



COUNCIL SPECIAL SESSION

Wednesday, February 11, 2026 at 4:00 PM

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

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

LOCATION & CONTACT:

HYBRID: Council Chambers & Zoom (details below)

Website | www.sthelensoregon.gov

Email | kpayne@sthelensoregon.gov

Phone | 503-397-6272

Fax | 503-397-4016

AGENDA

CALL SPECIAL SESSION TO ORDER

PURPOSE: The purpose of this Special Session is to consider adoption of an ordinance for a General Services Fee and referral of that ordinance for voter approval. The General Services Fee is proposed to be used for general fund staffing, programs, and services for police, library, parks, recreation, community development, administration, information technology (IT), and municipal court.

1. Ordinance No. 3321 and Ordinance No. 3322: Adoption of a General Services Fee

This Agenda item is to discuss Ordinance No. 3321 and Ordinance No. 3322 to determine whether Council would like to adopt a General Services Fee and if so, which amount of the fee to adopt.

- a. Presentation by City Administrator and Finance Director
- b. Public Comment – *Limited to three (3) minutes per speaker*
- c. Council Deliberation

2. Ordinance No. 3321: An Ordinance to Establish Chapter 13.34, General Services Fee, if approved by the voters at a citywide election (\$35.30)

- a. First Reading

3. Ordinance No. 3322: An Ordinance to Establish Chapter 13.34, General Services Fee, if approved by the voters at a citywide election (\$24.00)

- a. First Reading

ADJOURN

EXECUTIVE SESSION

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

- ORS 192.660(2)(h) To consult with legal counsel concerning the legal rights and duties of a public body with regard to current litigation or litigation likely to be filed.

Authorized 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.

VIRTUAL MEETING DETAILS

Join: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82660238289?pwd=Csuga0PWY0mYV0ZBBKTrOCGasbqeNf.1>

Passcode: 641133

Phone one-tap: +16694449171

The meeting location is accessible to persons with disabilities. A request for an interpreter for the hearing impaired or for other accommodations for persons with disabilities should be made at least 48 hours before the meeting to City Hall at 503-397-6272.

Be a part of the vision and get involved...volunteer for a City Board or Commission! For more information or for an application, go to www.sthelensoregon.gov or call 503-366-8217.



STAFF REPORT

Item #1.

Meeting Date: February 11, 2026

Author: John Walsh, City Administrator

Reviewed: Gloria Butsch, Finance Director

Ashley Wigod, City Attorney's Office

Department: City Administrator's Office

Subject: General Services Fee Ordinance to Refer to Voters

Type of Item: Proposed Ordinance

Purpose and Community Outcome

This Agenda item proposes an ordinance adopting Chapter 13.24, General Services Fee, and referring it to be approved by the voters at the May 19, 2026, citywide election. The General Services Fee will fund police, library, parks, recreation, community development, administration, information technology, and municipal court staffing programs and services, which are the services paid for out of the General Fund.

Background

At the February 4, 2026, City Council Work Session, City staff forecast a FY 26-27 budget shortfall of \$2,214,000.00 if services funded by the General Fund are to remain the same. Over the past several years, the City has used one-time revenue sources to fill budget gaps and maintain current service levels, but those one-time revenue sources are not available in future years.

The City of St. Helens has a permanent tax rate of \$1.91 per \$1,000 of assessed value, which is one of the lowest permanent tax rates in the State of Oregon. Many other communities, even those with higher permanent tax rates, have referred to and received voter approval for local option levies that temporarily increase the property tax rate and have adopted municipal services fees charged on utility bills.

Staff presented to City Council that adoption of a \$35.30 General Services Fee would allow the City to maintain staffing, programs and services at the current service level, with a 20% reserve. Alternatively, it proposes adoption of a \$24.00 General Services Fee that would maintain staffing at a current service level with a 10% reserve.

City Council directed staff to prepare an ordinance for a \$35.30 General Services Fee for Council review and adoption to then refer to the voters at the May 19, 2026, citywide election. This Agenda item also includes an alternative for City Council consideration.

What do the General Fund programs and services currently consist of?

- City Hall is open five (5) days per week
- Library is open six (6) days per week
- Municipal Court is staffed five (5) days per week
- 13 parks are maintained consisting of approximately 204 acres
- Recreation: 3,000 participants
- 24/7 Police Services

What does the General Fund staffing currently consist of?

