

City of St. Helens

City Council

Special Session Minutes

February 26, 2020

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

Members Absent: None

Staff Present: John Walsh, City Administrator
Matt Brown, Assistant City Administrator
Rachael Barry, Government Affairs and Special Projects Coordinator
Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder

Others: Mary Hubbard

1) **Call Special Meeting to Order - 4:00 p.m.**

Government Affairs and Special Projects Coordinator Barry presented a PowerPoint presentation. A copy is included in the archive meeting packet.

City Administrator Walsh reviewed the SWOT results from the South County Leadership Collaborative.

Consensus of Council that the meeting was very beneficial, and they need to continue to meet on a regular basis. Discussion of when to meet next focused anywhere from three to six months. Staff leadership will work on a date to meet.

2) **Why We Serve**

Mayor Scholl

- He loves the community and serving.
- He applied because we didn't have an active mayor.
- The mills sponsored kid activities and supplemented the cost of sewer. We need to bring back industry.
- He wants a safe community where all are welcome.
- People want to help and serve but not be recognized for it.
- Community kindness and integrity.
- He's been misperceived by the Council but he's only in this for the community.
- Sense of urgency.

Councilor Locke

- Talked about the river view being amazing.
- Talked about volunteers they have lost through change.

- He would like to see the Ford Leadership Program active again to make those connections and work together as a community.
- He likes to serve. He needed to find a way to serve when he was battling cancer.

Council President Morten

- Talked about how much more you can get done in a small community. The City is just the right size for solving community problems. The people are ready to roll up their sleeves and volunteer with pride.
- Serving is key. He grew up as a team player and has carried that into college, military, coaching, teaching, improving his neighborhood, and now City leadership. He loves serving.

Councilor Carlson

- Talked about the help she received from the community during her battle with cancer.
- We're a team and we work together as a community in this group.
- Inclusion comes when you get involved. Open up to the community and be yourself.

Councilor Topaz

- Thinks we work our volunteers to death. The number of volunteers is low. We have a lot of opportunity but have given up.
- People don't remember the good of the community. There is opportunity.
- We think poor.
- There's a problem of not working together. You need to work with your neighbor.

What Council Least Enjoys About Serving

Mayor Scholl

- The slow process of government. He doesn't like it when he can't tell people what's happening in the community.
- Doesn't feel like Council is always heard by staff and acted upon. Council said to do one thing and then staff spent two years working on what they didn't want.

Councilor Locke

- Least likes how long it takes to get things done.

Council President Morten

- The breakdown and ineffectiveness of not getting things done. There has been a lot of emotional tension with disagreement.

Councilor Carlson

- Her vacation time is used serving. She wants to feel like it matters. She leaves meetings and doesn't know if it's worth it. The stress has been overwhelming. There are good people with good hearts doing the best they can.

Councilor Topaz

- Finds it upsetting about not getting information from staff.
- The tension here is not a big deal. Sometimes you win and sometimes you lose, but you keep going. If you can't pick up and get going, this is not the place to be. We need to work as a team. Sometimes both are right but there is more than one way of doing it.

6) **Working Dinner 5:00 - 5:50 p.m.**

3) **Mission**

To provide quality, effective and efficient service to our citizens. By doing so we will:

- 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 leadership which is open and responsive to the needs of the community and works for the benefit of all

Discussion of mission. The first sentence is a mission. The bullets are more like goals. Consider changing citizens to community.

4) **Who Do We Serve?**

Barry presented the population and census numbers. Discussion ensued about:

- People employed by the high-tech industry are moving here with high paying jobs and pricing out the home market for lower income families.
- Would like to see businesses be able to hire more employees.
- Attracting medical facilities here.
- High number of veterans in our community. Need more veteran services and funding.
- Diversity among abilities in St. Helens.
- Most of the tax on transportation is going to metro transportation and not staying here for CCRider. The tax stays with the place of the employer and not the employee.

Break 5:30

5) **Individual Mission**

Accomplishments – Past & Future

Councilor Locke

- Started Grey Cliffs Park
- Kept 13 Nights on the River going
- Maintained Sand Island for years
- Wants to make sure the projects we've worked on move forward.

Council President Morten

- Wants to make sure projects are sustainable.
- Wants to instill a trust in City government for our citizens.

Councilor Carlson

- Wants to bring more people to the table so people aren't left out of the process.
- Wants the City to be more inclusive.
- Everyone should get the same service and play by the same rules.

