sustainable Development) is incorporated by reference into the regional plan as part of the Portland District of the State's Tourism plan. Both local and regional plans focus heavily on outdoor recreation opportunities, specificly water-related opportunities with emphasis on leveraging assets to achieve results. The St. Helens plan is more specific on the impact of events and activities. The City of St. Helens Tourism strategy has been to enter into a contract for services with a third party contractor to produce several events and activities throughout the year aimed at achieving the Plan Goals. These include: 13 Nights on the River, support 4<sup>th</sup> of July Fireworks, The Spirit of Halloweentown, and Christmas Tree lighting ceremony in conjunction with the annual Christmas Ships visit. The contractor has additional discretion, subject to City approval, to produce additional events and activities so long as total revenues cover expenses.

#### **Evaluating Tourism Program effectiveness**

Measuring success of the City's tourism can be complex as there are many variables and perspectives to consider. For purposes of the Council's evaluation, the Council should consider the program goals against the current contracted events and activities and consider any policy changes to improve the program. The following interrogative questions may help guide the evaluation process.

What's working well?

How can we improve?

What, if anything, should we be doing differently?

#### **Contracted Events and Activities**

- 13 Nights on the River
- The Spirit of Halloweentown
- Christmas Tree Lighting/Christmas Ships
- Sand Castle Competition
- Other

#### **Tourism Program Goals**

- 1. Attract visitors to the St. Helens Community
- 2. Support local businesses and non-profit organizations
- 3. Elevate the image of the City and region to the outside world
- 4. Operate a sustainable Tourism Program (revenues meet or exceed expenses)

5. Attain a high rate of return on TLT investment (Transient Lodging Tax)

#### **Tourism Business Models**

The City has utilized various business models over the years in an attempt to develop and sustain a viable Tourism Program. Most Tourism programs are supported by Hotel Tax revenues (TLT), and with only two (2) hotels contributing, the City's resources are limited compared to other communities the size of St. Helens. For perspective, neighboring Astoria collects around \$1.5M, Seaside receives \$2.5M compared to St. Helens meager \$100-\$110K. This financial constraint forces the City to be strategic with its limited funds and make investments that yield a high return on investment. The following are the various business models the City has considered or utilized to administer the Tourism Program. Each model has pros and cons and the results have varied broadly with the only constant being contention. Tourism has a history of being contentious which is likely due the limited City resources available and diminished capacity to support community partner organizations. The current model where the City has hired a third party contractor to produce events and activities has been very effective. The City has leveraged its limited TLT funds to secure a contractor to produce events that achieve and exceed the program goals. By contracting for these services the City has attracted visitors from across the planet, created a positive community image and identity, supported local and non-profit community partners, and become financially sustainable.

#### **Business Model Considerations**

City hires Tourism Director to achieve Tourism Program goals and objectives

- City hires/designates Staff to market, produce events and activities
- Staff manages tourism contracts for marketing of events and activities

City contracts with third party to achieve Tourism Program goals and objectives

- City contracts with third party to produce events, activities, and other services
- City/City Administrator manages third party contract(s)

#### **Tourism Advisory Committee**

- City Council acts as Tourism Program Administrator
- City Council designates City Administrator to Administer Tourism Program
- City Council (re)creates a Tourism Advisory Committee to advise the Council on Tourism related investments

City Reallocates all or portion of TLT revenues to achieve Tourism Program Goals and objectives by supporting:

- Chamber of Commerce
- Main Street Program
- Keep it Local Columbia County
- CET

- Non-profits
- Direct investments to local businesses
- Other Service contracts
- Other investments resulting in high ROI

#### Summary

In summary, the City collects very limited funds relative to comparable communities and this lack of resources has had a significant impact on the City's capacity to offer broad support to community partners engaged in promoting Tourism. The City needs to be strategic with the limited tax funds received and make investments that offer the broadest community benefit. The current model of hiring a third party contractor to produce revenue generating events, leverages the limited funding and offers broad benefit to local business, non-profits, and community partners and the City. This third party contractor relationship is one part of a larger vision for the City's Tourism Program. In evaluating the effectiveness of the program perhaps the best question to ask is "How else would the City invest limited TLT funds to better benefit the community?"

