

City of St. Helens City Council

Work Session Minutes

November 20, 2019

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, Finance Director
Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder
Sue Nelson, Interim Public Works Director
Joe Hogue, Police Lieutenant
Jacob Graichen, City Planner
Tina Curry, Event Coordinator

Others: Terri Clark Marcy Klug
Herb Bailey Christine Menges
Mark Kirchmeier

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

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

- ◆ Herb Bailey, Hudson Garbage. He is requesting a donation to help purchase bikes again from Walmart for the Bike Build. The Council donated \$500 last year.

Council concurred with donating \$500 again this year.

- ◆ Terri Clark, 314 S. 14th Street. Flooding is still occurring on her property. She purchased flood insurance this year. It scares her every time it rains. She invited Council to come look at her property.

Mayor Scholl will have Public Works look at it again.

Council President Morten asked Terri if the neighbors have the same problem. Terri said that one has flooding in their basement and one has some problems. She is concerned about the building in town making it worse for her. Nothing helps make it better for her.

Interim Public Works Director Nelson asked when it flooded last. Terri responded that it was this time last year. Mayor Scholl said he will send volunteers to her house next time this happens.

3) Discussion Topics

3.A Discuss Exclusive Towing Contract - John

City Administrator Walsh talked about the potential of an ongoing lawsuit regarding the towing contract. He distributed and read the Motion to Approve Settlement. A copy is included in the archive meeting packet.

Motion: Upon Topaz's motion and Morten's second, the Council unanimously approved the Motion to Approve Settlement as read by City Administrator Walsh. [AYES: Carlson, Topaz, Locke, Morten, Scholl; Nays: None]

3.B Discuss Right-of-Way Dedication - Jacob

City Planner Graichen reviewed the drawing. A copy is included in the archive meeting packet. It gets rid of the small strip. This is on tonight's agenda for approval.

3.C Discuss Amendment to Wetland Solutions Northwest, LLC Agreement - Jacob

City Planner Graichen reviewed the need for the amendment. A copy is included in the archive meeting packet. The process has taken longer than they expected, which has resulted in increased costs. This is included on tonight's agenda for approval.

3.D Utilities Discussion - Matt

Finance Director Brown reviewed the PowerPoint presentation. A copy is included in the archive meeting packet. He pointed out the decreasing sewer and storm funds. He reviewed options:

1. Combine the sewer and storm funds
2. Adjust cost allocation model
3. Master Plan updates
4. Continue through next year
5. Deferring Capital projects

Brown explained that not doing anything this year, means they have to do more next year.

Councilor Carlson suggested using the index rate. Brown said that would not help the bottom line. St. Helens is built on industrial businesses and they don't have them anymore.

Mayor Scholl emphasized the need to work with the County to bring in industrial businesses. They have a great Wastewater Treatment Plant that is now way too big.

Council President Morten talked about the huge bill that big businesses have left us with. Smaller business tracks could help make up for it. He agreed with working with the County. He favors option three.

Brown said one idea is a sewer rate that costs \$3/cf. He would come back each year with an index increase. That \$3 could be broken out to determine the operations costs. You could take that \$3 and set it aside to use for projects and then add an additional utility fee, such as \$1.50, for a particular project. Council would approve annually which project it would fund and what the fee needs to be. It appears to be more transparent.

Council President Morten said there will be push-back about raising fees and claims that it will never go away. Brown understands. The fee would go away when the project is complete.

Councilor Carlson asked if other cities are doing this. Brown said he hasn't seen other cities doing it.

Councilor Topaz asked if he looked at other states. Brown said no. Councilor Topaz said it is being done in other states. If they do nothing and a company takes over the Armstrong building, how long will it be before the City is impacted? Brown said it could be the next month if they begin operations immediately.

Mayor Scholl asked if Council would consider a private headhunter to recruit businesses. They would be paid based on what they bring to St. Helens. Councilor Topaz said that almost every state does that except for Oregon. Council President Morten talked about Columbia County Economic Team (CCET) that is tasked with doing that. Mayor Scholl is thinking above and beyond that, including the Waterfront property. CCET is supposed to be doing that. They pay a fee annually for those services.

