

# City of St. Helens

## CITY COUNCIL

Public Forum Minutes

October 4, 2017

---

**Members Present:** Doug Morten, Council President  
Keith Locke, Councilor  
Ginny Carlson, Councilor

**Members Absent:** Rick Scholl, Mayor  
Susan Conn, Councilor

**Staff Present:** John Walsh, City Administrator  
Matt Brown, Finance Director  
Kathy Payne, City Recorder  
Margaret Jeffries, Library Director  
Terry Moss, Police Chief  
Neal Sheppard, Public Works Operations Director  
Sue Nelson, Public Works Engineering Director

**Others:**

|                  |                        |                   |
|------------------|------------------------|-------------------|
| Doug Knight      | Sharon Coggsell        | David Kirby       |
| Kellie Smith     | Kathleen Grant         | Cole Snider       |
| Jenn Massey      | Daniel Morris          | Mike Roso         |
| Mike Norris, Jr. | Steve Palmer           | Michael Palmer    |
| Claire Catt      | Darold Sandberg        | Barbara Lines     |
| Garrett Lines    | Tammy Maygra           | Laura Byrd        |
| Dean Lemire      | Loryn Thurman          | Kendra Vandercook |
| Leslie Contreras | Chris Ostling          | Jenny Rudolph     |
| Serena McCurdy   | Desiree                | Leah Tillotson    |
| L. Goodwin       | Brian Vaerewyck        | Shannon Vaerewyck |
| Patrick Birkle   | Greg Jensen            | Tiffany Smith     |
| Ryan Laird       | Heather Oliver         | Gretchen Williams |
| Kim Clendenin    | Sherrie Ford           | Annie Slighter    |
| Heather Moar     | Jaelyn Wallace         | Michelle Caso     |
| Shannon Lazorick | Chip Hermelin          | Stephanie Daur    |
| Carston Williams | Kim Puyear Cabrera     | Jeff Fulk         |
| Craig Reesor     | Terry Stewart          | Jubilee Beatley   |
| Jamie Bush       | Matthew Pyon           | Thomas Young      |
| Mario Lerma      | Stephanie Zielaskowski | Kristine Lambert  |
| Larry O'Connor   | Geri Noble             | Debbie Loomis     |
| Robert Cole      | Mitzi Ponce            | Brady Preheim     |
| Dennis Sullivan  | Susie Wilson           | Doug Stokes       |
| David Thorp      | Shawna Harrison        |                   |



### **Public Forum**

#### **Potential Sugary Sweetened Beverage Tax**

**6:00PM** –Council President Morten opened the Public Forum and introduced staff. He explained how the City got to this point.

Finance Director Brown presented a PowerPoint presentation to give a background as to why the City is looking for a funding source for the Parks Department. A copy of the PowerPoint presentation is available in the archive packet for this meeting.

### **Proponent Presentation**

Heather Oliver and Claire Catt, Prevention Coordinators for the Public Health Foundation, presented a PowerPoint presentation, a copy of which is included in the archive packet for this meeting. They talked about the chronic health diseases caused by sugary drinks and the empty calories they provide.

### **Opponent Presentation**

David Thorp and Leah Tillotson (she and her husband own the Columbia Theater) presented a PowerPoint presentation, a copy of which is included in the archive packet for this meeting. David talked about all the beverage options available with low or no calories. He disagreed that sugary beverages are causing obesity and diabetes. Leah talked about how the tax would impact their business. The cost would have to be passed on to her customers or absorbed by her already struggling business.

### **Public Comment in Favor**

◆Dr. Daniel Morris. The taxes will generate revenue and have beneficial health impacts by reducing consumption. He thinks David's information was misleading. He would be happy to provide correct information.

◆Jenny Rudolph. She lives in Portland but commutes into St. Helens for work. She frequents the coffee shops and eateries in the area. People shop where they live and where they work. She's not going to drive to Scappoose during her lunch break. The tax will capture revenue from those traveling through St. Helens. There is a great need for park improvements.

◆Sherrie Ford. She has lived in St. Helens most of her life. She thanked the Council for considering an option outside of property taxes. She likes the idea of those traveling through contributing financially to our infrastructure. She uses our parks and streets, and also sees the need for safe environments.

### **Public Comment in Neutral**

◆Garrett Lines. The Oregon Health Authority lists Columbia County as having the fifth highest obesity with 40% overweight and 25% obese. Going out for a sugar tax will take a long time. Research has shown that artificially sweetened beverages cause as much obesity, diabetes, and heart disease as sweetened beverages. He would hate to see a sugar tax and not include things that would be just as bad.

