

# City of St. Helens

## CITY COUNCIL

Work Session Minutes

October 7, 2015

**Members Present:** Doug Morten, Council President  
Keith Locke, Councilor  
Susan Conn, Councilor  
Ginny Carlson, Councilor

**Members Absent:** Randy Peterson, Mayor

**Staff Present:** John Walsh, City Administrator  
Jon Ellis, Finance Director  
Kathy Payne, City Recorder  
Terry Moss, Police Chief  
Sue Nelson, Public Works Engineering Director

**Others:** Larry VanDolah                      Al Petersen  
Steve Topaz                                      Kannikar Petersen

Council President Morten called the meeting to order at 1 p.m.



### **Visitor Comments**

♦Steve Topaz. The agenda indicates someone is protesting the sewer lateral replacement. He has had a lot of dealings with that. Several of his neighbors have dug them up and found nothing wrong with them. In the past, City Council required that the drainage in his area take care of sewer, surface water and ground water because of standing water. That law has since changed. He has also heard that citizens are not to be told what contractors are doing on the jobsite. He has found that the groundwater drainage and the original springs affect his property, as well as other low lying properties. It seems the City makes their own rules.

♦Al Petersen. He is here for a couple of things. 1) St. Helens Economic Development Corporation (SHEDCO) completed the banner project by raising funds through a grant from CCCC. Banners are now installed all along First Street, more installed on St. Helens Street and a couple were replaced. 2) SHEDCO submitted a request to the City for a letter of support for a dog walk in St. Helens. The idea is that plywood cutouts would be painted and displayed on the streets of St. Helens; much like the cow project done in Chicago in 1999. They will apply to CCCC for a grant. The total cost should be around \$5,000.

### **Employee Length of Service Award**

We have one employee who has reached a big milestone in his employment with the City of St. Helens. The following individual will receive a certificate and pin at the October 7 Council work session.

### **15 Years**

**Aaron Kunders** began working for the City in September of 2000 as a WWTP Operator II. Three years later he became an Operator III and moved to Operator IV two years after that. Then, in June 2009, after Greg Zielinski retired, Aaron took over the role of Superintendent where he has served since.

**Congratulations** to Aaron, and **thank you** for your service!

### **Public Comments on Drop Box Rate Increase**

Waste Management is allowed by franchise agreement to increase their rates based upon the published Consumer Price Index, for All Urban Consumers for West-C, as prepared by the United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics from July of 2014 to July 2015. This year's CPI index was 144.917, up from 144.435 in July of 2014, which was an annual change of 0.334%. Per agreement, Waste Management is allowed 50% of this annual change, not to exceed 1.5%, which results in a 0.167% increase.

No comments received.

### **Protest on Sewer Lateral Replacement – 184 N. Vernonia Road**

**Background:** On September 2, 2015 the Council approved a resolution to declare certain properties within the city to be in violation of sections of the Municipal Code in regards to deficient sewer laterals and that a nuisance exists on such properties. On September 8, 2015 a letter was sent to each of the affected property owners advising them of the nuisance determination. In accordance with the Code, property owners have 10 days to provide a written protest of the notice. On September 18, a protest was submitted by the owner of 184 N. Vernonia Road. The packet includes a timeline of activity for this property with regards to the sewer lateral. Also included in the packet are letters, inspection reports and notices.

This item has been postponed until November 4, 2015.

### **ACC Gateway Sculpture Project Phase 2 Stage 1 Request**

**Summary:** The Arts and Cultural Commission (ACC) recommends the selection of the Gateway Sculpture Project proposal – Salmon Tree Cycle - by the firm Rhiza A + D and also requests approval to spend \$2,000 for the selected firm to provide illustrations of the sculptures showing the surrounding landscape of the site.

The illustrations will be used for project promotion and fundraising. This represents Stage 1 of the work described in the Request for Proposal and Qualification for The St. Helens Gateway Sculpture Project – Phase 2.

**Background:** At the ACC meeting immediately following the September 22 public hearing for the Gateway Sculpture Project, the Commissioners evaluated the proposal presented by Rhiza A + D and voted to recommend its selection to the City Council.

The design of Salmon Tree Cycle was inspired by the life cycle of the salmon and its relationship to trees in a river environment – fallen trees provide habitat for fish in the river and salmon at the end of their life provide nutrients for trees along the riverbank.

The ACC wishes to proceed with Stage 1 in order to enhance their fundraising opportunities for grants and possible crowd funding options.

**Motion:** Carlson moved to approve moving ahead with the project as proposed and allow the \$2,000 expenditure. Locke seconded.

Question. Council President Morten asked where the money is coming from. Kannikar Petersen explained that the more than half of the funds were raised through fundraising and in-kind donations.

