

City of St. Helens City Council

Work Session Minutes

April 18, 2018

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

Members Absent: None

Staff Present: John Walsh, City Administrator
Kathy Payne, City Recorder
Matt Brown, Finance Director
Margaret Jeffries, Library Director
Sue Nelson, Public Works Engineering Director
Terry Moss, Police Chief
Crystal Farnsworth, Communications Officer
Melanie Payne, Legal Assistant
Riki Thompson, Municipal Court Clerk
Jenny Dimsho, Associate Planner
Jacob Graichen, City Planner
Cindy Phillips, Judge
Max Stahl, IT Consultant
Tina Curry, Event Manager

Others:

Chuck Daughtry	Amanda Lowthian
Della Fawcett	Mitzi Ponce
Brian Fawcett	Ted Grove
Leah Tillotson	Zoe Wild
Harry Dalgaard	Jeff Auxier
Casey Garrett	Nicole Thill
Steve Topaz	Julie Thompson

- 1) **Call Work Session to Order - 1:00 p.m.**
- 2) **Visitor Comments - Limited to five (5) minutes per speaker**
 - ♦ Mitzi Ponce, 2Cs Vendor Mall. They are very excited about the opportunity to participate in the fairy doors. The door will be hidden in the store for visitors to find. Their fairy, "Cece," has the power to make all things new again. They will be giving kids packets of Cece's favorite things and a printout of her story. Kids can leave her a gift or note when they find her. 2Cs now has 60 vendors and everyone sees the Fairy Festival as an opportunity to increase sales.
 - ♦ Steve Topaz. He asked if the rumor is correct that Councilor Locke is retiring from the Council.
Councilor Locke confirmed that is correct.

Discussion Regarding Tourism in Columbia County

The following people were in attendance to talk about the Regional Cooperative Tourism Program:

Chuck Daughtry, CCET Executive Director

Harry Dalgaard, Regional Cooperative Tourism Program Manager for Travel Oregon

Amanda Lowthian, Travel Portland

Brian Fawcett, Clatskanie PUD, President of Rainier Chamber of Commerce

Della Fawcett, Columbia County Emergency Management, President of Clatskanie Chamber

Casey Garrett, Columbia County

Harry talked about the program. It's a mechanism at the State-wide level to work locally within communities and regional bases. Columbia County is located within the Portland region. According to State law, the Regional Cooperative Tourism Program is required to give 20% of transient lodging tax collected at the State-wide level back to the regions at a pro-rated level. Columbia County is in the largest financial region. They are in the planning process for administration of the funds.

Amanda talked about the Portland region, which includes Columbia County. Projects and priorities come from the community. They are then proposed to Travel Oregon.

Brian talked about the Rainier Chamber of Commerce. They have updated their mission and vision, which includes pursuing tourism and economic development opportunities. They are very interested in this process.

Della talked about the Clatskanie Chamber of Commerce. They have identified tourism as a major aspect of the strategic plan. They want to capture the traffic that comes through Clatskanie on their way to the beach.

Chuck explained that this is a new program. Their objective is to broadly represent the County. Over two years, \$60,000 has been designated for Columbia County. He suggests that Keep it Local Columbia County be the coordinator for the County. They need to determine the stakeholders board, and create a mission and vision.

Council President Morten asked how this fits in with the existing tourism St. Helens has in place. Harry said the program adds to what the City already has. The board will determine how the funds are distributed. Morten asked why CCET is the facilitator, when CCET deals primarily with industrial growth. Chuck talked about his experience with tourism and it being a County-wide program.

Mayor Scholl pointed out that the City financially supports CCET to bring in industry. Spirit of Halloweentown events bring visitors from all over the world to Oregon. They were surprised to find out they were the last ones to find out about this program.

Casey heard about the regional tourism cooperation and showed up at a recent meeting to make sure that Columbia County had the opportunity to become part of it. He is focused on trail connectivity. He wants the focus to be on the entire county and not just one area.

Councilors Carlson and Conn agreed with need to work collaboratively as a County to bring tourism.

Discussion Regarding Municipal Court

Finance Director Brown reported that requests for Proposals (RFPs) were due last Friday for Judge and Prosecutor. Four Judge RFPs were received and one Prosecutor RFP was received. The City Prosecutor resigned last Friday.

Brown reviewed a proposal under the assumption that Municipal Court would only handle traffic cases. Criminal cases would be handled by the County. He talked about existing cases. He suggested forming a work group to aid in the transition.

County and state court representatives were in attendance to talk about the effect this would have on them.

District Attorney Jeff Auxier has been gathering information to determine the impact on their office. Deputy District Attorney Brandon Riffle has approximately 600 misdemeanor cases at any given time. They have seen a significant increase in cases. He's already spending more than 40 hours a week on these cases and is spread as thin as possible. If they have to take on the City's cases, they would likely be forced to hire someone else but the County Commissioners are not in a place to give their department more funding. The burden would force them to reduce the less serious crimes to violations. He talked about Hermiston taking their Court back from being formerly turned over to Umatilla County. Columbia County is looking into the possibility of offering night court.

Trial Court Administrator Zoe Wild said they offer night court once a month for traffic tickets. If they offer it for misdemeanors they would need a security officer on site. Her main concerns are staffing and time. They have already had to accommodate an increase in criminal cases. She was told that they are in a position of cutting staff rather than adding it. They are also closed to the public on Fridays due to a shortage in staff and an increase in case files. Cuts would have to be made to accommodate the additional files and that would be a hardship to the community. Columbia County has significant fewer court staff than other counties.

Discussion of the need to approach Salem requesting additional staff.

Council President Morten asked if they have sufficient space. Zoe responded that space is tight but they make it work. They could accommodate two more work stations. However, she hopes to add an additional judge in the next few years but doesn't have another court room. She has been working with Casey Garret at the County to use both State and County funds to build a new courthouse near the jail.

3) Discussion Topics

3.A Semi-Annual Report from IT Consultant - Max Stahl of Centerlogic

Max reported:

- Revamping the wireless to accommodate the new cameras.
- Set up a service that gives them the ability to restore the server quicker.
- Almost done updating the police vehicles with the new mobile devices. It's been a large project in coordination with Columbia 911.

3.B 3rd Quarter Communications Report - Crystal

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

3.C 3rd Quarter Financial Report - Matt
Finance Director Brown reviewed his report. A copy is included in the archive meeting packet.

3.E Update on Riverfront Connector Plan - Jacob
City Planner Graichen updated the Council on the grant and plan. A copy is included in the archive meeting packet.

3.F Riverfront District Land Use Discussion
City Planner Graichen clarified that this discussion is related to uses along Mainstreet that create dead spaces rather than street vibrancy. A few ideas he had are:

- Social
 - Talk to the building owners
- Public investment
 - Urban Renewal
 - Projects
- Zoning
 - Create buffers
 - Enforcement of uses
- Incentives

Graichen talked about Planning being very busy with large-scale development activity. Building will follow soon.

Councilor Carlson mentioned that Council recently discussed the need for a Code review. She wonders about loopholes in the Code that are perceived as safety hazards to neighbors. Graichen said that could be made part of the review. The goal is to make efficient use of land within the Urban Growth Area (UGA). Some of the concerns from neighbors have been based on perception. There's not as many people coming to review plans and talk to staff before the hearing. They come for the hearing and are already upset.

Discussion ensued about the impact of development on neighbors.

4) **Department Reports**

4.A Administration/Community Development Department Report

4.B Public Works Department Report

Chief Moss reported...

- Elijah Merkwan will be sworn in at tonight's meeting. He begins at the academy in May.
- If another school resource officer is added, they will be short a person due to the time it takes for certification and training.
- Sgt. Matt Molden returned to work yesterday.

Public Works Engineering Director Nelson reported...

- Congratulations to Chief Moss on receiving the Max Patterson Award for the work he has done with youth in the community.
- Before working for the City, she worked for a private engineering developer. They mainly worked on subdivisions. Every public hearing she attended had people who were opposed to development around them. It's the nature of development.
- Engineering has been very busy with activity. It's exciting to see growth.