Regards,

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# Concerned Vendors of Halloween Town

### Participants

- Rick and Donna On the Spot Foods
- Jonathan and Amber Churro Shack
- Joanna Story Jo's Grub Shack
- Nicole and Kelsey Scouts BSA 106
- Beverly McGlin Paparazzi
- Angela Waymen
- Mr. and Mrs. Lisa Corda Sweet Betty's
- ► Tiffany T & T
- Skylar Mythical Mini Doughnuts
- Andrea Humbert Scandalous Hair Design

### Objective

- Our overall objective is to understand the needs of the city, vendors, community, and visitors. Have an open discussion on current concerns. Then, to produce ideas and proposals based on those needs/concerns and have a constructive conversation/presentation (as a whole) with those in charge to hopefully have those changes take place for the following years to come.
  - Note would like current 2022 contracts to be voided that were already sent out on 11/8 and due date to be set after both parties have agreed to proposed terms.

## PSA Contract – Objectives

- "support local merchants"
  - Needs to hear our vendor needs
- "improve community identity and livability"
  - ► Help neighbors' concerns
    - ► Parking during events
  - More local involvement

- "transforms and embraces the spirit of Halloweentown"
  - Needs to evolve around the Disney Movie

## Advertising – Revamp suggested

- Responsible for advertising and promoting
  - Should not advertise
    - ▶ "General Admission" with fees included Gives the impression that this event requires payment
  - Should be advertising
    - ► General Admission Free (donations always welcome)
    - Calendar with special events for specific days
      - ▶ Include Online discounted tickets for combined shows/venues
      - ▶ Include parking fees (can purchase ahead of time as well)
    - ▶ If a lot of changes added, advertise it "Enhanced Halloween Town Experience"
    - ▶ Have brochures like they do for Disneyland and list all vendors as well
    - ▶ Information/Welcome booth

### Vendor Concerns and Proposals

- Pricing (Currently food 1150 (96 per day) and nonfood is 650 (54 per day) upon further research, average cost for food truck is 800-1000 per month including utilities
  - ▶ Non-Profit 30% off Vendor fee
  - Cooking vs. non cooking (currently listed as "food and nonfood") anything requiring county food permit should be listed as "food" Food should be 20x20 at the \$1150 price and nonfood should remain 10x10 at the \$650 price
  - Returning vendors 10% off vendor fee
  - Local 10% off vendor fee
- Dates
  - No September September dates should be not included in "Halloween Town" venue but part of "fall festival"
    - Loss of Profit September
    - ▶ Less availability September
- Organization
  - ▶ Need someone always there as POC Current Vendor Coordinator not always available and not always clear on what is going on
    - ▶ Per contract, the vendor spaces will be clearly marked
    - ▶ Vendor coordinator should be always on site and can give clear direction and have clear knowledge of all event happenings
- What food can have to sell
  - Returning vendors should be able to sell previous products sold (as always), but should adhere to deadline of at most 2 months prior so others have options to add more
- ▶ Would like to have the schedule and possible meeting before event to go over activities going on
- Friday option to sell assigned spots need to be open to do so (close parking lot)
- All food vendors should be in one area not a few placed in main street area (preferential treatment should not be allowed)

### **Understand Community Needs**

- Parking should offer a community meeting a few months prior for input from neighbors
  - ▶ Need to lessen parking on neighboring streets
  - Make parking lots more visible
    - ► Signs on highway
    - ▶ Bring back bussing from other lots or even the one that is close (dress up the bus like Halloween Town)
      - ▶ Open up to local churches or schools as opportunity for them to earn money for transporting some have indicated hayrides...
- Ensuring more community involvement
  - ► Local vending, nonprofits, schools, supplying jobs
- Performances/music should be reviewed prior to event to make sure is family friendly
  - Some of the music was included profanity and some venues were not family friendly
- Hired Security

