

# City of St. Helens City Council

Work Session Minutes

August 7, 2019

---

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

**Members Absent:** None

**Staff Present:** Kathy Payne, City Recorder  
Matt Brown, Finance Director  
Margaret Jeffries, Library Director  
Sue Nelson, Public Works Interim Director  
Jenny Dimsho, Associate Planner  
Tina Curry, Event Coordinator

**Others:**

Bud Hickey	Patrick Birkle	Dave Innocenti
Shauna Harrison	Bethany Hoffee	M. Anderson
Chrissy Marquardt	Christine Menges	Agnes Petersen
Margaret Trenchard-Smith	Nicole Thill	

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

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

- ◆ Patrick Birkle. Today's agenda includes discussion about the proposed fee for the Recreation Program. He recommends the \$2 fee rather than a \$3 fee. The School District requested financial assistance to install an artificial turf at the middle school. They were able to save \$2 million from the middle school that can be used at the high school. The high school will have a levy on the November ballot. He believes it would be an inappropriate use of a recreation fee to be used toward the middle school turf field.

Mayor Scholl reported that City Administrator Walsh and Finance Director Brown were tasked with working with the School District on the request. The City does not have money to fund it.

- ◆ Chrissy Marquardt, new Executive Director for the Chamber of Commerce. She plans to be at the Chamber Monday-Friday, 9 a.m. – 3 or 4 p.m., depending on meetings. She welcomed the Council to come visit.

3) **Discussion Topics**

3.A Employee Length of Service Award

One employee has reached a milestone in her employment with the City of St. Helens. The following individual will receive a certificate and pin.

## 10 Years

---

**Margaret Jeffries** came to work for the City in July of 2009 as a Part-time Library Technician. The following July, she was hired as a Full-time Librarian I and 21 days later was promoted to head the Library as the City's Library Director where she has served ever since. Margaret is credited with hiring exceptional staff who together have created some amazing programs at the Library that have engaged children and adults of all ages.

**Congratulations, Margaret, and thank you** for your service!

3.B Discussion Regarding Bing's Outstanding Debt Owed to City - Bud Hickey  
Bud Hickey has been in the City for 80 years. He was drafted in the service, got out, and was recalled back. He is as local as you can get. Quite a few years ago he loaned money to the man who owned Bing's Restaurant. The loan was not paid back and they went into foreclosure, which has been ongoing for eight years. The problem with the sewer is now his problem. Bud asked Paul Joe if he owed any money for the sewer and he was told no. Bud went to the title company and ran the liens. All the liens were taken care of and he allotted the money. Then 14 months later, the City put a lien on the property for the sewer. How did it slip through the cracks? He loaned the money based on no liens. He is requesting leniency on the debt that is owed to the City.

Council President Morten asked Public Works Interim Director Nelson to speak about the Local Improvement District (LID) and specific sewer problems. Nelson reported that the former owner of Bing's was a proponent for the LID because they were having septic issues. They were under a DEQ order to resolve the issues or face closure. They provided an easement across the back part of their property. The sewer was constructed, they connected to it, and resolved their issues. The property owners knew how much they would be assessed beforehand. She cannot speak to the process or timing. It was done approximately in 2009.

Bud added that the property was not liened by the City until October 13, 2011. It sat there for two years without any type of lien put on there. He became involved in it about a year after the sewer was installed. He's not saying he wants it totally wiped out. He's asking the City to put themselves in his position. He is at the mercy of the City Council.

Councilor Carlson asked Brown if there is a precedence for similar situations. Finance Director Brown responded that the Council has forgiven SDC's and Development fees for Habitat for Humanity and CAT projects. It has not been done for projects like this. It's up to the Council if they want to reduce the fees. Councilor Carlson remembers discussions with Paul Joe where he promised to make payments but then never did. Brown pointed that there are about five or six LID properties that will be due in December. Three of those properties agreed to not make any payments and then make one balloon payment in December 2019. Whatever decision the Council makes on this property could affect the other properties. Mayor Scholl pointed out the difference that the owner is probably the same on the other properties.

Brown added that this has been ongoing since he began working for the City. There are two parts to this payment system: 1) the LID portion; 2) the SDC portion. The City is owed \$161,000; of which \$92,000 is LID and \$69,000 is SDC's. The City has spent a fair amount of money on attorney fees to get to this point. You cannot just waive SDC fees. The funds have to come from somewhere. He reminded the Council that there were funds in water, sewer, and storm accounts that was additional revenue this budget season. One option is to pay part of the SDC portion from those accounts. The LID portion is an additional discussion.