- 23 Police Department staff, including thirteen (13) police officers, four (4) sergeants, one (1) detective, one (1) lieutenant, one (1) Chief, and three (3) administrative services personnel, including code enforcement
- Six (6) Library Department staff
- Three (3) Parks Department staff
- Two and a half (2.5) Recreation Program staff
- Five (5) Community Development Department staff
- Nine and a half (9.5) Administration Department staff, including City Administrator, City Recorder, Human Resources, Finance, and Communications
- Two (2) Municipal Court staff, not including contracted municipal court judge, prosecutor and public defender
- One (1) Information Technology (IT) Services

Ordinance No. 3321

Ordinance No. 3321 proposes a General Services Fee that will generate revenue to continue the provision of existing services as follows:

\$ 35.30 per EDU / month (for the first year)

- Generates an estimated \$215,441/month, \$2,585,292 annually in FY 26-27.
- The fee will index annually by not more than three percent (3%) according to the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U) in the West Region as of December of the prior year.
- Staffing, programs and services are maintained at current levels.
- Creates a 20% reserve.
- Revenue from a municipal services fee is collected on an ongoing monthly basis and is not subject to Measure 5 property tax compression.

Ordinance No. 3322

An alternative approach for consideration, that was not proposed at the February 4, 2026, Council Work Session, is to adopt a lower General Services Fee, maintain a 20% reserve, and decrease some City services. We now propose Ordinance No. 3322 for consideration, as follows:

\$ 24 per EDU / month (for the first year)

- Generates an estimated \$146,496.00/month, \$1,757,952.00 annually in FY 26-27.
- The fee will index annually by not more than three percent (3%) according to the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U) in the West Region as of December of the prior year.
- Staffing, programs, and services will require a decrease from current levels.
- Creates a 20% reserve.
- Revenue from a General Services Fee is collected on an ongoing monthly basis and is not subject to Measure 5 property tax compression.

Both Ordinances have the following additional provisions:

Term of General Services Fee

The term is proposed for 10 years, commencing July 1, 2026, and expiring June 30, 2035.

Dedicated Ledger Account and Use of Fee

The General Services Fee collected would be recorded in a dedicated ledger account for the General Services Fee and expended only on General Fund staffing, programs, and services described which include: police, library, parks, recreation, community development, administration, information technology, and municipal court, also known as General Services.

Quarterly Reports and Annual Audit

The City will provide quarterly reports to City Council that document the General Services Fee revenue and expenditures. The City's annual audit will include a review of the collection and use of the General Services fund.

Billing of General Services Fee

The General Services Fee is charged on a customer's utility bill. The person responsible for paying the City utility account is responsible for paying the General Services Fee.

Payment on a utility services account is applied first to any public safety fee previously adopted, second to the General Services Fee, third to the sewer service charges, fourth to stormwater charges, and fifth to the charges for water service.

Water utility services may be discontinued as provided for in City code if utility charges are delinquent.

Timeline to make it onto Ballot for May 19, 2026 Election, for Voter Decision

Timeline:

- February 11, 2026, first reading of Ordinance.
- February 25, 2026 (14 days later), second reading and adoption of ordinance.
- February 25, 2026, adopt Resolution referring Ordinance for voter decision at the May 19, 2026, election, and filing Explanatory Statement and Ballot Title, with the City Elections Official.
- February 27, 2026, Notice of Proposed Ballot Title provided to newspaper of general circulation to publish on March 6, 2026.
- March 17, 2026, last day for registered voters to petition for review of ballot title.
- March 19, 2026, last day to file Notice of Referral, Ballot Title, and Explanatory Statement with County.
- May 19, 2026, Election Day.

Budget Scenarios

If the City Council decides to refer the General Services Fee to the May 19, 2026 ballot, the City will prepare two budget scenarios:

- 1) a budget if the General Services Fee receives voter approval; and
- 2) a budget if the General Services Fee does not receive voter approval.

Attachments

1. Ordinance No. 3321, General Services Fee of \$35.30, indexed annually, for a term of 10 years.
2. Ordinance No. 3322, General Services Fee of \$24.00, indexed annually, for a term of 10 years.
3. Ballot Title.
4. Explanatory Statement.

Options and Alternatives

1. First reading of Ordinance No. 3321, which adopts a \$35.30 General Services Fee, indexed annually, to fund General Fund staffing, programs, and services, and to be reviewed for second reading and adoption at the February 25, 2026, Special City Council meeting, and referred for voter decision at the May 19, 2026, citywide election.
2. First reading of Ordinance No. 3322, which adopts a \$24.00 General Services Fee, indexed annually, to fund General Fund staffing, programs, and services, and to be reviewed for second reading and adoption at the February 25, 2026, Special City Council meeting, and referred for voter decision at the May 19, 2026, citywide election.
3. Decline to approve a General Services Fee to be referred to the voters at this time.
 - a. This decision will likely result in the City reducing staffing, programs, and services for its FY 26-27 Budget, and the remainder of FY 25-26. The City Council may elect to refer a General Services Fee at the November 2026 citywide election.

Next Steps

If an Ordinance is approved for first reading by City Council, the City will:

1. Place the Ordinance on the February 25, 2026 Special City Council meeting agenda for second reading and adoption.
2. Place a Resolution for approval on the February 25, 2026, Special City Council agenda, in which the City Council directs the City Administrator to file the Ordinance with the City Elections Official and refer it for voter decision at the May 19, 2026 election.

City of St. Helens
ORDINANCE NO. 3321

AN ORDINANCE TO ESTABLISH CHAPTER 13.34, GENERAL SERVICES FEE, IF APPROVED BY THE VOTERS AT A CITYWIDE ELECTION

WHEREAS, the City of St. Helens, is experiencing an ever-increasing impact on its budget as a result of Measure 5 (1990) and Measure 50 (1997), decreasing revenue in other areas, and rising costs. Because of these property tax limits and decreasing revenue, property tax revenues for the City grow more slowly than the rising costs of services. In particular, the growing costs of the resource-intensive provision of public safety services continues to outpace General Fund revenue growth; and

WHEREAS, the City of St. Helens' permanent tax rate of \$1.9078 per thousand of taxable assessed value is among the lowest in the State of Oregon; and

WHEREAS, the City Council finds that a generally applicable fee to pay for the provision of General Fund services, is the best mechanism to generate the long-term and stable revenue needed to sufficiently cover the expense of on-going services, including staffing, programs, and services in police, library, parks, recreation, community development, administration, information technology, and municipal court, which is imperative to the health, safety, and general welfare of the city; and

WHEREAS, the City Council further finds that the most fair and equitable method of collecting such revenue can best be accomplished through the formation of a General Services Fee. In comparison to other funding options, the City Council finds that the General Services Fee will be charged to all developed properties and constitutes a reliable and equitable source of funding to address the public need for on-going General Fund services; and

WHEREAS, the City Council finds that assessing the Fee on each developed unit of property constitutes a reasonably accurate measure for the intensity of General Fund services, used throughout the City, also considering the resources needed to implement and maintain the revenue source; and

WHEREAS, in Chapter 13.32, the City requires that before the establishment of a municipal service fee, such as the General Services Fee, voter approval by a majority of votes cast at a citywide election shall be required. Therefore, after approval of this Ordinance, it shall be referred to the voters for a citywide election, and only if approved by a majority of votes cast at a citywide election, shall it be effective.

NOW, THEREFORE, THE CITY OF ST. HELENS ORDAINS AS FOLLOWS:

Section 1. Recitations. The above recitations are true and correct and are incorporated herein by this reference.

Section 2. St. Helens Municipal Code, Chapter 13.34, General Services Fee, is hereby added to the City Code as described in Exhibit A.

Section 3. Effective Date. Chapter 13.34, General Fund Services Fee, shall be referred to the voters in a general citywide election and shall be effective if approved by a majority of votes cast at the May 19, 2026, citywide election.

Section 4. The General Services Fee adopted herein is classified as a fee and thus not subject to the limits of Section 11 or 11b, Article XI of the Oregon Constitution. The General Services Fee is based on the direct and indirect use of or benefit derived from the use of the City's public safety and General Fund infrastructure and resources; it is not a property tax. The City Recorder is directed to provide notice of the adoption of this Ordinance as provided in ORS 305.583(9).

Section 5. Errors. The City Recorder is authorized to administratively correct any reference errors contained herein or in other provisions of the St. Helens City Code to the provisions added, amended, or repealed herein.

Section 6. Severability. If any section, phrase, sentence, or portion of this Ordinance is for any reason held invalid or unconstitutional by any Court of competent jurisdiction, such portion shall be deemed a separate, distinct, and independent provision, and such holding shall not affect the validity of the remaining portions thereof.

Section 7. Codification. Provisions of this Ordinance shall be incorporated in the City Code and the word "ordinance" may be changed to "code", "article," "section," or other word, and the sections of this Ordinance may be renumbered, or relettered provided however that Section 4 and 5 need not be codified.

Read the first time:

Read the second time:

APPROVED AND ADOPTED by the City Council this ____ day of ____, 20__, by the following vote:

Ayes:

Nays:

Abstains:

Jennifer Massey, Mayor

ATTEST:

Kathy Payne, City Recorder

CHAPTER 13.34 ST. HELENS GENERAL SERVICES FEE

13.34.010	Short Title
13.34.020	Purpose and Intent
13.34.030	Definitions
13.34.040	Establishment of General Services Fee
13.34.050	Amount of General Services Fee
13.34.060	Dedicated Account; Use of Fee
13.34.070	Administration
13.34.080	Billing
13.34.090	Delinquency
13.34.100	Adjustment of Accounts
13.34.110	Enforcement
13.34.120	Quarterly Reports; Annual Audit

13.34.010 Short Title

The provisions of this chapter shall be known and may be cited as the “City of St. Helens General Services Fee” ordinance.

13.34.020 Purpose and Intent

(1) The purpose of the General Services Fee is to provide funding for staffing, programs and services provided by the departments of the General Fund: police, library, parks, recreation, community development, administration, information technology, and municipal court, also known as General Services. The General Services safeguard, facilitate, and encourage the public health, safety, welfare and livability of the residents, businesses, and visitors of the City of St. Helens. Stable and reliable General Services provide a multitude of economic and social benefits to the public, including but not limited to:

- Protection of life and property
- Reduction of the incidence of crime
- Dependable response by law enforcement
- Access to judicial review in courts
- Enforcement of municipal ordinances and traffic laws
- Promotion of business and industry
- Providing library services, such as children’s reading and literacy events, purchasing books for all users to access, providing community space for citizens when using library services;
- Providing parks and open space and recreational opportunities to the community;

- Providing the planning and building services that ensure building and development adhere to land use laws and building codes as provided by the State and St. Helens Municipal Codes.

The City of St. Helens City Council finds and determines the necessity of this General Services Fee to provide a funding mechanism to help pay for the benefits of the General Fund services and to continue to provide an acceptable level of service.

(2) The intent of the General Services Fee is to provide a funding mechanism to pay for the benefits conferred on residents, businesses, and visitors of the city, as provided by the General Fund.

Since all developed property receives a direct or indirect benefit from the staffing, programs and services provided by the police, library, parks, recreation, community development, administration, information technology (IT) and municipal court departments, imposing a General Services Fee is necessary and proper use of the city's power to pay for the benefits conferred.

13.34.030 Definitions

(1) "Developed property" means a lot, parcel or tract of real property that is used as a dwelling unit (as defined by SHMC Title 17), business, or other activity in the city. It is presumed that a developed property served by city water, stormwater, and or wastewater utility services receives a direct or indirect benefit from the police, library, parks, recreation, community development, administration, information technology, and municipal court departments funded by the General Fund.

(2) "Equivalent Dwelling Unit" means the number of living units, office spaces, or connections to a single meter. Examples include, but are not limited to, a single family-residence is one EDU, a duplex with one meter is two EDU's, an apartment complex EDU is per total number of apartment units, an RV park EDU is per hook up. A commercial use is per office space, per meter, so that one office space with one meter is one EDU. An industrial use is per building and per meter, so that one building with one meter is one EDU.

(3) "Person" means a natural person, unincorporated association, tenancy in common, partnership, corporation, limited liability company, cooperative, trust, governmental agency (including the State of Oregon and Columbia County, but excluding the City of St. Helens), or other entity in law or in fact.

(4) "Responsible party" means the person responsible for the utility account. Unless another responsible party has agreed in writing to pay the General Services Fee, and a copy of that in writing is filed with the city, the person paying the city utility charges is the responsible party. If there is no service to or billing for the developed property, or if services or billing has been discontinued, the responsible party is the person having the right to occupy the property.

13.34.040 Establishment of General Services Fee

(1) Effective July 1, 2026, and ending June 30, 2035, if the ballot measure referring this ordinance receives voter approval by a majority of the votes cast at the citywide election held on May 19, 2026, a General Services Fee is established and imposed on all utility accounts within the corporate limits of the City of St. Helens.

(2) The General Services Fee for each utility account shall be based on a monthly amount applied to the number of equivalent dwelling units allocated to a utility account. The General Services Fee shall be prorated based on utility billing cycles and, for utility accounts that are opened or closed during the period the General Services Fee is in effect, the date the utility account is opened or closed.

(3) The General Services Fee is a personal obligation of the person responsible for payment of the city utility account. No lien will attach to any developed property because of nonpayment of the General Services Fee.

(4) The General Services Fee applies to all City of St. Helens utility accounts, including those that serve the local, state, and federal governments and to city utility accounts that service premises that are entitled to an exemption from or deferral of ad valorem property taxes.

(5) Vacant and undeveloped property within the city is exempt from the General Services Fee until such time that the city receives a request for utility services or issues a building permit.

13.34.050 Amount of the General Services Fee

The amount of the General Services Fee shall be \$35.30 per month for each Equivalent Dwelling Unit for fiscal year 2026-27 and will index by not more than three percent (3%) according to the Consumer Price Increase for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U) in the West Region as of December, the prior year. Example: if the CPI-U in the West Region in December 2026 is 3%, the General Services Fee will increase by 3%.

13.34.060 Dedicated Account; Use of Fee

(1) There shall be a dedicated general ledger account for the General Services Fee. All General Services Fee revenue imposed and collected under this chapter shall be recorded in the dedicated ledger account for the General Services Fee.