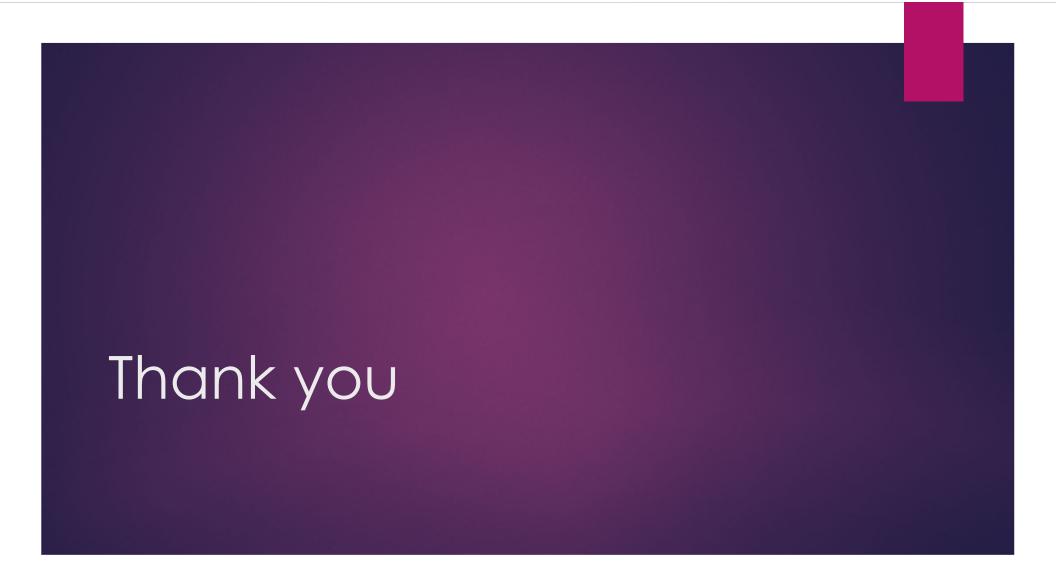
### **Understanding Visitor Needs**

- Halloween Town Experience
  - ▶ Hire city folk to wear costumes (from movie) and walk around square
  - Create production
    - Hire local theatre groups to reenact the pumpkin lighting every Saturday night
  - ▶ Hire local artist to make brooms with logo on them and sell like the movie
  - Music from movie playing on speakers all weekend long
  - Reach out to Enchanted forest to see if they can create an animated Benny for the cab and advertise it....
- ▶ Hire more help with haunted house...make unforgettable....need people in there
- ▶ Pirates shooting cannons not a successful attraction pertaining to Halloween Town
- Having DJ and lighting for Halloween dance party last Saturday after lighting? more opportunity to charge tickets
- More attractions' people travel from far away and want more
  - carnival games put on by local organizations/schools
- Should not be closing early on any of the weekend dates

### Personal Grievances

▶ Providing letters to council

# Questions, Comments, Concerns?



#### City of St. Helens

#### **RESOLUTION NO. 1917**

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF ST. HELENS, OREGON REPRIMANDING
AND CENSURING COUNCIL MEMBER STEPHEN TOPAZ FOR ENGAGING IN
BEHAVIOR VIOLATING THE CITY CODE OF ETHICS AND OTHER CITY POLICIES,
NEGATIVELY AFFECTING MEMBERS, THE CITY STAFF, AND BRINGING DISCREDIT
TO THE CITY

**WHEREAS**, the citizens and businesses of the City of St. Helens are entitled to have fair, ethical, productive, and accountable local government which has earned the full confidence of the public; and

**WHEREAS,** all public officials, both elected and appointed, are expected to comply with the letter and spirit of the laws and policies of the City and State of Oregon affecting the operation of government; and

**WHEREAS,** all public officials, both elected and appointed, are prohibited from using or attempting to use the position held to obtain a financial benefit, but for the position held by the public official; and

**WHEREAS,** all City councilors take an oath of office upon assuming their duties as a city councilor, stating in part a commitment to "faithfully perform the duties of city council member, to the best of my ability and understanding;" and

**WHEREAS,** each member of City Council commits to the City Council Mantra as an advocate of quality and effective City services and to promote cost sensitive and professional services to city residents and visitors, and to "champion" the city; and

**WHEREAS,** the City's Diversity Statement Resolution No. 1842 recognizes St. Helens is a multicultural community and that the City Council and staff are committed to recognizing the dignity of all its residents; and

**WHEREAS**, the City's Resolution No. 1509 adopted a Code of Ethics where City officials commit to using the City's powers and resources for the benefit of the public rather than any official's personal benefit, promote public respect by avoiding even the appearance of impropriety, and avoid bias or favoritism, and obey all laws and regulations; and

