

City of St. Helens

City Council

Special Session Minutes

April 8, 2020

This Special Session was held electronically via Zoom.

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

Staff Present: John Walsh, City Administrator
Matt Brown, Assistant City Administrator
Rachael Barry, Government Affairs & Project Support Specialist
Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder
Margaret Jeffries, Library Director
Jacob Graichen, City Planner
Jenny Dimsho, Associate Planner

Others: Dan Davis
Patrick Birkle
Lynne Pettit
AP

1) **4:03 P.M. - Call Special Meeting to Order**

3) **Roundtable - Managing the Temporary Reality**

Mayor Scholl reported...

- The last Council meeting went really well. It's just not the same as being in the Council Chambers.

Council President Morten reported...

- Applauded the staff for creating electronic meetings and staying safe in their offices.
- He checked in with Public Works and things seemed to be okay.
- People are walking in parks and keeping distant.

Councilor Topaz reported...

- The Food Bank has a need for volunteer drivers.
- You cannot donate food to the Food Bank right now.
- Some of his Chinese friends have not left their living spaces for four months.

Councilor Carlson reported...

- People are anxious about distance learning for students.

- The outreach in the community has been great. We will persevere.
- People are doing well with physical distancing.

Councilor Locke reported...

- It's going to get worse before it gets better.
- There's an advantage in being in a small town. He sees a lot more people out in Salem.

Walsh reported...

- People are recognizing the seriousness and following safety guidelines.

2) **Mission**

Reviewed the proposed amended vision and mission.

Vision

To provide quality, effective and efficient service to our citizens.

Mission

- Develop and preserve the highest possible quality of life for our residents, businesses, and visitors.
- Provide a safe and healthy environment within a sound economic framework.
- Provide a leadership which is open and responsive to the needs of the community and works for the benefit of all.

Council President Morten likes how the mission was separated. He would like to identify the City's core values as they work together.

4) **Review Process - Review 2/26 & 3/11 Meetings**

Barry talked about improvements that can be made in order to run more efficient Council meetings.

She reviewed past Council minutes and chose a point from each Councilor about accomplishments and dreams for the future:

- Quality of life – parks, community events, building momentum
- Developing a city government that is sustainable and trustworthy
- Inclusion for ALL residents, consistency in service
- Connections to the river and improving collaboration
- Moving forward all together

4.A SWOT Analysis Discussion

Reviewed the SWOT results with top priorities from Council, staff, and the regional meeting.

Strengths

City Council

- Sense of community
- Government agency support

City Staff

- City-owned property

- Fiscal responsibility

Weaknesses

City Council

- Property Development
- Permit Process

City Staff

- Council roles
- Tax base

Opportunities

City Council

- Teamwork (all levels)
- Leadership capacity, hire experts for projects

City Staff

- Waterfront development, central waterfront
- Efficiencies – Council/Departments

Threats

City Council

- Misinformation
- Politics recession

City Staff

- Misinformation
- Organizational structure trust

Discussion ensued about the City staff's priority under weaknesses listing Council roles. Brown explained that there is confusion about liaison roles. It's about the organizational structure. Council President Morten said the governing policy has been changed adding to confusion.

Councilor Topaz talked about councilors overlapping the departments they oversee. That has led to confusion. Mayor Scholl agreed. He wants everything to be relayed to Walsh and then he relays to staff. Councilor Topaz wants to be sure it is handled in a timely manner. Scholl responded that it could be brought up during Council reports as well. Walsh agreed that there are efficiencies to work out. Barry added that there is a lot of room for improvement and they'll review that.

Reviewed the steps to success:

- Vision. Your vision should provide the platform. What you aspire to.
- Mission. What is the overall purpose of the organization?
- Goal. What goals should the organization have to reach the vision? What is a desired result?
- Objective. What specific, measurable action must be taken to achieve the overall goal?
- Tactic. What tactics should staff use to accomplish an objective?
- Projects. What specific projects should be done to reach every tactic/goal.

Reviewed the five main Goals:

- Goal 1 – Effective Organizational Structure

- Goal 2 – Community Enhancement
- Goal 3 – Safe and Livable Environment
- Goal 4 – Economic Development
- Goal 5 – Long-Term Planning

4.B Work Plan Draft Review

Reviewed the draft work plan based on the vision, mission, and goals listed with low, medium, and high priorities. Copies are included in the archive meeting packet. Council can direct staff to move projects up or down in priority level as needed.