Council President Morten asked how they would handle the fairness issue when others need to pay their LID. Brown explained one idea is to forgive the SDC portion by transferring funds to cover what is owed. His records do not indicate that the other properties owe SDC fees.

Councilor Locke asked Bud what the status is of the restaurant. Bud responded that he is working with the City, McNulty Water, and a plumber to find out if there are any water leaks. Bud is here to get things cleaned up. His desire is to make this a respectable business.

Council President Morten asked Bud if he would be open to petitioning the City to use City water. Bud said he would love to have the City water coming in and City sewer going out. Discussion ensued. This topic was tabled in order to get legal advice from counsel during executive session. Bud thanked the Council.

### 3.C Request from Shoestring Community Players' - Margaret Trenchard-Smith

Margaret Trenchard-Smith was in attendance to give her presentation. A copy of her statement and PowerPoint presentation is included in the archive meeting packet. The Shoestring Community Players has been in operation for almost 40 years. They recently moved the theater to a downtown location. There is a possibility the Shoestring Community Players could go under. Operation costs have increased and they are requesting a \$5,000 grant. Their involvement in Spirit of Halloweentown has been a key to its success.

Council President Morten asked what the \$5,000 would be spent on and the timelines. Margaret requested that they be allowed follow-up with the financials since the treasurer is not here. Mayor Scholl has spoken with the Vaerewyck's and Paul from St. Helens Computer Center. Their financial status is not great right now. They moved to a location where they're not used to paying high rent but they don't want to lose it. He suggested they request \$5,000 in hopes of getting something. The Shoestring Community Players does a lot for the community.

Margaret talked about the cost to operate. Council President Morten emphasized the need to be accountable to citizens for the money that is granted to organizations. Margaret responded that she can work with the treasurer to prepare a document for review at the next Council meeting.

Councilor Topaz pointed out that the Shoestring Community Players brings visitors into town. Can that be under the umbrella of tourism? Mayor Scholl responded that tourism brings people from 30-50 miles away. Councilor Carlson said that would be a good question for City Administrator Walsh. She agreed with Council President Morten's request for a financial statement.

### 3.D Planning Division Report - Jenny

Associate Planner Jenny Dimsho reviewed the June and July reports. Copies are included in the archive meeting packet.

Discussion of the Wayfinding signage lighting not being consistent. Public Works Interim Director Nelson requested people send her an email when the lights are not working after dark.

### 3.E Discussion Regarding Millard Road Property

Mayor Scholl requested that this be added to the agenda when he learned that most of the property could potentially be a park. That is not what the Council discussed. He would like to develop that and push water up and down. Someone offered the City \$2.7 million to purchase

the property. That money could have helped with developing the Waterfront property or Ross Road property.

Associate Planner Dimsho explained that the City has a contract with McKenzie. They met to discuss what they would like to see in a park on the Millard Road site. Nothing has been finalized. The park boundary was not determined. Part of the master planning of the park was to determine how much room would be needed based on park needs.

Council President Morten would like to see a regular report for the property. Discussion ensued. Dimsho pointed out that the wetlands are very difficult to develop around. They make the property very narrow. The landscape architects recommend that it not be single family development. Developing a street network and homes would be very difficult since the wetlands are not likely mitigatable since they are already mitigation banks. Discussion continued about the property's potential and the need to act quickly on at least a portion of development to meet the easement's deadline. Dimsho will keep the Council updated.

### 3.F Discussion Regarding Recreation & Parks Fee

Finance Director Brown reported that tonight's agenda includes a resolution for the Recreation and Parks Community fee that the Council has been discussing. He is checking with the Council to make sure they are ready to vote. However they decide to vote, he hopes it will be done tonight so he knows how to move forward. The language includes a fee of \$3 that sunsets in two years. The Council was in consensus to change the resolution to \$2.

## 4) Department Reports

Public Works Interim Director Nelson reported...