(2) Receipts of the General Services Fee shall be used for the purposes of staffing, programs and services in police, library, parks, recreation, community development, information technology (IT), administration and municipal court.

(3) The City Council may designate a portion of the fee to provide financial assistance to low-income individuals.

13.34.070 Administration

The City Administrator shall be responsible for administration of the General Services Fee, including the development of administrative procedures, administration of fees, and all other activities related to the purpose of the General Services Fee.

13.34.080 Billing

(1) The General Services Fee is independent of and in addition to existing fees and charges imposed as part of the city's standard utility rates. The General Services Fee will be included with the city's utility bill as a separate and distinct charge.

(2) The customer responsible for paying the city utility account is responsible for payment of the General Services fee.

(3) If a developed property has more than one utility account, the General Services Fee shall be calculated based on the total number of equivalent dwelling units on the developed property.

(4) The General Services Fee shall be due and payable at the same time and in the same manner and method as the city's utility bill and associated charges, as provided for under SHMC 13.02.050, Billing, and 13.02.060, Application of Payments Received.

13.34.090 Delinquency

Delinquent General Service Fees may be collected and utility services associated with a delinquent account may be denied as provided for in SHMC 13.02.090, Denial of Utility Service, 13.02.100, Responsibility for Payment of Bills, and 13.02.110, Utility Charge Liens and Collection Process.

13.34.100 Adjustment of Accounts

(1) Customers who believe their General Services Fee, as applied to their developed property, is not within the intent of this chapter, may request in writing a review of their General Services Fee by the City Administrator. The written request must specify each and every reason for the request and provide accurate contact information. The City Administrator shall initiate a review of the customer's General Services Fee and determine whether any reduction in charge or increase in charge shall be made retroactively, not to exceed one year from the date the request for review was submitted.

(2) Persons not satisfied with the results of the review by the City Administrator may protest the decision to an independent hearings officer within fourteen (14) days of the date the City Administrator's response is received. The person requesting the review and the city may submit additional testimony and information supporting their request or decision. The independent hearings officers review shall be in writing, stating the reasons for its decision. The decision of the hearings officer is final.

(3) The City Administrator may write off accounts receivable balances if in the best interest of the city and may write off credit balances, unless the customer requests otherwise, if the cost of making the refund would exceed the amount of the credit balance.

13.34.110 Enforcement

(1) In the event funds received for payment on a city monthly utility service bill are inadequate to satisfy in full all of the water, sewer, stormwater, general services, and public safety charges, credit shall be given first to any public safety fee previously adopted, second to the General Services Fee, third to the sewer service charges, fourth to stormwater charges, and fifth to the charges for water service.

(2) In addition to other lawful enforcement procedures as provided in SHMC 13.02.090, Denial of Utility Service, the city may enforce the collection of charges required by this chapter by withholding delivery of water as provided for where the General Services Fee is delinquent.

(3) Notwithstanding any provision herein to the contrary, the city may institute any necessary legal proceedings to enforce the provisions of this chapter, including but not limited to injunctive relief and collection of charges owing. The city's enforcement rights shall be cumulative. If the city commences any legal proceedings to enforce the provisions of this chapter, and the city prevails, the city is entitled to all fees and costs incurred, as well as any sum that a court including any appellate court, may deem as reasonable attorney's fees.

13.34.120 Quarterly Reports; Annual Audit

(1) The city will provide quarterly reports to City Council that document the General Service Fee revenue and expenditures.

(2) The City's annual audit will include a review of the collection and use of the General Services revenues.

City of St. Helens
ORDINANCE NO. 3322

AN ORDINANCE TO ESTABLISH CHAPTER 13.34, GENERAL SERVICES FEE, IF APPROVED BY THE VOTERS AT A CITYWIDE ELECTION

WHEREAS, the City of St. Helens, is experiencing an ever-increasing impact on its budget as a result of Measure 5 (1990) and Measure 50 (1997), decreasing revenue in other areas, and rising costs. Because of these property tax limits and decreasing revenue, property tax revenues for the City grow more slowly than the rising costs of services. In particular, the growing costs of the resource-intensive provision of public safety services continues to outpace General Fund revenue growth; and

WHEREAS, the City of St. Helens' permanent tax rate of \$1.9078 per thousand of taxable assessed value is among the lowest in the State of Oregon; and

WHEREAS, the City Council finds that a generally applicable fee to pay for the provision of General Fund services, is the best mechanism to generate the long-term and stable revenue needed to sufficiently cover the expense of on-going services, including staffing, programs, and services in police, library, parks, recreation, community development, administration, information technology, and municipal court, which is imperative to the health, safety, and general welfare of the city; and

