

# City of St. Helens

## City Council

Work Session Minutes

May 6, 2020

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*Meeting was held electronically via Zoom.*

**Members Present:** Mayor Rick Scholl  
Council President Doug Morten  
Councilor Ginny Carlson  
Councilor Keith Locke  
Councilor Stephen R. Topaz

**Members Absent:** None

**Staff Present:** John Walsh, City Administrator  
Kathy Payne, City Recorder  
Matt Brown, Assistant City Administrator  
Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder  
Sue Nelson, Interim Public Works Director  
Margaret Jeffries, Library Director  
Brian Greenway, Police Chief  
Jacob Graichen, City Planner  
Mike DeRoia, Building Official  
Tina Curry, Event Coordinator  
Shanna Duggan, Recreation Manager  
Jenny Dimsho, Associate Planner  
Darin Cox, IT Specialist  
Tim Ramis, City Attorney

**Others:** Patrick Birkle      Ana Hadar-Ziady      Paul Terhune  
Chris Liedke      Brady Preheim      Christine Menges  
Jaime      Courtney

1) **1:00 P.M. - Call Work Session to Order**

2) **Visitor Comments - Limited to five (5) minutes per speaker**

◆ Patrick Birkle. He has a couple questions/comments:

1. How is the City addressing the possible reopening of the City? It seems that Columbia County may be able to open sooner than the Portland metro area. The City has responded well and pro-actively to this pandemic. He hopes a statement will be released soon from the City's administration regarding the reopening.
2. He supports reappointing Library Director Margaret Jeffries to the Columbia Learning Center Board. He is impressed with Jeffries' leadership and relationship with the Columbia Learning Center.

### 3) **Discussion Topics**

#### 3.A **Deliberate on CCMH Request to Use City Park Restrooms for Homeless**

Mayor Scholl apologized on behalf of the City of St. Helens for the comment made about the 18-wheeler and bussing to Portland. We do not have the resources to take care of the homeless and he knows it is a sensitive issue.

Councilor Locke reported that Communication Action Team (CAT) found a shower trailer shower to rent. He does not know if they have found a place to put it.

Councilor Carlson pointed out that a decision was not made because there were unanswered questions. Council President Morten did not think it was appropriate to make a decision at that time. For the record, most of the public testimony was in opposition to the request. He emphasized the importance of the safety for our citizens, our children, and our staff who would have to clean the restrooms.

Mayor Scholl explained that he was approached by Columbia County Commissioner Alex Tardif with the proposal. Scholl apologized to the Council that a thorough proposal was not brought to them. McCormick Park does have a history with homeless camping, needles, lack of safety, etc. He is not opposed to our downtown bathrooms being used to shower. He does not agree with homeless staying at McCormick Park. Council President Morten agreed with the idea of using the restrooms at Columbia View Park. He would also like them to consider the showers at the school district.

Councilor Locke reported that CAT would need a generator or sufficient electricity to run the trailer. Discussion ensued.

Councilor Topaz expressed concerns about homeless congregating. He is opposed to this type of facility. It will open it up to homeless from outside the area. He does not agree with using the schools for homeless either. It will bring in drugs and needles. Long term, you start building a congregation that you cannot handle. He is leery about having anything like this in St. Helens.

Council President Morten suggested the school district as another option, since Columbia Community Mental Health (CCMH) and CAT did not seem to have any other ideas. As a coach, he has seen how you can easily monitor the locker room and get everyone out. They would not be turned loose in the school. He does agree with welcoming homeless people to our City without any facilities or manpower to help accommodate their needs.

Speaking for himself, Mayor Scholl explained that homeless people are not always drug addicted or mentally ill. Some homeless people work 40 hours a week. There are 37 students at the high school who are homeless. Some of these people are just like us, they are citizens of this community. He pleaded with the Council to be sensitive and empathetic. Council President Morten declared that he has worked with those individuals for over 30 years. He is sensitive. Councilor Topaz suggested that if these are St. Helens residents and students, there should be no problem using the high school.

Discussion of 300 people needing the service. There were concerns about the number of people all being there together waiting for showers. There was an emphasis on providing the services to only people in the community.

Councilor Carlson talked about the services available in the community for the homeless. She suggested having Walsh work with CAT and CCMH on a plan that is safe for everyone. Council President Morten repeated that there are many facilities and resources that have not been investigated. It has all been focused on St. Helens. Mayor Scholl and Councilor Locke agreed with the suggestion for Walsh to work with agencies. Councilor Locke envisions it being most effective in St. Helens, nearby to services.

Interim Public Works Director Nelson reminded everyone that the restrooms at Columbia View Park are coin-operated. The trailer will require a power supply, water supply, and sewer supply.

Council President Morten suggested the RV park at Scappoose Bay be investigated. Mayor Scholl was not comfortable talking about that without the Port of Columbia County present.

Consensus of Council for Walsh to work with CCMH and CAT to designate a place, time, and restriction of services to only community members.

3.B Request from School District for Waiver of Special Use Permit Fees and Banner Permit Requirement - Mayor Scholl

Mayor Scholl reported that he received a request from parents for a senior cruise, which lead to a discussion about a drive-through graduation around the Plaza Square. Students would receive their diploma on the courthouse steps and then drive away. An online ceremony would be held later that evening. He has reached out to the School District to help. This is about the kids.

Councilor Carlson pointed out that the School District has acknowledged the City's efforts to help. The relationship between the City and school is important. Council President Morten added that the City needs to do all they can to support the students.

City Planner Graichen asked for clarification on what is being waived for the banner. The Temporary Sign Permit for the banner does require insurance unless it is waived. He recommended requiring the permit but waiving the permit fee.

The Council was in concurrence to waive the fees but still require the forms be completed.

3.C Request from DHS in Support of Foster Families in Columbia County

Ana Hadar-Ziady from DHS was in attendance to review the request. A copy is included in the archive meeting packet. They are reaching out to the community for support of foster families. They want to celebrate foster parents and let them know they are appreciated. Meals will be delivered to every single foster home in the County.

Discussion ensued. There is \$3,842 remaining in the Council Discretionary Fund.

**Motion:** Morten moved, and Topaz seconded to donate \$100 from the Council Discretionary Fund.

Discussion. Councilor Locke suggested \$500.

**Vote:** Scholl, Morten, Locke, Carlson, and Topaz opposed. Motion failed.

**Motion:** Upon Locke's motion and Morten's second, the Council unanimously approved donating \$500 to DHS in support of foster families.

Ana thanked the Council. She encouraged the Council to submit videos that will go to the foster families.

3.D Consider Reappointing Margaret Jeffries to the Columbia Learning Center Board

Consensus of Council to reappoint Jeffries. It is on tonight's agenda for approval.

3.E Discussion regarding Chase Road Easement - Jacob

Graichen reviewed his memo and reported that this is on tonight's agenda for approval. This is for the property off Millard Road. The easement is a bridge between Chase Road and the Millard Road property. The utility easement is fixed but the access easement had a deadline. Thankfully, the grantor was willing to give us two more years.

Mayor Scholl pointed out that the easement was for an access road to get to the park, which was going to be named Dahlgren Park. He asked for the Council to keep that in mind if they name the park in the future since it was donated by Dahlgren.

3.F City Planner Report - Jacob

Graichen reviewed his March and April reports. Copies are included in the archive meeting packet.

3.G Review Letter from Best Western regarding Transient Room Fee - John

Walsh reviewed the letter from Best Western. A copy is included in the archive meeting packet. They are requesting to forego their portion of the hotel/motel tax to the City. They are really going through a hard time. The request is from January 2020 to the end of the pandemic. He recommends that the end date be tied to something, such as the governor's order.

Councilor Carlson asked if they are going to stop collecting the transient room tax or that they will continue collecting it but keep it.

Council President Morten asked if it would set a precedent for other businesses. He thinks they should wait to see if restaurants and businesses start opening.

Discussion ensued. It would not be legal for Best Western to collect the tax and retain it.

3.H Review MorePower Contract for IT Services - Matt

Brown introduced the consultants in attendance. A copy of the contract is included in the archive meeting packet. The contract will be on tonight's agenda for approval.

Councilor Topaz asked if the contract process was legally followed. Brown said yes. City Attorney Tim Ramis confirmed it was done legally and complied with all the procurement provisions.

Discussion ensued about services and upgrades needed.

3.I Review New Job Description for Accountant - Matt

Brown gave a brief background on the development of this position. A copy is included in the archive meeting packet.

Councilor Carlson pointed out that the job description does not list an advanced degree under desired qualifications. It seems like there needs to be more delineation. Brown agreed. He missed that when writing the description.