Brown will do more research and bring back a model to the Council for review.

Discussion ensued. Council President Morten suggested the storm rate be based on the size of the property. Scholl disagreed. He wants to see more businesses to help pay for it.

Nelson added that they are waiting to release the Master Plan updates until the beginning of the year because laws are changing.

Council President Morten pointed out that water and sewer rates are based on how much water we use. He emphasized the need to base storm on square footage. Nelson agreed that they do that on all non-residential properties. They looked at all the factors for residential and averaged it for everyone.

4) **Department Reports**

Lieutenant Hogue reported...

- Donut Day is December 14 and will be held at the Recreation Center.
- New vehicles are doing great.
- They will plan a Cocoa with a Cop when their staffing levels are back to normal.

Interim Public Works Director Nelson reported...

- Columbia River PUD will start putting up Christmas decorations on the poles on November 25.
- The Christmas tree is scheduled to arrive December 2.
- Fences have been taken down on the Waterfront property.

Finance Director Brown reported...

- Held the first Parks & Recreation Steering Committee meeting. It is open to the public.
- Basketball signups are over. Over 350 kids signed up. They far exceeded signups in the past. Practice starts in January.
- Received the budget award for 2019. A press release will go out soon.
- Utility Billing offices are torn out and being re-done. They are going to raise the ceiling. It will look nice when it's done. It's expected to be completed in late December or January.

Deputy City Recorder Scholl reported...

- Nothing to report.

Event Coordinator Curry reported...

- Christmas celebration December 14.
- A group of people are going to be testing the lights that go on the poles and in the Plaza to make sure they work. She has heard comments that the lights are not bright enough. She is hoping to improve that. Some of the transformers on the poles have burned out. Does the Council want lights on those poles? Nelson said she will contact Columbia River PUD to repair them. After discussion, it was decided not to hang the lights on dark poles this year.
- She suggested replacing the Spirit of Halloweentown banners with winter banners around the Plaza. Council concurred.
- They have been renting the upstairs of the Masonic building. ShoeString is moving out of the downstairs. She would like to take over the downstairs for tourism activities. It would be paid for through tourism funds. Councilor Carlson emphasized the need to work with the Building Official about what it would take to move in, and also talk to the building owner about getting a better rate for the whole building. Mayor Scholl agreed with finding out the cost first. Walsh pointed out the revenue the building would generate as well.
- Going to survey homeowners between here and Seventh Street to find out how their parking was impacted by Spirit of Halloweentown. Council President Morten suggested going all the way to West Street.
- Working with a global company to potentially bring a family experience to town in July, August, and September of 2020. It could bring 60,000-80,000 people over the three months. She will report more later. Mayor Scholl wants more information before it is finalized.
- Working with Brenna, who recently moved to town, on new projects to make the merchant community stronger. Brenna came from Humboldt County where she was doing economic development, chamber, and tourism activities.
- Have distributed contracts for 13 Nights on the River and Spirit of Halloweentown. They are already receiving returned signed contracts.
- She asked for an update on the stage. It needs to be a spring project to be complete before 13 Nights on the River begins. Walsh reported that staff has been directed to work on a design.
- Will distribute 'Fast Facts' flyers to businesses. It will include contact and event information.

City Administrator Walsh reported...

- Welcomed Mark Kirchmeier from the Spotlight.
- Both newspapers have reported that the BUILD grant was unsuccessful. The funding was cut in half. Many of the projects don't succeed. It is disappointing but they will review for changes and try again.
- They are continuing to make improvements on the Waterfront property as they're able.
- The City is responsible for managing a stormwater system. It's better to think about it as a system and not your own property. Mayor Scholl asked if a fuel tax could be used to fund storm. Brown doesn't think St. Helens would get nearly as much as Scappoose because we don't have Fred Meyer. Discussion ensued.
- There's a written report in the Council mailboxes about Sand Island.

5) Council Reports

Councilor Topaz reported...