Mayor Scholl would like to take more time to review the list and prioritize them as Council sees.

Councilor Topaz asked how staff will relay the details of projects to Council. Mayor Scholl sees it as Council discussing it in a meeting. Council President Morten added that staff should be reporting to Council. Communication is key. Councilor Topaz said the reports are following the project being done. He wants to ask questions and get responses ahead of time. Council President Morten understands but doesn't want to micromanage. Councilor Carlson pointed out that it's a team effort. Just because the councilor name is not listed, doesn't mean they're not involved in the project. Walsh clarified that these are intended as the Council's project goals for staff. Councilor Carlson suggested councilors mark up the document and return it to staff. Discussion ensued.

5) Break – 4:55 p.m.

6) Governing Policy Discussion

Walsh reported that the governing policy and Council rules were updated last year. The main focus was for the City Administrator to take on more roles, which happened. Taking on supervision has worked well. He talked about the roles and authority that the Council still retains.

Councilor Topaz wants to be informed when something happens. Walsh responded that the Council liaison is included in the decision-making process. Councilor Topaz wants to know about communications as well. Council President Morten said that is the responsibility of the Councilor to ascertain what is happening in the department. It's important to communicate with Walsh and the department head, and then report back at a Council meeting. Discussion ensued about the confusion among staff of whether they report to the City Administrator or the council liaison. Communication is key. Council needs to reach out to department heads or supervisors. Mayor Scholl understands but wants to be informed so he can communicate with the public when he's in the community. The City Administrator works for each individual councilor.

Brown suggested staff create a document outlining liaison responsibilities. Discussion ensued about Council and City Administrator roles and responsibilities. Walsh communicates to the Council so they can make decisions. Barry will work with staff on a document.

7) Council Team Agreement

Reviewed the draft agreement included in the packet. Barry encouraged the Council to adopt it at a future Council meeting. It will greatly help incoming Councilors.

8) **Wrap Up and Key Message Takeaways**

Reviewed the message from George Dunkel. A copy is included in the archive meeting packet, titled, "Read before each Council meeting..." It's important to remember it before going into each meeting.

Takeaways from the process:

Council President Morten

- Anything that helps with communication is a plus.
- Understand each other and work together.

Mayor Scholl

- The City on rock is ready to rock and roll.

Councilor Locke

- A lot of headway has been made over the last six months.

Councilor Carlson

- Positive about the team commitment. This is just the beginning and there is still a lot of work ahead.
- Communication is key.

Councilor Topaz

- It's the beginning of the process.

Mayor Scholl encouraged Councilor Topaz to call him if he has questions or needs clarification. Government is a whole different process than a business.

Barry talked about the next steps. The list of projects is a living document.

Other Business

We're still an operating City.

Day to day operations update:

- Due to vandalism, the lock box in front of Utility Billing has been closed. Public Works will remove the box. Payments can be made online, through the mail, or over the phone. Staff is working in the office and will help customers over the phone.
- Keeping up with the flow of information is challenging. Regulations are constantly changing.
- City Hall is closed but is still conducting business safely.
- Tourism is shifting to supporting local businesses.
- CDC has asked the reference of social distancing to be changed to physical distancing. Social interaction is still important.
- Staff is very dedicated. Police are on the front lines and Public Works is continuing operations.

Mayor Scholl wants staff to investigate grants to help our small businesses. Discussion of supporting businesses.

Council update:

Councilor Carlson reported...

- She is good. Grass is cut and she has toilet paper.

Councilor Topaz reported...

- He is good.
- Communicating with people all over the world. People are realizing how important medical staff are.

Council President Morten reported...

- Lost his job this season. It's a loss to him.
- He is still very fortunate to be part of this Council. He has a passion for it. He's excited about getting things done on the Waterfront.
- Suggested the Council job description be titled, "Council Expectations."

Mayor Scholl reported...

- Family communication is important. There's a fear of the unknown. Life is still happening.
- Maintain physical distancing but still be social.
- Oregon is going to be okay.

9) **Adjourn – 6:07 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted by Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder.

ATTEST:


Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder


Rick Scholl, Mayor