Discussion ensued about professional development and continuing education.

#### 4) **Department Reports**

Police Chief Greenway reported...

- Nothing to report.

Interim Public Works Director Nelson reported...

- Public Works crews have been cleaning up along the highway. They want to remove the overgrown trees/bushes that block the Chamber building and signage. Following discussion, Council concurred with removing the two overgrown trees/bushes.

Councilor Carlson asked if the crews have protection against bees? Nelson responded that she is not aware of any issues with bees.

- Reminded the Council that Gable Road is a County project. The City is just a partner. The contractor is ready to pave but some repairs need to be made first. They are on tract to be complete this month.

Library Director Jeffries reported...

- Work is continuing in the building. It is going to look great when it is done.
- Being a part of the Columbia Learning Center Board also means working with high school scholarship students and part of the Black Tie and Blue Jeans fundraiser.

Assistant City Administrator Brown reported...

- Shout out to Public Works staff. He mentioned the carpet in the courtroom being replaced and asked if they could paint in the next couple months. Roger Stauffer showed up the next day to prep for painting.
- The Urban Renewal Budget Committee recommended the Urban Renewal Agency (URA) approve the budget. The City's Budget Committee also recommended City Council approve the City budget. Two public hearings and an URA meeting need to be held. The public hearings do not typically last very long. He is proposing to hold a public hearing for the City's budget at 6 p.m., a public hearing for the URA budget at 6:15 p.m., and an URA meeting at 6:30 p.m. on June 3. Council concurred, as long as there are no conflicts.
- Explained the slight budget increase. The City has appropriated personnel expenses that have not been filled and will not be filled until changes with COVID-19 occur. The City's budget is proposed at \$43 million but it does not mean that will be spent. Unlike retail, most government revenue is fairly stable. Building permits are still going strong. Departments have been cutting expenses. He hears comments from citizens about the need to make cuts, which they did. Recreation staff has been laid off. He has not seen a lot of governments laying off full-time employees.

Council President Morten talked about budget questions in relation to community development funds and tourism funds. When Public Works helps set up for tourism events, does that money come from tourism or community development funds? Brown explained that there is a clear line between a tourism event and community event. The only tourism event we do on a regular basis

is Spirit of Halloweentown. Councilor Topaz said that it would be beneficial to show the tabulation of how events are funded.

City Recorder Payne reported...

- Nothing to report.

Event Coordinator Curry reported...

- Working on permits for the Masonic Building.
- Working on community activities to support local businesses.
- The Explore Local app is live. She will be helping merchants with posting.
- Helping with the high school graduation. The biggest obstacle is that the courthouse is open on Fridays. Mayor Scholl said he is working with Judge Grove on those details and it should not be a problem. He acknowledged that Tina is doing a great job. He appreciates everything she is doing.

City Administrator Walsh reported...

- He is getting questions about what the City is doing to support small businesses.
  - Provided 15,000 meals through the Senior Center.
  - Waiving utility bill late fees and not turning off water.
  - Working with CAT to administer the Utility Assistance Program.
  - Working with community partners to share information and assistance.
  - Supporting small businesses through tourism marketing.
- Discussion of the Chamber of Commerce. They have been continuing with virtual meetings and a strong volunteer base.
- Discussion of re-opening. They are following the state guidelines very closely to keep the community and staff safe. Opening will be a phased approach. City Hall staff have been working and have stayed very productive. He would rather be criticized for being overly cautious. Mayor Scholl would like to know more about test kits for our area. We declared a State of Emergency to slow the spread. You can get a flu shot and still die from the flu and that has a vaccine. He finds it weird that marijuana and alcohol stores are open and considered essential. There needs to be a middle ground for businesses that choose to open. Discussion ensued. Mayor Scholl would like to continue discussing this at the next work session.
- Working on the BUILD grant. It is a \$8 million request.
- He and Associate Planner Dimsho presented the Riverwalk Trail to the Oregon Parks and Recreation District Board. That one is a \$500,000 request. The presentation went really well. The project was ranked really high.

## 5) Council Reports

Councilor Locke reported...