- The consultant for the N. Vernonia Road sidewalk project has been working on the design and has come up with a couple of issues that need Council input. Looking at sidewalks on both sides of the roads, from the new subdivisions to the corner of MacArthur Street, the major cross section for a collector street has the street for bicycle lanes, a landscape strip, and the sidewalk separated from the roadway. If they move forward with that configuration, they would lose approximately 54 mature trees. The Development Code allows for changes to the cross section when it makes sense. She asked if the Council would allow her to swap the landscape strip with the sidewalk to save a majority of those trees. The survey shows gas lines, water lines, storm, and sanitary sewer all in the ground where the landscape strip would be located. The Council was in consensus to swap the landscape strip with the sidewalk. Nelson pointed out that there will be some cost involved to change the scope of work. However, the cost will be offset by not having to remove all the trees.
- Kittleson & Associates presented a study on the S. 1<sup>st</sup> Street and St. Helens Street intersection. Mayor Scholl and Council President Morten both were gone during that presentation. Their recommendation was to make improvements to solve the issues at that intersection. The improvements would reduce the crossing distance, improve sight distance, and crosswalk improvements. They have not moved forward because of cost. She has approximately \$150,000 to put towards the project but the project will cost more than double that. Council President Morten asked Brown where the funding could come from. Brown suggested using timber revenue that goes into the Economic Development Fund. Council President Morten talked about improvements at that intersection being a part of revitalizing the historic district. He would like to proceed with the improvements. Mayor Scholl agreed with Morten. Councilor Locke was adamant about making changes

immediately. Discussion ensued. The Council was in concurrence to move forward with improvements for the S. 1<sup>st</sup> Street and St. Helens Street intersection.

**Motion:** Upon Morten's motion and Carlson's second, the Council unanimously approved taking \$250,000 out of timber revenues for the S. 1<sup>st</sup> Street and St. Helens Street intersection improvements.

- Acknowledged the contributions that Public Works crews put into the Veterans Park Grant and Grey Cliffs Park Grant. They did a majority of the work that was matching contributions. They are a huge asset to the City.

Councilor Locke pointed out the request to relieve \$60,000 worth of SDC fees. How much sidewalk would that build? Nelson responded that it would be a little over 1,000 linear feet of five foot wide sidewalk. Councilor Topaz asked if it could be more of an artistic, meandering sidewalk, especially to save trees. Nelson responded that she will instruct them to look at the best placement for saving trees and planting additional trees, as well as looking at the aesthetics.

Library Director Jeffries reported...

- The Rose City Astronomers were here on Monday night.
- The Silk Road Travel talk was held last night.
- Saturday is the final event for the youth summer reading program.
- Beginning a pilot program for people interested in forming a photographers club. They will meet the last Saturday of each month.
- The genealogy group began about a year and a half ago. It's a vibrant group with good attendance. They are going to do a workshop on September 21.
- Over a year ago, they added meeting room fees for after-hours use. They previously had to turn people away who wanted to use the meeting rooms outside of Library hours. It helps the Library cover their costs for having staff onsite.

Finance Director Brown reported...

- Attended the Columbia River PUD (CRPUD) Rate Advisory Board Meeting last night. Approximate rate increases will be:
  - Residential 4.5%
  - City lighting 6.1%
- Before Brown began working at the City, the Council approved a plan to change street lights to LED's. The City took out a loan for the work to be done. The CRPUD did not have a rate schedule for LED's. The City's consultant worked with CRPUD to create a rate. When the CRPUD rate consultants did a study, they discovered the fee was not enough to cover cost and maintenance. They decided to increase the rate by 72.8%. That was a shock to the City. He, Nelson, and Mayor Scholl attended a public meeting and talked with them about options. The CRPUD wrote them a check for \$48,000 that went into the Street Fund to help offset the increase. The City had spent \$65,000 annually on street lights. That went down to \$25,000 after the first year the LED lights were installed. After the 72.8% increase, the annual fee went about to about \$42,000. It's still a savings but not as much as expected. Council President Morten talked about the City becoming its own utility district. The City would be in total control of utilities. Many cities have already done that with tremendous success. He was outraged by what the CRPUD did. Discussion ensued.