- Meeting with contractor of the crack-sealing project next week. That project will begin soon.

Library Director Jeffries reported...

- Thanked Mayor Scholl for signing all the certificates for the annual Library volunteer appreciation event. It was held last Friday and well attended.
- Attended a meeting to discuss Dolly Parton's Imagination Library on Monday. Local organizations were well represented and there was a lot of excitement about the program. They were more concerned about obtaining enough volunteers rather than funding it. United Way offered to take on the funding piece of it.
- Next installment of Civics for Adults tomorrow night at 7 p.m.
- Hosting author Willie Vlautin next week.

Finance Director Brown reported...

- Was contacted by a Board member of the pool. They propose changing the name to the Greater St. Helens Aquatics & Recreation District. In return, they are requesting:
 - The Council keep an open mind of the adjacent park if they consider expanding.
 - Become a partner of the recreation program, along with the City and School District.
 - The City re-visit their utility rate. They pointed out that most of their water does not go into the sewer. Discussion ensued about the pool performing a study of the percentage of water that goes into the sewer system.
 Council directed Brown to move forward.
- Seeking direction for the Court. There are two employees who are constantly on the edge about their jobs and this puts them in a difficult position. The estimated revenue for the current Court budget was \$205,000. The supplemental budget increased it to \$270,000. Those fines are currently at about \$208,000. It's uncertain right now with the prosecutor resigning last Friday. Staffing and professional services costs about \$360,000 – 380,000 annually. Even with the changes, they are still in the red. The five-year projection at last night's Budget was based on only traffic. Council President Morten pointed out that the State Court's do have room for additional staff. He talked about sharing our staff with them. Councilor Carlson argued that other departments are not required to fully fund themselves. Government provides services and not enforcing crimes, due to a lack of staff, is not providing a service to our community. Discussion ensued. It was the consensus of the Council to create a workgroup with effected organizations to meet and come back with a proposal.

City Recorder Payne reported...

- Boards and Commissions reception next Tuesday at the Roof.
- Council retreat April 25.
- Building Official interviews April 26.

Event Manager Tina Curry reported...

- Working with Stephanie on distributing fairy doors to local businesses.
- The Air BnB meeting went really well. A second meeting was requested.
- A new full-time Chamber director has been hired.
- Posted an ad in the Freshwater News encouraging boaters to come back.
- Met with Travel Oregon. Will be working with them on some grant opportunities.
- Met with Bart and Matt at Cascadia Home Loans about 4th of July.

- Met with stakeholders about the potential hotel on the Waterfront property. Discussed future events. One of the events discussed is the main factor of whether they come or not. It's important to have viable events.
- The next merchant's meeting will be in May.
- Festival of the Fairies coming up.
- Running Dogs Brewery is the official beer of City events.
- Clarified that the City typically supports businesses inside the city if there is competitive business outside the City at the same cost. Council confirmed that is correct.
- Thanked Council for helping control misinformation in the community.
- Thanked Stephanie and staff for their help.
- Congratulations to Chief Moss.

City Administrator Walsh reported...

- Congratulations to Chief Moss.
- Building Official interviews next week.
- Thanks to City of Scappoose for sharing their Building Official.
- Working diligently on the middle school plans to issue. Thanked Building & Administration Secretary Heidi Davis for keeping it going.
- The regional tourism representatives here earlier is only one piece of tourism in the area. The City is also working with Travel Oregon on another program. The regional program does not even include St. Helens in the plan, although we are the leading tourism organization in the County. The City has asked for that to be fixed in the plan but it has yet to be. Discussion of CCET's inception and role. Council President Morten is bothered by CCET making decisions using tax payer dollars in a private meeting. Mayor Scholl was only made aware of the regional tourism meeting on the Friday before the Tuesday meeting.

5) **Council Reports - postponed until the evening Regular Session**

6) **Other Business - None**

7) **Adjourn – 4:26 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted by Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder.

ATTEST:


Kathy Payne, City Recorder


Rick Scholl, Mayor