



BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING #2 (READJOURNMENT)

Thursday, May 15, 2025, at 6:00 PM

DRAFT MINUTES

Members Present

Council President Jessica Chilton
Councilor Mark Gundersen
Councilor Russell Hubbard
Councilor Brandon Sundeen

Chair Lew Mason
Vice Chair Steve Toschi
Committee Member Jennifer Gilbert
Committee Member Ivan Salas

Members Absent:

Mayor Jennifer Massey

Staff Present:

Gloria Butsch, Finance Director - Budget Officer
John Walsh, City Administrator
Jamie Edwards, Accountant III- Budget Comm. Sec.
Jennifer Johnson, Accountant III
Ashley Wigod, City Attorney
Kathy Payne, HR Coordinator/City Recorder
Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder
Jacob Graichen, City Planner
Brenda Herren-Kenaga, Reference Librarian
Jana Wiersma, Youth & Makerspace Librarian

Sharon Darroux, Engineering Manager
Suzanne Bishop, Library Director
Shanna Duggan, Recreation Manager
Buck Tupper, Facility Maintenance Supervisor
Aaron Kunders, Water Quality Manager
Alex Bird, Engineer II
Crystal King, Communications Officer
Tyler Hills, Water Quality Operator

Others:

KOIN
Aaron Martin
Elsadye
JoAnn Dohn
Troy
Ikennifer Massey
Roger
Scott
Shauna Stroup-Harrison
Wendy
Tari
Michelle
Teegee
Erin Wheeldon
Dominique Dubois
Joe

Brittani
Jamerson
Boby Bushay
Angel
Becky
Teresa
Rick Scholl
Jameson
Patrick Birkle
Walt Petersen
Brady Preheim
Reed Hjort
Charlotte Hart
Tina Curry
Gannon Smith
Eric Schnell
Steve Topaz

Jane Garcia
Nick Flory
Laurie Raffin
Ashlee
Molly Matchak
Nick Hellmich
Alana Gilstch
Lynne Pettit
Pam Benham
Robyn Toschi
Melissa
David
Linda Sprau
Catherine
Dav

Call to Order – 6:00 PM

Introductions were made around the table, starting with the committee members and City staff.

Budget Officer Comments

Finance Director Gloria Butsch welcomed and thanked the audience and Committee. Gloria read the role of the Budget Committee. She emphasized that the Committee's role is not to make management decisions such as establishing or eliminating programs or services. Butsch also stressed the importance of being respectful and avoiding disparaging comments about staff, as it erodes morale and causes divisiveness among departments.

Public Comment (3 minutes each)

Chair Mason welcomed public comments, limiting them to three minutes each and requesting that speakers state their name and confirm they are citizens of St. Helens. Public comments were heard by: Steve Topaz, Ellen Jacobson, Nicholas Hellmich, Molly Matchak, Alana Gilston, Tyler Hills, Patrick Birkle, Brady Preheim, Dannon, Linda Sprau, Nick Flori, Christina Sullivan, Charlotte Hart, Kathy Payne, Joe, Dwayne, JoAnn Dohn, Shauna Stroup Harrison, Angel, Jameson, and Rick Scholl.

- Steve Topaz spoke about the list of possible changes and additions presented by Kathy Payne, noting that it showed failures of the City and a lack of accountability for mistakes. He expressed concern about potential retaliation for bringing up problems.
- Ellen Jacobson, a resident and Library Board member, spoke in support of the library. She highlighted the value the library provides for the community and expressed concern about potential staff and service reductions. Jacobson also voiced her discomfort with the proposed \$42 fee on the water bill.
- Nicholas Hellmich, a citizen of St. Helens, commented on the proposed \$42.10 fee addition to the utility bill. He expressed concern about the impact on low-income residents and suggested alternatives such as adding the fee to property taxes or charging corporations.
- Molly Matchak, a long-time resident, spoke about the importance of the library to her family and the community. She emphasized the library's role in children's development and learning.
- Alana Gilston, a 30-year resident, praised the Library's improvements over the years and stressed its importance in providing services to marginalized people and children. She expressed concern about the potential impact of furloughing part-time employees.
- Tyler Hills, a City Employee and Union President, expressed strong opposition to the implementation of furlough days. He urged the Committee to explore other cost-saving measures that would not cause undue harm to workers.
- Patrick Birkle, a former City Council Member, commented on the Library and the proposed fee. He suggested that the City could step up to provide opportunities for children through library services and the recreation program, especially considering potential school budget cuts. He also expressed concern about the proposed fee on the utility bill.
- Brady Preheim criticized the Committee for ignoring budget issues that were apparent two years ago. He argued that the Committee should have acted earlier to prevent the current situation.
- