

City of St. Helens City Council

Work Session Minutes

March 6, 2019

Members Present: Councilor Keith Locke
Councilor Ginny Carlson
Councilor Stephen R. Topaz

Members Absent: Mayor Rick Scholl
Council President Doug Morten

Staff Present: John Walsh, City Administrator
Kathy Payne, City Recorder
Matt Brown, Finance Director
Margaret Jeffries, Library Director
Sue Nelson, Public Works Engineering Director
Brian Greenway, Police Chief
Amy Lindgren, Municipal Court Judge
Terry Massey, Jr., Police Officer
Jacob Graichen, City Planner
Joe Hogue, Police Lieutenant
Malinda Duran, Police Support Specialist
Tia Sharp, Police Records Specialist
Dustin King, Police Detective
Crystal Farnsworth, Communications Officer
Kolten Edwards, Police Officer
Jamin Coy, Police Officer
Brianne Mares, CIT Coordinator
Heidi Davis, Building & Administration Secretary
Tina Curry, Event Coordinator

Others: Christine Menges
Caleb Cox
Nicole Thill

1) **Call Work Session to Order - 1:00 p.m.**

2) **Swearing in of New Police Officer Terry Massey Jr.**

Municipal Court Judge Amy Lindgren swore in new Police Officer Terry Massey, Jr. Welcome, Officer Massey!

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

No visitor comments.

4) **Discussion Topics**

4.A Presentation by the St. Helens High School Robotics Club
Postponed for a later date.

4.B Presentation and Q&A on S. 1st/St. Helens St. Intersection Improvements - Kittelson & Associates

Caleb Cox with Kittelson & Associates reviewed his PowerPoint presentation. A copy is included in the archive meeting packet. They are proposing curb extensions at each corner, which significantly decreases the pedestrian crossing distance from 70 feet to about 40 feet on St. Helens Street. That will increase pedestrian visibility as well. It also significantly increases site distances for vehicles turning from St. Helens Street onto S. 1st Street. They recommend the intersection remain a two-way stop. The design concept acts a gateway into the downtown area.

Councilor Locke asked if they interviewed anyone who lives in the area. Caleb said no. If the concept to moves forward, they would take the it to a public engagement meeting.

Councilor Topaz expressed that the biggest problem turning from St. Helens Street to S. 1st Street are the large vehicles that block clear vision. He assumes the curb extensions are low level and will keep the vehicles away from the corner. Caleb confirmed that is correct. The landscaping is specked out to be low growth landscaping to maintain site lines for vehicles.

Councilor Carlson understands that intersection is quiet for several months of the year but then it gets busy with people in October and on Thursdays during the summer. She has witnessed several close calls. She asked if changing the parking from parallel to diagonal could be implemented without much effect on the budget. Public Works Engineering Director Nelson responded that it's not costly but it wouldn't make sense to do it without the extension. Caleb agreed. The reason they have room for the diagonal parking spaces is that the curb extensions protect the vehicles and provide a physical barrier for vehicles heading toward the river. Ideally, this layout provides the most protection for pedestrians.

Councilor Carlson asked if Caleb has seen other communities do one intersection at a time. It will cost millions to complete the Corridor Master Plan. Caleb responded that it's pretty common to do it piece by piece. As long as each piece follows the Transportation System Plan (TSP), you'll have a complete corridor that matches the plan. Nelson explained that street capital improvement projects are funded from the Surface Transportation Program (STP), which the City receives an allotment each year ranging from \$130,000 - \$154,000.

Caleb said the preliminary cost estimate for this intersection is between \$200 - 250,000. Nelson added that she has reserved about half of that lower amount for the next three budget years to try to implement something at that intersection. If we focus all of the STP funds here, then there will not be funds for paving, patchwork, crack sealing, trench patching, etc. Those projects would have to be deferred. Grants may be available. Associate Planner Dimsho could help look into them for the safety considerations of this. It is within the Urban Development area, so once funds become available for that, this would be prime for that funding opportunity.

Councilor Carlson talked about speed bumps and creative striping. Are either of those a possibility? Caleb agreed that striping is one way to introduce traffic calming measures. Nelson added that speeds aren't the main issue. Pedestrian safety and clear vision are the priorities.