WHEREAS, the City Council further finds that the most fair and equitable method of collecting such revenue can best be accomplished through the formation of a General Services Fee. In comparison to other funding options, the City Council finds that the General Services Fee will be charged to all developed properties and constitutes a reliable and equitable source of funding to address the public need for on-going General Fund services; and

WHEREAS, the City Council finds that assessing the Fee on each developed unit of property constitutes a reasonably accurate measure for the intensity of General Fund services, used throughout the City, also considering the resources needed to implement and maintain the revenue source; and

WHEREAS, in Chapter 13.32, the City requires that before the establishment of a municipal service fee, such as the General Services Fee, voter approval by a majority of votes cast at a citywide election shall be required. Therefore, after approval of this Ordinance, it shall be referred to the voters for a citywide election, and only if approved by a majority of votes cast at a citywide election, shall it be effective.

NOW, THEREFORE, THE CITY OF ST. HELENS ORDAINS AS FOLLOWS:

Section 1. Recitations. The above recitations are true and correct and are incorporated herein by this reference.

Section 2. St. Helens Municipal Code, Chapter 13.34, General Services Fee, is hereby added to the City Code as described in Exhibit A.

Section 3. Effective Date. Chapter 13.34, General Fund Services Fee, shall be referred to the voters in a general citywide election and shall be effective if approved by a majority of votes cast at the May 19, 2026, citywide election.

Section 4. The General Services Fee adopted herein is classified as a fee and thus not subject to the limits of Section 11 or 11b, Article XI of the Oregon Constitution. The General Services Fee is based on the direct and indirect use of or benefit derived from the use of the City's public safety and General Fund infrastructure and resources; it is not a property tax. The City Recorder is directed to provide notice of the adoption of this Ordinance as provided in ORS 305.583(9).

Section 5. Errors. The City Recorder is authorized to administratively correct any reference errors contained herein or in other provisions of the St. Helens City Code to the provisions added, amended, or repealed herein.

Section 6. Severability. If any section, phrase, sentence, or portion of this Ordinance is for any reason held invalid or unconstitutional by any Court of competent jurisdiction, such portion shall be deemed a separate, distinct, and independent provision, and such holding shall not affect the validity of the remaining portions thereof.

Section 7. Codification. Provisions of this Ordinance shall be incorporated in the City Code and the word "ordinance" may be changed to "code", "article," "section," or other word, and the sections of this Ordinance may be renumbered, or relettered provided however that Section 4 and 5 need not be codified.

Read the first time: February 11, 2026
Read the second time:

APPROVED AND ADOPTED by the City Council this ____ day of ____, 20__, by the following vote:

Ayes:
Nays:
Abstains:

Jennifer Massey, Mayor

ATTEST:

Kathy Payne, City Recorder

CHAPTER 13.34 ST. HELENS GENERAL SERVICES FEE

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13.34.120	Quarterly Reports; Annual Audit

13.34.010 Short Title

The provisions of this chapter shall be known and may be cited as the “City of St. Helens General Services Fee” ordinance.

13.34.020 Purpose and Intent

(1) The purpose of the General Services Fee is to provide funding for staffing, programs and services provided by the departments of the General Fund: police, library, parks, recreation, community development, administration, information technology, and municipal court, also known as General Services. The General Services safeguard, facilitate, and encourage the public health, safety, welfare and livability of the residents, businesses, and visitors of the City of St. Helens. Stable and reliable General Services provide a multitude of economic and social benefits to the public, including but not limited to:

- Protection of life and property
- Reduction of the incidence of crime
- Dependable response by law enforcement
- Access to judicial review in courts
- Enforcement of municipal ordinances and traffic laws
- Promotion of business and industry
- Providing library services, such as children’s reading and literacy events, purchasing books for all users to access, providing community space for citizens when using library services;
- Providing parks and open space and recreational opportunities to the community;

- Providing the planning and building services that ensure building and development adhere to land use laws and building codes as provided by the State and St. Helens Municipal Codes.

The City of St. Helens City Council finds and determines the necessity of this General Services Fee to provide a funding mechanism to help pay for the benefits of the General Fund services and to continue to provide an acceptable level of service.

(2) The intent of the General Services Fee is to provide a funding mechanism to pay for the benefits conferred on residents, businesses, and visitors of the city, as provided by the General Fund.

Since all developed property receives a direct or indirect benefit from the staffing, programs and services provided by the police, library, parks, recreation, community development, administration, information technology (IT), and municipal court departments, imposing a General Services Fee is necessary and proper use of the City's power to pay for the benefits conferred.

13.34.030 Definitions

(1) "Developed property" means a lot, parcel or tract of real property that is used as a dwelling unit (as defined by SHMC Title 17), business, or other activity in the city. It is presumed that a developed property served by city water, stormwater, and or wastewater utility services receives a direct or indirect benefit from the police, library, parks, recreation, community development, administration, information technology, and municipal court departments funded by the General Fund.