**WHEREAS,** City of St. Helens Personnel Policies prohibit harassment against an individual and contain a "No Bullying Policy;" and

WHEREAS, in 2020 the City received several serious complaints from a member of the public, City employees, and a vendor against Councilor Stephen Topaz alleging a variety of complaints including allegations of discrimination, harassment, unethical behavior, making knowingly false statements publicly, attempting to steer City resources toward his own personal property, and violation of City Policies against Bullying and Harassment; and

**WHEREAS,** an investigation was authorized in September 2020 through the City Attorney's Office to protect the integrity of the process and the individuals who had brought forth complaints; and

Resolution No. 1917 Page 1

**WHEREAS,** Councilor Topaz failed to respond to eight separate requests to participate in the investigation; and

WHEREAS, the investigation was completed in March 2021, resulting in a fact-finding report that found that there is significant, credible evidence that Councilor Topaz engaged in the activities described in five separate allegations of wrongdoing; and

WHEREAS, the City Council, including Councilor Topaz, has discussed the fact-finding report on three occasions and reviewed an Executive Summary summarizing the finding of fact-finding report, and

**WHEREAS**, the City Council provided Councilor Topaz an opportunity to be confronted with the possibility of discipline at an open hearing on April 20, 2021; and

**WHEREAS,** the City Council accepts the fact-finding report and seeks to discipline Councilor Topaz within the limitations of its authority.

#### **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the City Council of St. Helens:

**Section 1.** Finding No. 1. The City Council hereby finds and determines that the City Code of Ethics requires all members of City Council to commit to using the City's powers and resources for the benefit of the public rather than any official's personal benefit, promote public respect by avoiding even the appearance of impropriety, and avoid bias or favoritism, and obey all laws and regulations. The City Council further finds and determines that Councilor Stephen Topaz has violated the City Code of Ethics as well as other City policies including the City's Diversity Statement Resolution No. 1842, and Personnel Policies that both prohibit harassment against an individual and contain a "No Bullying Policy."

**Section 2.** Finding No. 2. The City Council hereby finds that Councilor Stephen Topaz' behavior has negatively affected members of the City staff and brought discredit to the City. To prevent future issues, the City Council finds it necessary to take remedial action to create reasonable restrictions to reduce Councilor Topaz' access to City facilities for the purpose of protecting employee rights and to promote efficient delivery of City services. The restrictions are designed to not unreasonably impede Councilor Topaz from carrying out his duties as a member of the City Council.

**Section 3.** Sanctions and Remedial Actions: The City Council of St. Helens hereby reprimands and censures Councilor Stephen Topaz for violations of the City Code of Ethics, the City's Diversity Statement, and Personnel Policies that prohibit harassment against an individual and bullying. Remedial actions that take effect immediately are:

- Councilor Topaz's access to City employees and Departments shall be only through the City Administrator or designee. Any requests by Councilor Topaz for information, materials, records, or meetings with City employees shall be made through the City Administrator. In addition, Councilor Topaz shall not meet with any City employee or personnel other than the City Administrator or Human Resources Coordinator/City Recorder without preauthorization by the City Administrator.
- Councilor Topaz is required to limit his engagement with City employees or personnel, other than engagement with the City Administrator or Human Resources Coordinator/City Recorder, to only those interactions that occur during meetings or appointments that are pre-arranged and pre-authorized by the City Administrator.

Resolution No. 1917 Page 2 Page 34

3. Councilor Topaz shall have no direct contact, either in person, by email or by telephone, with any City employee other than the City Administrator or Human Resources Coordinator/City Recorder without pre-approval from the City Administrator. When a City staff member is required to meet with Councilor Topaz, such meeting shall be attended by at least one other City employee, including the City Administrator or the City Administrator's designee.

Rick Scholl, Mayor

**Section 4.** Duration of Remedial Actions: The remedial actions stated in Section 3 shall be in effect for no less than six months from the effective date. At the end of six months, the City Council may review Councilor Topaz' compliance with the restrictions and, based on evidence that the remedial actions were properly honored, may consider reducing the restrictions.

Section 5. This Resolution shall become effective immediately upon passage.

PASSED AND ADOPTED by the City Council of this 19th day of May 2021.

Ayes:

Morten, Chilton, Birkle, Scholl

Nays:

Topaz

ATTEST:

Kathy Payne, City Recorder