◆Patrick Birkle. He lives in St. Helens and has been a member of the St. Helens Budget Committee for the last 5-6 years. The Committee charged City staff with looking for additional revenue sources. The City is finally in stable position to fill vacant positions, after years of vacancies due to budget cuts. It can't be done without an additional revenue source. He encouraged everyone to attend Budget Committee meetings and be involved in the process.

## Public Comment in Opposition

◆David Kirby. Owner of Market Fresh. Beverages comprise over 6% of sales. The tax would place an undue burden on a retail outlet. He has watched industrial businesses close and we have turned into a commuter town. Commuters will stop in Scappoose for their soda on their way home. Grocery industry is a 1% net profit business. Market Fresh donates to local nonprofits and community events. He would have to reduce staff to cover the increase in cost.

◆Susie Wilson. Local real estate broker. After 15 years, they have finally sold Violette's Villa property. It will be apartments in back and commercial in front. Businesses interested in the property will be selling these beverages. She has been contacted by commercial brokers who have said they won't come if the tax is passed.

◆Doug Stokes. Liquor agent for St. Helens Liquor Store. The beverage tax represents 75% of his non-liquor revenue. That's a huge blow. This will make it difficult to survive. People will shop at the Scappoose Liquor Store. He also supports a lot of car shows.

◆Laura Byrd. Resident of St. Helens. She talked about the history of sugar taxes, dating back to 1733. She feels the sugar tax has more to do with the revenue than the City's concern for citizen's health. She envisions citizens shopping out of town and hurting local businesses and the economy. She challenges the City to budget the money they already have and become more frugal with citizen tax dollars. If the Councilor's truly represent the citizens, they will vote no.

◆Loryn Thurman. She grew up in St. Helens and has owned Dari Delish for almost 26 years. She opposes the beverage tax. They do not need government meddling in what they should or shouldn't eat or drink. The tax is discriminating. It's an open door to tax other items deemed bad for us. What's next and where does it stop? A sedentary lifestyle contributes to obesity and health problems. Will you tax video games, TV's, phones, and computers? The answer is in education. She asks Council to exam the negative impact this tax will have.

◆Tammy Maygra. Deer Island resident. The Council's loyalty belongs to the small businesses. This will penalize them. If the Council was so concerned about health of kids in the community, they wouldn't be preparing to be bring toxic sludge from the Portland Superfund site through the community to harm kids. It's hypocritical. She didn't see the City in outrage when St. Helens High School made a deal with Coca Cola to pay for the football stadium.

◆Shannon Vaerwyck. Co-owner of Bertucci's Chocolates. She has lived here all of her life. She is also President of Shoe String Community Players, a community theater group for over 35 years. Her small business supports them and other nonprofits. She's concerned that the tax will really hurt businesses and nonprofits.

◆Chris Ostling. He grew up here. The City is trying to extract money from the community. He suggests bringing money into the community. One idea is to charge for cruising in St. Helens. Classic and muscle cars come from all over.

◆Tiffany Smith. Owner of Dockside Steak and Pasta. She sees the need to improve City parks. But there needs to be a better way to do it. She agreed with everyone who spoke. She's a small business and gives back as much as she can. It's getting harder to run a small business in this community. She has a friend who lives in one of the County's that adopted the tax. Her soda sales have gone down 50%. She asked the Council to consider the impact on small businesses.

◆Brady Preheim. He chose to stop drinking soda and didn't need the City to tell him to do that.

If you have a heart attack or two, you change your behavior. The implementation of it is ridiculous. People will purchase a diet soda and then go fill it up themselves with a sugary soda. He appreciates the public forum but expressed that it should have been held in a different location.

◆ Jubilee Beatley. Born and raised here. She agrees with the need for a tax but not like this. The parks are horrendous. She plans on getting involved.

◆ Kimberly Cabrera. She works for Coca-Cola. They sell a bag-in-the-box to markets that have fountain machines. It goes into the machine at a 5:1 ration. Five times that is water and one times that is the soda and sugar. The businesses are already having to pay for the water. We have some of the highest water rates. Her water bill is \$500/cycle.

◆ Shawna Harrison. She is a local realtor. She supports parks. What makes the City think this will be a positive change? We're so close to metro. They've already approved two major housing developments and have leased prime industrial land to a pot grow farm from California. Why is it the citizen's burden to improve parks? As citizens, who already pay high water bills, it's another cost to encumber. She went on to talk about the burden of additional taxes and the need for pedestrian safety improvements.

Council President Morten encouraged everyone to attend Council meetings and be involved in the process.

Deliberations will be held during the regular session.



Respectfully submitted by Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder.

ATTEST:

  
Kathy Payne, City Recorder

  
Doug Morten, Council President