(2) "Equivalent Dwelling Unit" or EDU, means the number of living units, office spaces, or connections to a single meter. Examples include, but are not limited to, a single family-residence is one EDU, a duplex with one meter is two EDU's, an apartment complex EDU is per total number of apartment units, an RV park EDU is per hook up. A commercial use is per office space, per meter, so that one office space with one meter is one EDU. An industrial use is per building and per meter, so that one building with one meter is one EDU.

(3) "Person" means a natural person, unincorporated association, tenancy in common, partnership, corporation, limited liability company, cooperative, trust, governmental agency (including the State of Oregon and Columbia County, but excluding the City of St. Helens), or other entity in law or in fact.

(4) "Responsible party" means the person responsible for the utility account. Unless another responsible party has agreed in writing to pay the General Services Fee, and a copy of that in writing is filed with the city, the person paying the city utility charges is the responsible party. If there is no service to or billing for the developed property, or if services or billing has been discontinued, the responsible party is the person having the right to occupy the property.

13.34.040 Establishment of General Services Fee

(1) Effective July 1, 2026, and ending June 30, 2035, if the ballot measure referring this ordinance receives voter approval by a majority of the votes cast at the citywide election held on May 19, 2026, a General Services Fee is established and imposed on all utility accounts within the corporate limits of the City of St. Helens.

(2) The General Services Fee for each utility account shall be based on a monthly amount applied to the number of equivalent dwelling units allocated to a utility account. The General Services Fee shall be prorated based on utility billing cycles and, for utility accounts that are opened or closed during the period the General Services Fee is in effect, the date the utility account is opened or closed.

(3) The General Services Fee is a personal obligation of the person responsible for payment of the city utility account. No lien will attach to any developed property because of nonpayment of the General Services Fee.

(4) The General Services Fee applies to all City of St. Helens utility accounts, including those that serve the local, state, and federal governments and to city utility accounts that service premises that are entitled to an exemption from or deferral of ad valorem property taxes.

(5) Vacant and undeveloped property within the city is exempt from the General Services Fee until such time that the city receives a request for utility services or issues a building permit.

13.34.050 Amount of the General Services Fee

The amount of the General Services Fee shall be \$24.00 per month for each Equivalent Dwelling Unit for fiscal year 2026-27 and will index by not more than three percent (3%) according to the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U) in the West Region as of December of the prior year. Example: if the CPI-U in the West Region in December 2026 is 3%, the General Services Fee will increase by 3%.

13.34.060 Dedicated Account; Use of Fee

(1) There shall be a dedicated general ledger account for the General Services Fee. All General Services Fee revenue imposed and collected under this chapter shall be recorded in the dedicated ledger account for the General Services Fee.

(2) Receipts of the General Services Fee shall be used for the purposes of staffing, programs and services in police, library, parks, recreation, community development, information technology (IT), administration and municipal court.

(3) The City Council may designate a portion of the fee to provide financial assistance to low-income individuals.

13.34.070 Administration

The City Administrator shall be responsible for administration of the General Services Fee, including the development of administrative procedures, administration of fees, and all other activities related to the purpose of the General Services Fee.

13.34.080 Billing

(1) The General Services Fee is independent of and in addition to existing fees and charges imposed as part of the City's standard utility rates. The General Services Fee will be included with the city's utility bill as a separate and distinct charge.

(2) The customer responsible for paying the City utility account is responsible for payment of the General Services fee.

(3) If a developed property has more than one utility account, the General Services Fee shall be calculated based on the total number of equivalent dwelling units on the developed property.

(4) The General Services Fee shall be due and payable at the same time and in the same manner and method as the City's utility bill and associated charges, as provided for under SHMC 13.02.050, Billing, and 13.02.060, Application of Payments Received.

13.34.090 Delinquency

Delinquent General Service Fees may be collected and utility services associated with a delinquent account may be denied as provided for in SHMC 13.02.090, Denial of Utility Service, 13.02.100, Responsibility for Payment of Bills, and 13.02.110, Utility Charge Liens and Collection Process.

13.34.100 Adjustment of Accounts

(1) Customers who believe their General Services Fee, as applied to their developed property, is not within the intent of this Chapter, may request in writing a review of their General Services Fee by the City Administrator. The written request must specify each and every reason for the request and provide accurate contact information. The City Administrator shall initiate a review of the customer's General Services Fee and determine whether any reduction in charge or increase in charge shall be made retroactively, not to exceed one year from the date the request for review was submitted.