- He attended the COG meeting last Wednesday in Portland. The report was about a piece of property on the Columbia Slough, inside Hayden Island. A group of chemical plants contaminated some of the area. They reported on the cleanup process, which involved about 30-40 agencies. It showed how many agencies can get in the way of stopping things. The worst part was that the piece of ground covered was unusable. Be careful when you remediate property. As you drive down Highway 30 near Linton there's an old mill that's surrounded by fencing. You cannot go on that property. It was not particularly contaminated but that property cannot be used for anything now. It's important to get everyone involved in the same room at the same time.

Mayor Scholl asked Councilor Topaz to bring back a written report of why you can't use that property. It could be still in probate because it was owned by the mill workers. He wants to see documentation showing that you can never walk on that property. Councilor Topaz said there was no discussion about the ownership of the property.

Councilor Topaz talked about property next to it, which was the old PGE, also has red legged frogs. A good portion of that property can never be used by anyone but wildlife people. They're re-doing the transformer on the other half of the property for the substation. Topaz added that there's another piece of property on Sauvie Island that can't be used as well. He will try to bring back the documentation of limitations.

Walsh searched the Linton Mill project online. It's an environmental bank.

Councilor Locke reported...

- The towing contract was reviewed earlier. He has heard rumors that he didn't care what happened. That was taken out of context. It's not that he doesn't care about St. Helens, because he does. He owns property here, votes here, and lives here half the time.
- Attended a tourism meeting last week. They are starting to wind down their grants and help. CCET is going to continue leading the project. Locke suggested they reach out to each community to get representatives to join a board and share in a governance. They need to make everyone feel part of it. The problem right now is funding. They discussed a County-wide hotel tax.
- OLCC has assigned an investigator for the ACSP processor permit. They were given 45 days to complete the buildings or their permit would go back to the end of the line and they would start over. Locke has been there trying to help them. Boise tore the water out, electricity out, and fire water out. They have to have their occupancy by December 5 or they will lose the permit again.

Councilor Carlson reported...

- The Columbia County Museum Association is rotating historic photos in our building. She would like to thank them for their service with a card.
- Working with Youth Council and Councilor Locke for the Christmas Ships dinner. Mayor Scholl thanked them for doing that.
- Youth Council discussed having an "If I Were Mayor..." contest event, possibly at the Library. Rachael Barry could give a presentation about government. They can help them with their submittals.

- Asbury Acres is a County park. There are doggy bags but no garbage receptacle to put them. The County needs to be contacted but she wanted to make sure we don't do the same thing at our parks.
- Cakehouse is representing Columbia County at a State Conference. She'll move on to Nationals if she wins. She's gone from a home-based business and now operates in the Chamber building.
- Shoutout to the Library as they are holding it together while Library Director Jeffries is gone. She misses hearing reports from the Library and Arts & Cultural Commission. Councilor Topaz reported they continue to work well while she is out.
- The Library has been doing cultural passes for several years. She was able to visit the Evergreen Aviation Museum yesterday by using them.

Council President Morten reported...

- Made a point at last night's training that you need to report to Council with updates on departments, boards, and commissions you oversee.
- Parks & Trails Commission did not meet this month.
- Parks & Trails Commission would like Brad Hendrickson to report to them about Sand Island at their meeting.
- Nob Hill Nature Park hosted a clean-up day. It was very successful.
- Thanked George Dunkel for leading the Council training session. It was about good governance, responsibilities, and teamwork. One idea for more transparency and citizen involvement is to reduce visitor comment time at the beginning of the meeting and then allow them to comment at the end, based on what was discussed.

Mayor Scholl reported...

- Agreed that it was a good Council training last night. He would prefer to keep visitor comments at the beginning but can add a section for final comments at the end.
- Council will be more professional and implement the training learned. They will try to be more clear and direct to staff. We have a great staff.
- Have a Happy Holidays!

6) **Other Business**

7) **Adjourn – 3:07 p.m.**

Executive Session

Respectfully submitted by Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder.

ATTEST:


 Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder


 Rick Scholl, Mayor