Councilor Topaz asked if grant funding would be more accessible through the Main Street Plan. Nelson said having those master plans adopted makes a huge different. They would just need to find grant funding that matches this situation.

Councilor Topaz talked about the low visibility on St. Helens Street between 4th and 3rd Street. He asked if Caleb looked into that or is this just a flat ground plan? Caleb said they looked at in 3D just in respect to drainage impacts. They didn't look further up the corridor. Vertical site challenges are more challenging to solve. Reducing vehicle speeds is the most cost effective way to solve it. Topaz said it's mainly at night that speed is an issue.

Councilor Locke asked if Caleb has seen communities take the plan and paint the existing surface area to reflect the suggestions. Caleb recommends not doing that in this case. That would result in pedestrians standing in the painted areas in the street with no actual physical barrier protecting them. One thing they've done in communities like this is a mockup of the proposed improvements using traffic cones and temporary striping.

Councilor Topaz asked if putting 1.5 foot planters instead of traffic cones would be a viable longer term possibility. Caleb said it would work temporarily but something like that would be destroyed. Councilor Carlson pointed out areas in Portland that used planters and posts to protect the pedestrian and bike zone. She suggested staff look at temporary measures until funding is available.

City Administrator Walsh pointed out the improvements offer an opportunity to add features such as a gateway into 1st Street.

Councilor Locke expressed safety concerns when trying to turn left from St. Helens to 1st Street.

4.C Review Draft of Council Operating Rules & Procedures

Councilor Topaz recommends tabling this until the full Council is in attendance. He would like to discuss the line of succession if the Mayor and Council President are absent. City Recorder Payne said it's written that the most senior Councilor is next.

Discussion of the need for Councilor job descriptions. Consensus of the Council to remove the resolution from tonight's agenda until the full Council can review it.

4.D Review Draft of Council Governing Policy

City Administrator Walsh reported that the proposed document retains the commission form of government, collaborative decision making process, assignment to departments, and the hiring and firing process of department heads. The only substantive change is the City Administrator position oversees department heads. It eliminates the judge and city prosecutor because they are contracted positions.

Councilor Locke asked if it should include language if the judge and prosecutor become regular employees. Walsh does not anticipate that happening and suggested waiting to make the change if it does.

Councilor Topaz asked what happens if the City Administrator dies. Walsh said there is a process for the Council to appoint an interim.

Consensus of the Council to remove the resolution from tonight's agenda until the full Council can review it.

4.E Review Agreement for Special Events Coordination & Management with E2C Corp.

City Administrator Walsh reviewed the events coordinated by E2C Corp. The majority of her pay is covered by the hotel revenues. The cost of events are covered by revenues and sponsorships.

Councilor Carlson asked if there is a mechanism to measure her work; such as hotel revenues, participation, etc. Walsh responded that Travel Oregon has a metric. Hotel and restaurant revenue is easier to measure than some things. Discussion of hotel revenues. Walsh clarified that Sand Island camping will be subject to hotel tax.

Councilor Topaz asked if this open to any company to bid on. Walsh responded that the City did a Request for Proposals (RFP) two years ago. The Council selected E2C Corp. This is a renewal. Topaz suggested that other companies might want to be involved now that they've seen the success. Carlson does not want to measure it by other companies wanting to be involved but rather if we're happy with our product. She doesn't like the idea of starting completely over with someone new at this time. Spirit of Halloweentown is finally in the black. There's no rule that they have to go out for an RFP at this time.

Councilor Locke agreed to renew it this year but suggests going out for an RFP in two years.

5) Department Reports

Police Chief Greenway reported...

- First Thursday is tomorrow at 7 p.m. at the Columbia Center. The topic is Drug Recognition. Officers Jamin Coy and Dylan Gaston will be presenting the top illegal drugs in the area.
- New Police Officer Massey was sworn in today. He was a reserve officer.
- They are in the background phase for two additional applicants to fill vacancies.
- Police Officer Adam Hartless graduates from DPSST in Salem on Friday.