- At the CRPUD Rate Advisory Meeting, the Board and General Manager talked about EV power and putting stations around Columbia County. They asked if the City or County would be interested in an EV charger for cars in the vicinity. He attended the Board of Commissioners work session this morning to discuss the idea with them. They propose to put a station in the parallel parking spaces at the entrance into the public parking lot. The City owns that section of parking. CRPUD will pay for it, which is about \$45,000. Jeffries suggested putting a station at the Library as well. She has had someone run a heavy duty extension cord into the lobby in the past. Maryanne Anderson expressed concern about the suggested location. Those are the only shaded spots in that entire area. She suggests putting them on the other side or in the back. Mayor Scholl pointed out that they would be more visible in the parallel spots. Brown pointed out that those spaces are the best based on not taking parking away from businesses and agencies; as well as needing the spaces to be on City-owned property.
- There was a recent incident in a Multnomah County court room where a prosecutor was assaulted after a hearing. That has brought up concerns in our court room about security. He wants to be proactive but there is a cost associated with it. Judge Lindgren and Chief Greenway have been discussing possibilities. It will be an overtime cost for an officer. Greenway suggested an armed security guard or a retired officer. Council President Morten feels more comfortable when the Chief attends the meeting and is near the door. Morten would like to have someone attend in Greenway's place when he is not here. Brown added that he met with the CIS Risk Manager and a prior police chief to talk about City Hall safety. They are waiting for a report and staff suggestions. He will update Council when that report is received. Agnes Petersen reported that she has been practicing law in the courts for about 60 years. She received a phone call that Andy Jones was shot during a divorce case in the Multnomah County courthouse. One of the good things the Columbia County courthouse did was putting metal in front of the dais to take cover in case of gun shots. She does not agree with metal detectors. It's comforting to have a living person watching what is happening. Council was in concurrence to have staff do further research.
- St. Helens Girls Softball had a lease with Boise Whitepaper for use of the three ballfields near the Recreation Center. That lease is coming up due. Jeff Kroll is asking if the City is willing to continue that agreement. Conversations in the past with Council and the Parks Commission was to end the agreement and open the fields for public use. He is going to meet with the Parks & Trails Commission on Monday to confirm what they want to do. He will inform Jeff of what the Council and Parks & Trails Commission have decided. Council President Morten would like to keep the space flexible and their options open with future development of that area. Councilor Topaz expressed the need for ballfields everyone can play at. He would like it to be open to the public when it's not reserved for Girls Softball. Discussion ensued about park and field reservations. Mayor Scholl thanked Brown for the work he does for the City.

City Recorder Payne reported...

- Nothing to report.

## 5) Council Reports

Councilor Locke reported...

- Chief Greenway is not here because he was injured while chasing a suspect last week.

Councilor Carlson reported...

- Asked about the status of the art flags in the Plaza. Discussion ensued. Council President Morten emphasized the need to post signage explaining the art. Councilor Carlson would also like to see a stipulation in the agreement for early removal if the project is damaged or fails. The Council was in consensus to ask Joan Youngberg and the Arts & Cultural Commission to take the flags down by next Friday. Payne will contact Joan.

Jeffries addressed the banners along the highway that are damaged. They were done by the Ford Family Foundation Leadership group. The Council was in consensus to remove the banners and recommend the Arts & Cultural Commission take on a project to replace them.

Councilor Topaz reported...

- He has some objections to some of the mechanisms of ORS 192.660.

Council President Morten reported...

- He and Locke went to Sand Island to see how it was going. It's an amazing change in a short period of time. It's more user friendly and safer. It has saved the City a lot of money and liability. The next step is to add running water.
- Spoke with some boaters who tied up at the City docks and were eating at Big River Bistro. They tried using the showers and only got cold water. Morten reported that to Nelson on Monday morning and it was immediately fixed. Nelson added that the showers had been vandalized. Someone tried to short circuit the system to get hot water without paying.

Mayor Scholl reported...

- The Black Tie and Blue Jeans event raised \$174,000 for scholarships for Columbia County high school students.
- The Port Commission tabled the ground lease decision at their meeting. They need to figure out some details.
- Spoke with City Administrator Walsh prior to the meeting. He expressed his appreciation of the Council allowing him to not be here today and take two weeks to travel with his family.

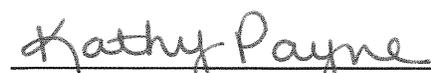
6) **Other Business**

7) **Adjourn – 3:58 p.m.**

### **Executive Session**

Respectfully submitted by Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder.

ATTEST:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Kathy Payne, City Recorder

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Rick Scholl, Mayor