

City of St. Helens

CITY COUNCIL

Public Hearing Minutes

July 19, 2017

Members Present: Rick Scholl, Mayor
Doug Morten, Council President
Keith Locke, Councilor
Susan Conn, Councilor
Ginny Carlson, Councilor

Staff Present: John Walsh, City Administrator
Matt Brown, Finance Director
Kathy Payne, City Recorder
Margaret Jeffries, Library Director
Jacob Graichen, City Planner
Jenny Dimsho, Associate Planner
Neal Sheppeard, PW Operations Director
Sue Nelson, PW Engineering Director

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| Others: | Nicole Thill | Steve Topaz | Lorelei Juntunen |
| | Garrett Stevenson | Jim Wilson | Mark Kreutzer |
| | Wren Christopher | Jenn Farrington | Jim Wilson |
| | Carmin Dunn | Julie Stenberg | Linda Demaray |
| | Matt Doherty | | |



Public Hearing

Applicant: City of St. Helens

Request: Approval of St. Helens Urban Renewal Plan

At 6:00 p.m., Mayor Scholl opened the public hearing.

Lorelei Juntunen from ECONorthwest and Associate Planner Dimsho presented a PowerPoint presentation, a copy of which is included in the archive packet for this meeting.

- Reviewed the Urban Renewal Plan
 - Used throughout Oregon
 - Addresses “blighting” influences in designated areas
 - Provides financing mechanism to implement city plans
- Reviewed proposed projects

Based upon the facts and findings, staff recommends approval of the St. Helens Urban Renewal Plan.

Testimony in Favor

◆ Steve Topaz. It is no doubt that the City needs a financial system. The problem is that it’s primarily based on the property that is the paper mill/cooling pond and faith in the City. Faith in the City is low. What are we going to put in place of the cooling pond? It’s polluted. What happens if this fails? Also, what happens with the marijuana facility if the federal government comes in and say it’s illegal?

♦Jenn Farrington. She is a new St. Helens resident. She is appreciative of this community and really likes it here. She has participated in the process and is in favor of the plan. The waterfront is an asset to this community. This is what we need.

♦Matt Doherty. He is a St. Helens resident. He has been very pleased with the community involvement. The public's voice was heard. There is untapped potential and the Urban Renewal will kickstart us in the right direction. He hopes to see it move forward.

♦Wren Christopher. This is her 24th year as a teacher at Warren Elementary School and living in St. Helens. This is a plus. She moved here when her son was in 2nd grade and became involved in the Library fundraisers. Education is key.

Neutral Testimony

♦Linda Demaray. She lives in St. Helens. Are you focusing on the number of people coming in? What will happen to taxes? Will people who live on Plymouth Street be responsible for sidewalks?

Mayor Scholl will follow-up with Linda if she stays after the meeting.

♦Mark Kreutzer. He lives in St. Helens and serves on the Urban Renewal Advisory Committee. He is concerned about the makeup of the Urban Renewal Board. He's not concerned about the current Council but it could change down the road. He suggests the Urban Renewal Board be made up of stakeholders: two members of the Council, two members of the special taxing districts, two citizens, and a County Commissioner. The Columbia River Fire & Rescue Board agrees.

♦Jim Wilson. He lives in St. Helens. He echoes the sentiments of Mark. Corruption is a big problem in urban renewal districts.

Testimony in Opposition

None spoke in opposition.

Dimsho explained that the Urban Renewal Agency meetings are open to the public. The agendas and minutes are public record. If any changes are proposed to the projects list they would be discussed in a public forum and on the agenda. There's very little room for corruption with the specific project list.

Mayor Scholl pointed out that this began long before he was here but was halted due to the economy. This is important for the community.

Councilor Locke said this is the most diverse Council that he has served on during his 17 years. They all have the community in mind.

Council President Morten asked Lorelei if the Council can stop the Urban Renewal Plan process at any time? Lorelei is aware of other cities who have chosen not to collect tax revenues because they either completed the projects or they wanted to take a break from collecting revenues.

Garrett Stevenson, Legal Counsel for EcoNorthwest. He explained that the Council can choose not to take out debt, not to collect revenue, and not to do the project. The Plan does not obligate this Council or future Council to implement it. If this Council or a future Council decides they do not like the Plan, they can repeal it, which would require a vote and public hearing.

Council President Morten believes that Ms. Demaray makes a good point. What affect will this have on her, since she lives within the district? Mayor Scholl responded that property owners will not be financially responsible for the proposed projects.

Close Public Hearing and Record – 6:58 p.m.

Deliberations will be held during the regular session following this hearing.



Respectfully submitted by Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder.

ATTEST:

Handwritten signature of Kathy Payne in cursive script.

Kathy Payne, City Recorder

Handwritten signature of Rick Scholl in cursive script.

Rick Scholl, Mayor