Councilor Topaz

- Started it with SHEDCO and Maritime. They both lasted about five years and then died.
- The City doesn't work well with people who accomplish things.
- Would like to establish the Waterfront from Grey Cliffs Park to Scappoose Bay Kayaking. Waterfront means entertainment, fishing, education, etc.

Mayor Scholl

- Wants to bring a cohesive group together to help the City move forward. Individual projects are self-serving. Need to let in new blood and new ideas. He feels very small in the middle of a large government entity. Our citizens would love to have more input. We take offense to it because it might affect our department or our own mission. He's not self-serving. It's "we." He is only one of four votes.
- Citizens Day in the Park came together as a team.
- Friday Night Cruise-ins came together with help from Highway 30 Cruisers.
- We're not just about parks. We have a lot of parks that we can't fund.
- These are business meetings. To move the City forward, we must move things along.

7) Leadership and Governance

Areas for improvement for the Council collectively:

Councilor Carlson

- Have been talking about fireside chats for years and none have been planned. Communication needs to continue with the public. She doesn't want to continue to pester staff about getting things done. It should get done when they ask.

Council President Morten

- Communication has improved with the public. When he first started, it was only through the newspaper. Now we have a newsletter and active social media. Staff is trusted to communicate in writing for the Council, which he thinks they do effectively. Council's job is to be out in the community talking to people. Need to continue to encourage staff to reach out to the community.

Mayor Scholl

- We need to add staff if we can't get things done. The Building Official is overworked. Builders are willing to pay more to get their permits sooner. We used to have three building inspectors and now only have one. Building brings jobs and builders don't want to come here.

Discussion ensued about adding staff versus reviewing internal processes. Community Development processes are being looked at for efficiency improvements. Barry reminded Council that they can set this as a priority.

8) Differences in Strategic Planning v. Goals

Barry defined the differences in organizational goals and strategic planning. The City is constantly moving and needs to be ready to change. Discussion ensued about a strategic plan. Need to keep the community engaged and updated.

10) 2020-21 Council Goals and Objectives

10.A 19-20 Goal Review

Review of Goals in the PowerPoint presentation. Discussion of honoring the history and uniqueness of St. Helens. Need to capture the culture.

Goal 1

- Completed bullet points one and two
- Add the need for more communication from staff to Council

Goal 2

Discussion/ideas:

- A strong partnership has been cultivated with the school district. Communicating these partnerships with the community is important.
- Instill trust in citizens.
- Building relationships and creating an action plan.
- A lot of cultural improvements have been made in the last six to eight years.
- Communications and tourism have greatly improved.

Goal 3

Councilor Carlson

- Should include code enforcement, safe routes to school, and after-school programs.

Mayor Scholl

- Suggested adding a bullet for enhancing the natural landscaping and green space.

Council President Morten

- Need a goal for preserving our historic documentation, improving our cultural integrity, and implementing arts. The bronze statues are amazing, but they need to be in a better location. Staff needs to take more control. Councilor Topaz argued that staff should have less control.

Discussion of a Waterfront trail.

Goal 4

Discussion/ideas:

- Prioritize properties that have the most potential.
- Work with the Port of Columbia County.
- Hire a headhunter.
- Feasibility study for the local broadband service. St. Helens would be a good market. Discussion of what would be available. We don't qualify for financial assistance because we're not rural enough and we have good service.
- Investigate a fee increase to afford a building inspector.
- Campaign for industrial and residential development to attract people to live, work, and play here.
- Review Community Development processes. Council identified the problems, staff met and discussed changes, and will bring back recommended changes to Council. Emphasis to communicate changes well with the public.
- Combine bullets four and five.
- Need a coherent strategy for the riverfront.

Goal 5

Discussion/ideas:

- Need someone to lead the vision.
- Communicate with the high school about supporting programs.

12) **Next Steps**

Barry thanked the Council for their input and getting through the tough part. Direction needs to come from Council for staff to function appropriately. Mayor Scholl wants to be able to contact one staff person to find out the status of the project.

Barry recommends staff clean up the document, bring it back to Council with a SWOT exercise, prioritize, and then direct staff. Brown added that projects need to be prioritized to direct staff.

Mayor Scholl wants to move forward on the Waterfront Development project and supplement it with timber money for five years. Urban Renewal will pay back that investment.

13) **Council Team Agreement**

Council sets the tone for the culture in the City. Barry reviewed example team agreements. They cannot move forward if they're not unified.

Mayor Scholl has been re-energized knowing he's doing things for the right reasons.

14) **Adjourn – 7:47 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted by Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder.

ATTEST:



Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder



Rick Scholl, Mayor