

# City of St. Helens City Council

Work Session Minutes

June 19, 2019

---

**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, Finance Director  
Sue Nelson, Public Works Interim Director  
Brian Greenway, Police Chief  
Jacob Graichen, City Planner  
Paul Gerdes, Parks Specialist  
Tina Curry, Event Coordinator

**Others:** Chris Iverson Douglas Hayes Nicole Thill  
Scott Jensen Christine Menges Patrick Birkle  
Glenn Fishbine (via conf call)  
Chris Mitchel (via conf call)

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

2) **Swearing in of New Police Officer Adam Raethke**

Mayor Scholl swore in new Police Officer Adam Raethke. Welcome, Officer Raethke!

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

- ♦ Douglas Hayes, Port of Columbia County Executive Director. Reviewed current projects and challenges.
  - He listed the current tenants in St. Helens. That totals approximately \$91,000 in property taxes for the City and employs over 300 people. It has a payroll of approximately \$11 million/year.
  - He has been speaking with contacts at Perry Technical Institute. They are interested in a satellite campus in Columbia County. He's trying to persuade them to locate at McNulty Industrial Park. He encouraged City officials to help with recruitment.
  - Talked about issues with Building B for Composites Universal Group. There is a lot line adjustment that is holding up the development process.

Councilor Carlson asked if the controlled burns were in preparation for the building. Douglas responded that it was unrelated.

Council President Morten referenced the lot line adjustment. He asked if they have the survey with them to review. Port of Columbia County Planner Scott Jensen responded that he does not have it with him. They have been discussing it with City staff. City Planner Graichen reported that the lot line adjustment will require a variance because of the odd shape. It is more difficult than most. They have been discussing it but an application has not been submitted. Morten asked if the Council can help expedite the process. Graichen said they can move the request up in priority when it's received but they're still obligated to meet timelines for legal notices and the Planning Commission agenda.

Mayor Scholl pointed out the potential lagoon property landfill and working with the Port for them to remediate some of their property.

Councilor Topaz asked if they have spoken with the local schools about Perry Technical Institute. Douglas responded that Perry sent him a survey to see how they will shape that type of campus. He shared it with OMIC and all the County school superintendents. The superintendents were all very enthusiastic about it. He returned the responses to Perry and they will come here to visit. This is not in response to what PCC is doing.

#### **4) Discussion Topics**

##### **4.A Employee Length of Service Awards**

Three employees have reached milestones in their employment with the City of St. Helens. The following individuals will receive a certificate and pin.

##### **25 Years**

Keith Cernac came to work for the City in the spring of 1994 as a Summer Labor worker. He was then hired on full-time as a Utility Worker I that fall. In January of 1996, he was promoted to Mechanic I and then promoted again to Mechanic II in 2000 where he serves today.

##### **20 Years**

In May of 1999, Paul Gerdes, was hired as a Parks Utility I worker. After five years he became a Parks Utility II and then in 2012, his position was re-evaluated and he was made a Parks Specialist, where he currently serves to this day.

##### **10 Years**

Sean "Buck" Tupper began working with the City in June of 2009 on a term-limited basis as a Utility Worker I on our sewer lateral CCTV project. He was then hired regular full-time in 2011 and moved to a UW II in 2014. He was promoted to Water Systems Operator in 2016 and was recently promoted to Public Works Field Supervisor/Safety Coordinator last month.

**Congratulations to all of you, and thank you for your service!**

##### **4.B Municipal Broadband Presentation**

Glenn Fishbine from Neo Partners, LLC and Chris Mitchell from Community Broadband Networks Initiative with the Institute of Local Self-Reliance did a presentation via Cisco WebEx Meetings over the computer for the Council to explain the potential of a publicly owned broadband network. Copies of their reports are included in the archive meeting packet.

- Studies have shown that St. Helens has decent performance from Comcast, so-so performance from Century Link, and only have a few other small providers in town. Comcast has it monopolized for any quality of service.

- Comcast will not be happy if this happens but it could also result in Comcast becoming a better provider and lowering the price of services.
- Reviewed local fiber providers.
- Reviewed design options.
- Reviewed costs
  - Between \$1.7 and \$6.6 million
  - Depends on which model is the most efficient for the City
  - There will be a cost to households
  - Recommends a \$5 million cost for the City, which is model three
  - Typically paid for by grants and/or bonds
  - Typically offer broadband for \$40/month to users
- Reviewed subsidized construction
- Reviewed the phased approach of construction, which Chris recommends
- Next steps
  - Educate local leaders and businesses
  - Designate a project champion to move project forward
  - Hire a consultant to create the RFP, negotiate the contract, etc.
  - Conduct a public survey to gauge local interest
  - Hold public meetings

Councilor Locke asked how far the wireless signal reaches. Glenn responded that there would be a choice through vendors. They modeled one that is three miles. Chris added that there has been a tremendous increase in wireless benefits. Discussion ensued about towers. The wireless towers will generate less power than cell phone towers, meaning less risk if there are concerns. Councilor Locke pointed out that the City already owns three large towers that could potentially be used to co-locate the service.

