

City of St. Helens

CITY COUNCIL

Special Session Minutes

March 18, 2020

This Special Session was held electronically via conference call.

Council Members Present: Rick Scholl, Mayor
Doug Morten, Council President
Keith Locke, Councilor
Steve Topaz, Councilor
Ginny Carlson, Councilor

Staff Present: John Walsh, City Administrator
Matt Brown, Assistant City Administrator
Kathy Payne, City Recorder
Ed Trompke, City Attorney

Others: Patrick Birkle
Kathy Innocenti
Lynn Pettit
Howard Blumenthal



1. **4:00 p.m. – Call Special Session to Order** – Mayor Scholl
2. **Resolution No. 1878:** A Resolution Declaring a Local State of Emergency in the City of St. Helens as a Result of the COVID-19 Pandemic

Motion: Topaz moved and Carlson seconded to adopt Resolution No. 1878.

Discussion

City Administrator Walsh said that Municipal Court Judge Amy Lindgren issued an Order Imposing “Level 3” Restrictions on Court Operations. In addition, Walsh signed in a Temporary Policy Response to COVID-19 Pandemic & Public Health Emergency. This temporary policy addresses issues the City can anticipate due to the coronavirus with regards to employees.

There was discussion about closing the parks. The consensus was to close the playground structures and put up clear signage so that people do not play on them.

City Attorney Trompke said that the liability involved with the play structures isn’t clear under these circumstances. As long as there are signs up not to use the play equipment, that the play equipment is not sanitized, and also signs near bathrooms to wash hands, he believes that is sufficient to satisfy the need under today’s circumstances. He believes that under these circumstances, juries and courts would be more flexible.

The Council unanimously adopted Resolution No. 1878. [Ayes: Locke, Carlson, Topaz, Morten, Scholl; Nays: None]

3. **Senior Center Discussion.** The Senior Center submitted a request to the City for financial support.

Senior Center Manager Kathy Innocenti was present on the line and said that they have crunched the numbers and are going to be about \$9,300/month short. This is due to the slow down of business in the Top Notch Thrift Store that supports the Senior Center and because of the coronavirus and the need to close the Senior Center.

Mayor Scholl proposes giving the Senior Center \$5,000.

Innocenti said that while the Senior Center is closed, they are still operating the Meals on Wheels program, which is a nutritional program for seniors in St. Helens and Scappoose that delivers meals directly to their home.

Council President Morten expressed a concern about the total budget for the Senior Center and ask Innocenti if they have been cutting back. Innocenti said that they have cut payroll at the Senior Center and at the Thrift Store. They've also decreased open hours at the Thrift Store. The majority of the budget is the Meals on Wheels program.

Morten said he would like to see a breakdown of the expenses better. He has no problem helping out, especially the Meals on Wheels program. It is a very important program and he's a strong supporter of that. It is very much needed under today's circumstances. He wants to know how it is all going to work. He asked Innocenti how they are going to be sustainable in moving forward...\$5,000 is just a band-aid. There's some way he needs to be convinced that the Senior Center Board is working on ways to be sustainable.

Innocenti said that the Board understands that they need to have multiple streams of income coming in. The Board met and discussed different ways to achieve this. She contacted Betsy Johnson and the Board of Commissioners to ask for help or ideas of funding sources. They have posted some things online to sell. They have asked restaurants that have closed for food. They are going to try to continue operating as long as they can.

Councilor Topaz asked if the Senior Center receives anything from the Columbia Pacific Food Bank. Innocenti said that the Food Bank received milk and some other items from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). Sometimes the Senior Center is given some of those items. Topaz confirmed that federal law governs what the Senior Center can use from the Food Bank in their nutritional program.

Councilor Carlson feels it is prudent to help the Senior Center in this situation they are in now but that there needs to be more discussion.

Councilor Locke agreed that we need to help out. He recommended that the Senior Center put out a GoFundMe page and that the City could help advertise it.

Morten said that they should look at different funding sources. He also said that he'd like to see more integration in our community with pooling resources collectively so that we are all pulling in the same direction together, especially for the Meals on Wheels program. He sees the Food Bank being in the center of that. He hopes that there is a strong integration of people who are working on this problem. He doesn't want us to be pulling against each other.

Topaz suggested that people might be able to donate the types of food that is acceptable for the program. He asked Innocenti if the nutritional standards are being lax in this

emergency. Innocenti said that sometimes there is a little bit of wiggle room. They are regulated by the Area Agency on Aging (AAA).

Motion: Carlson moved to give the Senior Center \$5,000 and that the Senior Center look into resources. Morten seconded.

Discussion

Mayor Scholl asked Innocenti to work with the Food Bank to get more bang for the buck.

Morten would like the Senior Center Board to focus their direction on integrating resources in the community.

The Council unanimously approved giving the Senior Center \$5,000 out of Council discretionary funds. [Ayes: Morten, Carlson, Locke, Scholl, Topaz; Nays: None]

4. **Adjourn** - There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:55 p.m.



Respectfully submitted by Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder.

ATTEST:



Kathy Payne, City Recorder



Rick Scholl, Mayor