Public Works Engineering Director Nelson reported...

- Attended a Disaster Sanitation workshop in Portland yesterday. It reviewed what to do in a wide-spread emergency when there are no sanitation and water facilities available.
- Tonight's agenda includes:
 - A contract for a water line replacement on N. 7th Street and S. 11th Street. There are existing undersized lines there now.
 - A new contract for bulk chlorine delivery for the Wastewater Treatment Plant.
 - Reimbursement for oversizing a water line. The City can contribute to a project when a developer oversizes a utility. He is requesting reimbursement of approximately \$3,200.
- Attending a Regional Disaster Recovery Conference next week.

Library Director Jeffries reported...

- The Makelt! Series for ages 7-12 is continuing today and next Wednesday. During the entire month of April, they are doing a circuitry workshop. Registration is open.
- Thursday, March 14 at 7 p.m. is the next Conversation Project: "It's a Free Country." It explores the idea of freedom and what choices and responsibilities come with freedom.
- 108 people attended MakerFest last week. She talked about the various activities held.

Finance Director Brown reported...

- An open house will be held at the Recreation Center on Saturday from 3 – 5 p.m.
- A public hearing will be held tonight at 6:45 p.m. to update the budget.
- He has been working on updating the exclusive use permit forms and procedures. In the past, Council has had the final authority to approve exclusive use permits and street closures. Is Council comfortable with staff making that final determination? Staff could report to the Council with what's been approved. It helps speed up the process to do it administratively. Council concurred.

City Recorder Payne reported...

- The City/County Quarterly Dinner will be held March 19 in Clatskanie.
- The Chamber of Commerce Banquet is March 21.

City Administrator Walsh reported:

- Attended the CIS conference in Salem last week.
- Working on updating the Municipal Court Clerk job description.

Event Coordinator Curry reported...

- Working on new programs to involve the merchants:
 - Art walk.
 - The Easter bunny will be here the weekend of Easter and the weekend prior.
 - Find the fairies.
- The 13 Nights on the River schedule has been announced.
- A salmon festival will be held in April. It will involve local restaurants and a fishing derby.
- A heart was in the Plaza during February and it's now been replaced with a four leaf clover for St. Patrick's Day.
- Nonprofits and City sponsors can advertise events on the Discover Columbia County website.

Councilor Topaz talked about the 130th Birthday Party for St. Helens held last week. The American Heritage Girls passed out the cake. Their presence made the celebration nicer. He encouraged Tina to involve local youth in community events.

6) Council Reports

Councilor Carlson reported...

- The Chamber of Commerce Banquet finalists will be named this week.

Councilor Topaz reported...

- He received a call from a citizen with concerns about the City's water reservoir. Why did the concrete go wrong? How did the membrane fail? Is the membrane the right material for human consumption? Did the company pay for the lost water? A lot of the chlorinated water went down the stream. Was the EPA notified? Has the City notified the fire department to verify there is enough water for hydro flow? Is the City liable if there's a fire and not enough water?

Nelson responded to the questions.

- The concrete wasn't the contractor's fault. It's older concrete and was determined that a membrane needed to be installed under the spray-in liner. The liner is rated for water consumption.

- The membrane did not fail. It was the installation of the membrane on the bottom portion of the reservoir that was not installed correctly. The contractor has come back to repair it. If it can't be repaired, they will have to replace it.
- They do not have to pay for the water that was lost when they tested it. The City pays for the water used in the project per the contract.
- Water that is released from the reservoir is de-chlorinated before it reaches the ditch or creek.
- If there is any water in our system, all of our fire hydrants have water. If there is not water at a fire hydrant it's because a valve is turned off. That's only one reservoir out of multiple reservoirs in town.

Discussion ensued about the project.

Councilor Locke reported...

- Asked Brown where the money will come from for the S. 1st Street and St. Helens Street intersection project. Brown responded that it's a good question for the upcoming budget. He reviewed some of the options.

7) **Other Business**

8) **Adjourn – 2:39 p.m.**

Executive Session

Respectfully submitted by Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder.

ATTEST:


Kathy Payne, City Recorder


Keith Locke, Councilor