**Vote:** All in favor; none opposed; motion carries.

Councilor Carlson expressed appreciation for Kannikar's dedication and hard work.

**Donation of Historical Newspapers to Columbia County Museum Assn.**

**Background:** The City of St. Helens owns a collection of bound copies of historical newspapers that are currently being stored at the Stimson Building. These newspapers have been stored in a variety of locations throughout the City but none of them have enabled their protection, preservation or access.

Columbia County now benefits from a museum association that has as its mission to "...collect, display, preserve, and safeguard various artifacts, ephemera, photographs and research materials about all aspects of the history of Columbia County." This mission and their expertise make the museum an ideal repository for this important newspaper collection.

**Recommendation:** The Library Director requests the Council's approval to donate the City's collection of historical newspapers to the Columbia County Museum Association. The City of St. Helens would reserve the right to transfer these newspapers to an alternate format (i.e. digitized for online access), if at any time in the future, the removal of copyright restrictions and funding made it possible.

**Motion:** Conn moved to donate the City's collection of historical newspapers to the Columbia County Museum Association. Carlson seconded.

Discussion. Councilor Locke spoke of the CCTV tapes in storage. The museum association would like to view those and possibly take them as well. Morten said that has already been done.

**Vote:** All in favor; none opposed; motion carries.

**Review Finance/Municipal Court Staff Request**

Finance Director Ellis presented his request, outlined in a memo dated October 1, 2015, which is included in the packet for this meeting.

Option No. 1 is adding one full-time Accountant position, reclassifying the Office Assistant to an Accounting Assistant, and bringing in a .4 FTE (2 days a week) Office Assistant to support Court. The cost is \$124,000 of which \$58,000 is funded by the General Fund.

Option No. 2 proposes shifting responsibilities between the Finance Director and the Accounting Tech associated with account reconciliations, have the reclassified Accounting Assistant perform monthly processing of payroll, and hire a .8 FTE Office Assistant to provide support two days a week in Court and two days a week for utility customer service. The cost is \$45,800 of which \$28,800 is funded by the General Fund.

Option No. 3 proposes what was requested in the FY 15-16 budget process that was not adopted. In reflection (4 months in rearview mirror), this would help but is really insufficient.

Staff recommends Option No. 1, however, Option No. 2 can assist in maintaining service levels for an interim period until such time as a new Finance Director is recruited.

Council President Morten would like to inform the Budget Committee of whatever the Council

decides.

Continuation of deliberations on this matter will be on October 21, 2015.

### **Discussion Regarding Utility Rates**

In his memo dated October 1, 2015, Finance Director Ellis requested direction from the Council in setting parameters associated with development of proposed calendar year 2016 and calendar year 2017 water, sewer, and stormwater utility rates. He presented a PowerPoint presentation.

**Background:** The City water, sewer and stormwater utility rates have doubled over the last 10 years (2005 to 2015) primarily as a result of capital improvement projects required to meet federal regulations associated with the Clean Water Act.

The City has finally reached the plateau whereby many of the significant capital improvement projects to meet the last round of regulatory requirements have been completed, replacement program on aged infrastructure is well established and underway, and the limited growth impacts are primarily covered through SDC fees.

Debt utilized to fund capital project is also approaching a plateau and revenues streams are such to assure maintaining bond covenants requirements of minimum service reserve balances and debt ratio tied to net operating income compared to annual debt service (absent inflationary increases to operation costs). Therefore, rate increases over the next couple of years will primarily be contingent to inflationary pressures to operating cost and/or any new environmental regulatory standards.

Council talked about their positions on a rate increase. Council President Morten would like to keep the rate under \$100. Councilor Carlson would like to give rate payers a break. She suggests anywhere between zero to a half percent increase for the next year. We can review it over that year and come to a conclusion. Councilor Locke suggests no increase for a year. Councilor Conn is concerned if they don't do some kind of increase that a larger one will have to be done later. City Administrator Walsh pointed out that anything less than inflation will be made up at some point. It does not get easier to make up in the future.

Ellis will return to the next meeting with a rate proposal based on various scenarios.

### **Discussion Regarding Camping on Sand Island**

Council President Morten reported that there is no fee for camping on Sand Island. However, the maintenance costs are high.

*Public Works Operations Director Sue Nelson handed out a document entitled Staff Discussion on Sand Island Camping Options dated September 9, 2015. She reviewed the options. The most viable option would be to have a parks host on site 24/7. That is also recommended in the Parks Master Plan.*

Councilor Conn likes option three. She suggests adding an online reservation program. Councilor Carlson suggested partnering with the store at the marina to help sell camping permits. Councilor Locke sees a strong need to have a caretaker on site. Sand Island is a great asset. He would like to see it become more accessible as the waterfront property is development.