(2) Persons not satisfied with the results of the review by the City Administrator may protest the decision to an independent hearings officer within fourteen (14) days of the date the City Administrator's response is received. The person requesting the review and the City may submit additional testimony and information supporting their request or decision. The independent hearings officers review shall be in writing, stating the reasons for its decision. The decision of the hearings officer is final.

(3) The City Administrator may write off accounts receivable balances if in the best interest of the city and may write off credit balances, unless the customer requests otherwise, if the cost of making the refund would exceed the amount of the credit balance.

13.34.110 Enforcement

(1) In the event funds received for payment on a City monthly utility service bill are inadequate to satisfy in full all of the water, sewer, stormwater, general services, and public safety charges, credit shall be given first to any public safety fee previously adopted, second to the General Services Fee, third to the sewer service charges, fourth to stormwater charges, and fifth to the charges for water service.

(2) In addition to other lawful enforcement procedures as provided in SHMC 13.02.090, Denial of Utility Service, the City may enforce the collection of charges required by this Chapter by withholding delivery of water as provided for where the General Services Fee is delinquent.

(3) Notwithstanding any provision herein to the contrary, the City may institute any necessary legal proceedings to enforce the provisions of this Chapter, including but not limited to injunctive relief and collection of charges owing. The City's enforcement rights shall be cumulative. If the City commences any legal proceedings to enforce the provisions of this chapter, and the City prevails, the city is entitled to all fees and costs incurred, as well as any sum that a court including any appellate court, may deem as reasonable attorney's fees.

13.34.120 Quarterly Reports; Annual Audit

(1) The City will provide quarterly reports to City Council that document the General Service Fee revenue and expenditures.

(2) The City's annual audit will include a review of the collection and use of the General Services Fee revenues.

City of St. Helens Proposed General Services Fee**DRAFT dated February 10, 2026****May 19, 2026 Election****Explanatory Statement (not more than 500 words)**

The City projects a budget shortfall for the FY 26/27 in the amount of \$2,214,000 if the service level provided by the existing General Fund staffing, programs, and services is to remain the same. The General Fund services include staffing, programs and services by police, library, parks, recreation, community development, administration, information technology (IT), and municipal court.

What are the voters being asked to approve?

The City of St. Helens is referring a ballot measure for voter approval of a General Services Fee to fund staffing, programs and services in police, library, parks, recreation, community development, administration, information technology (IT), and municipal court, which are also known as the General Fund services.

The proposed General Services Fee is in the amount of \$35.30 per equivalent dwelling unit on developed property for fiscal year 2026-27 and adjusted annually using the Consumer Price Index (CPI) West as of the prior year. If approved by a majority of the voters, the fee will be charged monthly on customer's utility bills, effective July 1, 2026, expiring June 30, 2035. The proposed General Services Fee Ordinance No. _____ can be found at the City of St. Helens website at: <https://sthelendsoregon.gov/ordinances>.

Receipts from the General Services Fee will be recorded in a dedicated general ledger account for the General Services Fee. The General Services Fee shall be used for police, library, parks, recreation, community development, information technology (IT), administration and municipal court staffing, programs and services. The city will provide quarterly reports to City Council that document the General Service Fee revenue and expenditures. The City's annual audit will include a review of the collection and use of the General Services Fee revenues.

What happens if the voters do not approve the General Services Fee?

Without additional revenue, the General Fund staffing, programs and services listed above will likely be reduced to ensure the City may adopt a balanced budget with adequate reserves.

BALLOT TITLE**CAPTION (NOT MORE THAN 10 WORDS)**

Fee for General Fund staffing, programs, and services

QUESTION (NOT MORE THAN 20 WORDS)

Should City adopt a fee of \$35.30 per month charged on utility accounts for General Fund staffing, programs, and services?

SUMMARY (NOT MORE THAN 175 WORDS)

The General Fund Services:

- City Hall: five (5) days / week
- Library: six (6) days / week
- Municipal Court: five (5) days / week
- 13 parks: approximately 204 acres
- Recreation: 3,000 participants
- Police: 24/7 coverage

General Fund Staffing numbers:

- 23 Police Department, including thirteen (13) police officers, four (4) sergeants, one (1) detective, one (1) lieutenant, one (1) Chief, three (3) administrative, including code enforcement
- Six (6) Library
- Three (3) Parks
- Two and a half (2.5) Recreation
- Five (5) Community Development
- Nine and a half (9.5) Administration, including City Administrator, City Recorder, HR, Finance, Communications
- Two (2) Municipal Court, excluding contracted municipal court judge, public defenders
- One (1) Information Technology (IT)

To continue the same level of services, the City will need to increase revenue or services will be reduced.

The General Services Fee is \$35.30 per equivalent dwelling unit charged monthly on developed property and adjusted annually using the Consumer Price Index (CPI) West as of the prior year, effective July 1, 2026, expiring June 30, 2035.