- Asked if anyone at the City can spray weeds? With the Roundup situation, are we looking at something else to use? Nelson responded that anyone can spray with a backpack or hand sprayer. We do not have anyone with a license to use the motorized sprayer. They had three people who were in the process of getting the license but were unable to continue the training and test, due to COVID-19. They have been doing backpack spraying. As far as she knows, we are using Roundup. Councilor Locke said the parking lot at the mill site is growing a lot of weeds.
- He asked what the status is of cleaning the area for the light show. There are a lot of dead trees in there. There are also a lot of mosquitos. Nelson responded that she will contact Vector Control about the mosquitoes.

Councilor Carlson reported...

- Youth Council held a Zoom meeting this week. They would like to help with the planters in front of the courthouse again this year. They also want to help Planning Commission by taking pictures of historic structures. They look forward to doing anything that gets them out of the house. These would be projects done with their families.
- Do not forget to vote!
- This is Teacher Appreciation Week. It is a hard time for them too.
- Thanked Deputy City Recorder Scholl for taking pictures of Council members to include in the School District appreciation video.
- This is also Nurses and Healthcare Professionals Appreciation Week. We appreciate them. Sometimes you wear a cape and sometimes you wear a mask.
- She just found out there are many people who are making masks from their home and selling them at cost. One place is Hagz Bagz on Columbia Blvd.

Councilor Topaz reported...

- How much rent has been collected for the marijuana business at the mill property over the last three years? Has the survey been re-advertised in the DJC? How does it compare to the original? Walsh does not understand the reference between the DJC and re-advertising for the mill property. They have been working closely with the attorneys to complete the property transaction by May 15. It will include a full accounting of revenue, but he does not have that available right now. Councilor Topaz explained that the original advertisement needs to match the earlier one. We need to double-check that the two plots match. He is worried about the legal process to sell the property. Mayor Scholl reminded Topaz to come talk to him or Walsh when he has questions.
- He thinks the tourism director should be furloughed. There will not be any tourism for a while. We rented the Masonic Building for \$4,000 and it is being used as a warehouse. We need to get out of that rent. It will cost \$70,000 – 100,000 for a fire sprinkler system. Walsh responded that the tourism coordinator took a self-furlough for two months, but she is still working. As far as the Masonic Building improvements, we do not have any cost estimates. They would not invest the amount of money that Topaz suggests.
- An RFP will go out in July for a new tourism director.
- We applied for a grant and hopefully will get it. What was included in the grant and what was told to the public were completely different. In the Spotlight, it said that dumping fees were going to be used to fill in the lagoon. He would like to know all the words that were put into the grant. We have not been good at advertising it or giving it to the Council for approval. Walsh explained that the Council saw the grant last year before it was submitted. The tipping fees were listed as a potential revenue source.
- Asked for clarification on the proposed Gable Road apartments. Is that nonprofit and taxes will not be collected? Walsh explained that the development on Gable Road is being constructed by a non-profit. It does appear to be a non-assessable tax-exempt organization. It is a partnership with NOHA.

Council President Morten reported...

- There is 80-degree weather coming on Saturday! Wow! He has been getting out a lot and visiting all our parks and many of our trails. He has met a lot of people, safely.
- He has been very impressed with how clean Sand Island has been. It is beautiful.
- Held a practice Zoom meeting with the Parks & Trails Commission last week. It went well. There is a sense of urgency to re-do the master plan to be prepared for grants.
- Feels really good about where we are at with our parks.

Mayor Scholl reported...

- Need to keep moving projects forward. He would like to hold a meeting in June to review goals and projects. He does not want COVID-19 to be an excuse to not move the City forward.
- He is very encouraged about the grant on the waterfront.
- Reminded the Parks & Trails Commission to keep in mind the property on Millard Road for a park.
- Talked earlier about the COVID-19 response in area. We need to be pushy about getting testing for our area. The new Legacy clinic should be capable. We have 13,500 people in St. Helens, 50,000 in the County, and only 14 reported cases. He looks forward to talking about it at the next meeting. Some people want to pay their water bill in person and not get a money order and mail it. Brown reported that they are going to put the utility bill payment box back up to give people another chance. Mayor Scholl suggested opening for one day a week to allow time for cleaning. We can put up plexi-glass like stores.

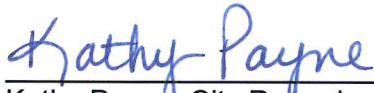
6) **Other Business**

7) **Adjourn** – 4:02 p.m.

#### **Executive Session**

Respectfully submitted by Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder.

ATTEST:



Kathy Payne, City Recorder



Rick Scholl, Mayor