

# City of St. Helens City Council

Work Session Minutes

January 16, 2019

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**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  
Margaret Jeffries, Library Director  
Neal Sheppard, Public Works Operations Director  
Sue Nelson, Public Works Engineering Director  
Brian Greenway, Police Chief  
Crystal Farnsworth, Communications Officer

**Others:** Leah Tillotson  
Simon Date  
Nicole Thill

- 1) **Call Work Session to Order - 1:00 p.m.**
- 2) **Visitor Comments - Limited to five (5) minutes per speaker**  
No visitor comments.

Council took a break at 1:04 p.m. to go into Executive Session pursuant to ORS 192.660(2)(h) Consult with Counsel/Potential Litigation to discuss potential litigation concerns with the City's attorney Akin Blitz.

The Executive Session was recessed at 1:23 p.m.

- 3) **Discussion Topics**  
3.A Employee Length of Service Award  
One employee has reached a milestone in their employment with the City of St. Helens. The following individual will receive a certificate and pin.

## **10 Years**

Tim Illias began working for the City in December of 2008 as the City's first Utility Plumber.

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

### 3.B Communications 2nd Quarter Report - Crystal

Communications Officer Crystal Farnsworth reviewed her report. A copy is included in the archive meeting packet.

- Social media posts have increased.
- Fewer City Talks on KOHI due to outages with their antennae upgrades.
- Preparing to launch a bi-monthly printed newsletter to be included in utility bills.

Mayor Scholl pointed out that listeners have a hard time hearing discussions during the meeting. He reminded the Council to speak clearly into the microphones.

Councilor Carlson asked Farnsworth to help promote the "If I Were Mayor..." student contest on social media.

### 3.C Discussion Regarding Utility Rates - Matt

Finance Director Brown presented a PowerPoint presentation. A copy is included in the archive meeting packet. Discussion ensued about water, sewer, and storm projects and funding. Brown recommends a 3.5% increase across the board.

Mayor Scholl suggested a 2% water, 2% sewer, and 3.5% storm increase. After discussion, Morten, Carlson, and Locke concurred. Topaz sees the need for an increase but would like to re-evaluate it annually.

Councilor Locke would like to see a detailed report distributed to the citizens explaining why there is a need for an increase. Brown will work on that.

### 3.D Discussion Regarding Time of Council Work Session Meeting

City Recorder Payne distributed a report listing the management team's pros and cons of changing the meeting time. Based on discussion, the consensus of the Council is to keep the meeting times as they are but to increase communication with the public focusing on Council's availability by phone and to meet outside of a meeting.

Council President Morten encouraged the Council to focus on their goals and bring them to evening meetings to review. He would like to start with Goal 2: Improve Service, Communication, and Relationships. Mayor Scholl agreed. City Recorder Payne suggested the Council do something like what the Police Department does with First Thursday. They can hold open meetings every other month, focusing on one specific goal each time.

City Recorder Payne will draft a letter of response to send to Patrick Birkle informing him of the Council's decision. After the Council has their goal setting retreat, she will work with the Council on creating a plan to meet with the public.

Council President Morten read a letter from Hudson Garbage thanking the City for their support with the bike build. They donated 141 bikes to foster children in the County.

## 4) Department Reports

Chief Greenway reported...

- He believes the Council sets the goals and it's the responsibility of staff to meet the goals. He suggested staff quarterly reports showing how the goals were met.
- St. Helens Police Department is the only 24/7 agency in the County. Because of that, other agencies are relying on St. Helens resources to respond to incidents outside City

limits. He would like to modify the current policy to be more stringent when assistance is offered outside our jurisdiction. They will continue to respond to life safety calls. Their responsibility is to serve the citizens of St. Helens. Discussion ensued. Greenway pointed out the value in partnering with surrounding agencies, particularly the County.

Public Works Engineering Director Nelson reported...

- The Council recently heard safety concerns about the need for sidewalks on N. Vernonia Road and a crosswalk to Campbell Park. She has been working with a consultant to determine a scope of work. She received the final draft of it yesterday. It included sidewalks on both sides of N. Vernonia, from the newer subdivisions, down around the corner, with a new crossing somewhere between Frantz Street and MacArthur Street. She asked if it could be added to tonight's agenda to expedite the process. Council concurred and agreed with the urgency to move forward.
- She and the I&I design consultant were interviewed a couple months ago by I&I Magazine. She distributed a five-page excerpt with employee Ethan Stirling on the cover page.
- She will be co-presenting a session at a Trenchless Symposium in Portland on the lateral program and Godfrey Park Storm Project.

Public Works Operations Director Sheppard reported...

- The restrooms are done at Grey Cliffs Park.
- They are waiting for new metal to be sent to complete the building at the Veterans Memorial Project.

Library Director Jeffries reported...