Nelson explained that the biggest obstacle will be cost. Park use fees will not be enough to

cover the maintenance cost.

Council President Morten expressed concerns for safety and police enforcement if problems arise on the Island. Police Chief Moss likes the idea of a dedicated host on site but has concerns with the lack of access to the island. If they need immediate help, it can take time to get an officer over there. They currently send two officers over to the island at a time for safety reasons. He suggested a park ranger that has interest in law enforcement. This could even be someone who oversaw all the parks; such as McCormick Park camping as well.

This will be added to the October 19 Parks Commission agenda for discussion.

### **Update on Spirit of Halloweentown Activities**

Tina Curry was in attendance to update the Council on Spirit of Halloweentown. As of 11:30 p.m. yesterday, 977,521 people have visited the Spirit of Halloweentown page. 928,471 people found the page from other places. Huge numbers are expected to attend the pumpkin lighting on Saturday. Six weeks ago, the Facebook page had over 11,000 followers. Today, it has over 30,000 followers. Additionally, over 100,000 people have visited the Discover Columbia County website. With staff's help, they have been able to prepare for Saturday's event. A group photo shoot will be taken with Marnie, as well as event video clips to use for future promotions. The Marnie photo opportunities have sold out. Spirit of Halloweentown t-shirts have been designed and are available for online purchase. Activities will be happening all month. The response to all the new activities has been really positive.

### **Department Reports**

**Police Chief Moss** reported...

- A press release was distributed announcing the grant they received for the Crisis Intervention Training (CIT). Part of the grant is to hire staff to administer the program. It's a collaborate effort between the City, CCMH, Sheriff's Office and community partners. He will return with more information on the temporary position. Assistant Planner Jenny Dimsho played a vital part in writing the grant.
- Interviews occurred a couple weeks for police officer position. They identified a couple candidates. He hopes to have one on board by November 1.

**Public Works Engineering Director Nelson** reported...

- There are a few projects coming up.
  - Semi-annual asphalt patching project.
  - Small storm drain extension located in a side yard off South 4<sup>th</sup> Street.
  - Constructing concrete abutments for McCormick Park Pedestrian Bridge.
- She will not be here at the next Council meeting. She will be attending APWA Fall Conference.

**Finance Director Ellis** reported...

- He will bring a report to the next meeting outlining monthly utility billing.
- There is a public hearing at 6:45 p.m. for the special procurement determination of the Boise Veneer and Boise White Paper property. Walsh added that state purchasing rules are very complex. Judge Phillips will be here tonight to talk about the process.

**City Recorder Payne** reported...

- Oregon Climate gave a presentation at the September 2 meeting. The presenter requested the Council adopt a resolution for the carbon dividends. Payne is looking for direction from Council. It was the consensus of the Council to discuss this at a future work session.
- There are two amended State Waterway Leases in the regular session packet. Everything

stays the same except the area is extended. The State believes it was an oversight on their part.

- Tonight's agenda also includes an intergovernmental agreement with the Port of Portland from them to use our docks while they're doing the dredging. They pay \$10 to stay at the docks.
- The letter of support will be included in tonight's supplemental packet.
- Tiffany from the Dockside just brought in an application for the Dark and Dank Disco on Saturday. She is asking for the \$50 fee to be waived. We have only waived fees for the events Tina is organizing on behalf of the City. We have not waived fees for the Monster Dash or other parties. Based on past practice, it was the consensus of the Council to not waive the fees.

**City Administrator Walsh** reported...

- He has been on a conference binge the last few weeks.
  - Brownsfield Conference in Chicago. It was part of the requirement as part of the area-wide planning grant.
  - League of Oregon Cities (LOC) Conference in Bend.
  - International City Managers Conference in Seattle. It was his first time attending. Education and training was high level.
- They have received over a dozen letters of interest for the phone system RFP. It was a much better response this time.
- Tonight's agenda includes:
  - The first reading of an ordinance for a franchise agreement with Astound Broadband.
  - Presentation of a resolution for the City to support a transportation district.
  - A resolution to accept the Millard Road property.

**Council Reports**

Postponed until tonight's regular session meeting.

**Executive Session**

**ORS 192.660(2)(e) Real Property Transactions**

**Motion:** At 4:00 p.m., upon Locke's motion and Conn's second, the Council unanimously voted to move into executive session under ORS 192.660(2)(e) Real Property Transactions.

**Motion:** At 4:26 p.m., upon completion of the executive session, Conn moved to go back into work session, seconded by Carlson, and unanimously approved.


**Other Business**

No other business.



There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:27 p.m.

ATTEST:

  
Kathy Payne, City Recorder

  
Doug Morten, Council President