City Administrator Walsh asked them to explain why other jurisdictions have moved or are moving to local broadband. Chris explained that it's a way to retain and attract businesses and residents with better connectivity. Hillsboro just announced their pricing, which is \$55 for a gig. That ranks them in the top 10 in the United States for that quality of service.

Walsh pointed out that a study is being conducted by the County to increase broadband service. They would like to work collaboratively.

#### 4.C Annual Report from Insurance Agent of Record - Chris Iverson from Hagan Hamilton

Chris Iverson from Hagan Hamilton Insurance Services was in attendance to give his annual report. He handed out the Premium Summary. A copy is included in the archive meeting packet. He reviewed the structures and equipment that have been added. The City is growing at a fast rate. There is an increase of almost \$25,000 in insurance cost this year.

Council President Morten has always considered Sand Island a big liability. Will that change as it becomes privately managed? Chris responded that will likely not change the general liability because the City still owns it.

Council President Morten pointed out that leasing vehicles does not seem to save money. They'll actually be adding leased vehicles with time. Chris responded that they are still responsible for the vehicles and their replacement. Plus, they have not removed the older vehicles.

#### 4.D Police Station Feasibility Update - Matt

Finance Director Brown presented a PowerPoint presentation. A copy is included in the archive meeting packet.

- Partnered with Mackenzie in Portland
- Began in March 2019 and plan to be done in November 2019
- Staff identified nine potential sites
- Council will narrow down to four sites
- Mackenzie will report on those four sites in August 2019
- Mackenzie will return in November 2019 to focus on the one site that is selected
- Reviewed the current facility
- Reviewed needs for a new facility
- Reviewed cost expectations
- Reviewed potential funding sources

Chief Greenway reviewed a map identifying the top calls for service types and locations. He talked about changes in technology to one day be able to do all reports from vehicles and not have to return to the station as often.

Brown reviewed the potential site locations. Discussion ensued. Consensus of Council to focus on the three central sites but keep the locations general as the study continues.

#### 5) Department Reports

Police Chief Greenway reported...

- Saturday, July 27 is the first Annual Youth Police Academy. There is a \$50 fee, which covers lunch, dinner, and a t-shirt. The Council was in consensus to cover the cost if there is a need for scholarships.
- Partnering with Columbia River Fire & Rescue to perform training at the old St. Helens Middle School before it's demolished.
- Excited about the potential of a new police station.

Public Works Interim Director Nelson reported...

- They have hired four summer helpers.
- Two new Utility Workers recently started as well, Nicholas Ratliff and Ryan Powers.
- Gable Road traffic control has been set up. Things are going far better than anticipated. The County has done a great job communicating with residents along Gable Road. They hope to have the project nearly completed before school resumes. Council President Morten asked why Firlock Park Road is not being used as an alternate detour. Nelson will check with the County.
- Work is being done along the highway landscape strip between the highway and railroad. Public Works and Parks staff have been trimming trees, brush sculpturing, removing dead material, etc. It looks so much better. Council President Morten added that the flowers planted around the sign also look very nice.
- The roadside mower is still broken. They were hoping to borrow the County's mower but it's not available yet.

Councilor Carlson reported that a large tree has died in the planting strip in front of the Library. Nelson will have Parks staff look at it.

Finance Director Brown reported...

- A public forum will be held Monday at 6 p.m. at the St. Helens High School Loo Wit Room.
- Tonight's agenda includes a final reading of the ordinance for the Community Recreation and Parks fee. It's the language to add it to the ordinance. It does not create the fee, which still needs to be determined and voted on.
- Tonight's agenda also includes a Senior Center contract with Columbia NW Heating & Cooling for HVAC service.
- Held interviews for the Utility, Banking and Court Specialist position. They are currently conducting background checks on the top candidate.
- Met with Lewis Audio & Video, who services our audio visual system in the Council Chambers. They discussed the issues with microphones and laptops. They are scheduled to do upgrades at the end of August. They will install ceiling mics to increase sound quality for online and Comcast viewers.

City Recorder Payne reported...

- Nothing to report.

City Administrator Walsh reported...

- Asked how the Council felt about the Municipal Broadband proposal. Discussion ensued. Carlson, Topaz, and Scholl were all in favor of waiting and focusing on current projects. Morten and Locke both wanted to continue investigating the idea. Mayor Scholl suggested discussing this further at the next meeting.
- The BUILD Grant is being resubmitted on July 15.
- Will be going to Salem tomorrow with Associate Planner Jenny Dimsho to present the Grant application for Campbell Park improvements.
- Lower Columbia Engineering was selected as the architecture firm for the Food Bank project.
- The lagoon repurposing work plan will begin next week. They will begin with drilling, sampling, and installing monitoring wells.
- Staff recently met to discuss nuisance abatement processes. They are looking for ways to become more efficient and effective.