- Middle schoolers filled all the public computers at the Library yesterday afternoon. The partnership with the School District showcased some of the programs at the high school.
- Held an art class earlier this month where participants turned an old book into an artistic journal. That was a lead-in to the fourth annual Altered Book Show in February.
- The next St. Helens Book Club meeting is January 31 at 7 p.m. The book theme is humor.

Finance Director Brown reported...

- The audit report will be included in the February meeting packet for review.
- Recreation Center update:
  - The plumber is finishing the bathroom. They are ahead of schedule.
  - The high school was unable to install the floors to meet our deadlines, so that was done by a contractor.
  - The new sign is almost ready.
- The new St. Helens Industrial Park sign has been delivered. It is sitting in the Recreation Center gym waiting for a couple things to be done before installation.

City Recorder Payne reported...

- The next City/County Quarterly Dinner meeting will be in Clatskanie and is tentatively scheduled for March 19.
- The Employee Recognition Banquet is February 1.

City Administrator Walsh reported...

- The City will be highlighted at the Brownsfield Conference in New Orleans this year.

- The Council Goals Retreat will be held January 23, 4-8 p.m., tentatively in the upstairs conference room or the Columbia Soil & Water Conservation office.
- The Council Tourism/Events Retreat will be held January 30, 4-8 p.m., tentatively in the Columbia Center Armstrong Room.
- The Lagoon Project Retreat will be held February 13 in Portland.

#### 5) **Council Reports**

Councilor Locke reported...

- Distributed a map of what Cascades has leased from the City. They are using just over 50 acres. He will continue to report back.
- ACSP is trying to get all their temporary permits going. They harvested their first crop a week ago. They are in the process of making it retailable.
- ACSP or Grow Tech is in need of employees. They are recruiting 10-12 people. The base wage for trimming is \$15/hour. For now, people can contact him if interested.

Councilor Carlson reported...

- The Planning Commission has appointments for tonight. Only one application was received, which did not meet the qualifications. Their recommendation is to reappoint Audrey Webster and Sheila Semling. The Commission discussed the importance of experience for that Commission. Both she and Planning staff concur with their recommendation. Discussion ensued about term limits. Council reviewed Resolution No. 1648: A Resolution Establishing Guidelines for the Appointment of St. Helens Board, Committee, and Commission Members. Council would like to discuss the resolution further, especially as it applies to the Planning Commission.
- Arts & Cultural Commission Member Lisa Brooke presented the skate park project to the last St. Helens Youth Council. They were energetic about the project and voted to support the improvements. There were no active skaters in the group but all felt it was important to the youth.
- Some of the important things to the Youth Council for Council goals was lighting, sidewalks, and improved crossing between the high school and Safeway.
- Youth Council also felt it was important to feature student art in the community. It would showcase something that's often overlooked. Jeffries informed Carlson that the display cases in the Library were purchased by the Columbia Arts Guild. Carlson will reach out to Joann Youngberg about featuring student art.
- Thanked Councilor Topaz for the information he distributed about the effects of cannabis use to pregnant moms and kids. Part of the community impact fund being collected is for prevention and education.

Councilor Stephen Topaz reported...

- At the last meeting it was stated that the St. Helens Industrial Park sign had not been purchased yet. He had a professional look at it and give feedback. He displayed photos of potential signs. A copy is included in the archive meeting packet. He has some problems with the sign that was purchased.

Brown responded that a consensus was given by the Council to base the sign on our Branding & Wayfinding plan, which was done by a consultant who did community outreach. Topaz expressed that he would rather the consultant recommend the best sign from a technical standpoint. It's more about impressing the people outside the community to come here. Discussion ensued.

Council President Morten reported...

- Suggested posting a public announcement when a seat will become vacant on one of the boards or commissions. That gives them the opportunity to know well in advance. Payne agreed with the need to talk about that. Unfortunately, display ads in the newspaper cost hundreds of dollars. If they do a press release, they would be doing it non-stop. She'd like to work with the Council on a plan for advertising. Discussion ensued.
- Talked about the need for an on-site attorney during meetings. An attorney in town has offered his services. It would have been nice to have an attorney here today to weigh in on the Planning Commission appointment discussion.
- He asked the Parks Commission to brainstorm ideas for amenities to add to Grey Cliffs Park as part of the Waterfront Redevelopment.
- The Parks Commission is open to the proposal by the Arts & Cultural Commission for improvements to the skate park. It will be a partnership between the two commissions.

Mayor Scholl reported...

- Agreed with Morten about Grey Cliffs Park. He suggested hiring the community service work crew to clean out the blackberries with hand tools.
- Looking forward to the goal system as part of the Council retreat.
- Want to get going on developing the industrial property. The wetlands have been delineated and now need someone to do logging.
- Need to get in touch with Port of Columbia County about the rail system and future collaboration.

6) **Other Business**


7) **Adjourn** – 4:10 p.m.

#### **Executive Session**

Respectfully submitted by Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder.

ATTEST:

  
Kathy Payne, City Recorder

  
Rick Scholl, Mayor