Event Coordinator Curry reported...

- 13 Nights on the River
  - Thanked police officers for being there
  - Thanked Hudson Garbage for the new green initiative to have recycling available
  - Thanked Public Works Supervisor Dave Elder for his assistance
  - Audience and donations have both increased about 30%
- Started initiatives to raise money for local charities
  - Checks Out for Children
    - Hope to raise around \$5,000 for Kiwanis, Rotary, Elks, and the Food Bank
- Looks like great weather for Citizens Day in the Park
- 4th of July
  - Donation jars around town
  - Kiwanis donated \$500
  - Schedule posted on [www.discovercolumbiacounty.com](http://www.discovercolumbiacounty.com)
  - Working with Judy Thompson, Councilor Stephen R. Topaz, and Mayor Scholl
  - Musicians and activities

- Cuts+ now has a year-round Spirit of Halloweentown gift shop

City Planner Graichen reported...

- Port of Columbia County talked about a lot line adjustment being held up. Graichen elaborated on the confusion there has been.

## 6) **Council Reports**

Councilor Locke reported...

- A Mill shutdown was held last week. Everything went well, except that they put poles in the parking lot that were not permitted. Mayor Scholl asked how they were able to do work without permits. Locke referred him to Johnathon with that question.
- Community Action Team (CAT) is having an Open House on Friday at 2:30 p.m.
- The Mill had to replace more poles than they thought. They tried to trim a tree so it wouldn't fall on the pole and it fell on the pole.

Councilor Carlson reported...

- Youth Council had a good meeting this week. Liam will be here tonight. They had a visit from an organization that is looking at doing a drop center for at-risk young adults, aged 14-25. It's a safe place for young adults to talk to someone who's not a parent.
- What's the status of the flags in the Plaza? Payne responded that Joan Youngberg was going to come in after her vacation to pick them up. Walsh added that she picked up the ones that the County removed because they were hazardous.
- Excited about Citizens Day in the Park this weekend.
- Tomorrow night will be exciting at 13 Nights because it's a battle of two hobbits.

Councilor Locke asked Brown if it would be possible for the Youth Council to meet at the Recreation Center. Brown said it would be possible. The times would need to be worked out to make sure there are no conflicts. Councilor Carlson said she has offered that to them but they like meeting here. Their July and August meetings will be held in Columbia View Park as an outreach opportunity.

Councilor Topaz reported...

- He attended four meetings in downtown Portland in regards to cleaning up the Harbor. He asked Council if he could get paid for mileage to those. Council said yes.
- The Library Board and the Arts & Cultural Commission both have vacant positions.

Council President Morten reported...

- He attended the National Conference on Youth and Families. Youth councils from all over the country attended. The youth councils were actively involved in their commissions and committees. He has invited Youth Council members to attend the Parks & Trails Commission meetings but is disappointed that none have come.
- He has played tennis since he was a kid and has also taught it. He's encouraged by the plan for a tennis facility at Campbell Park. However, he doesn't support it because it's being replaced by pickle ball in popularity. He suggests including badminton lines to allow for pickle ball. It's much easier to learn than tennis.
- Lynn Pettit volunteered to report on the Dalton Lake Preserve. She would like to see it changed from ODOT's jurisdiction to the City's.
- A citizen volunteered to form a "Friends of the Botanical Gardens" group.
- Friend groups need to report to the Parks & Trails Commission.

- Sand Island Marine Park Facebook page has been very positive. Discussion ensued about Sand Island. Mayor Scholl pointed out the negative comments he has read on Concerned Citizens, plus people calling him to complain. He compared it to the Recreation Program. They have held three public forums and people will still say they were not informed. It's important for the public to attend and speak.
- When he joined the Council there was a 2020 Vision Plan that had been created in the 1970's or 80's. He would like to share the vision with community members. Mayor Scholl added that it was updated with Erik Jensen. Morten would like to hold a public forum to share it.

Mayor Scholl reported...

- Citizens Day in the Park is on Saturday starting at 11 a.m.
  - Local sponsors continue to step up for the community.
  - The 20 year skate park anniversary will be highlighted. He requested cakes be purchased for the celebration.
  - Local bands will perform.
- The highway looks great!
- No meeting on July 3.
- July 4<sup>th</sup> activities scheduled throughout the day.


7) **Other Business**


8) **Adjourn – 4:18 p.m.**

**Executive Session** - None

Respectfully submitted by Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder.

ATTEST:

  
Kathy Payne, City Recorder

  
Rick Scholl, Mayor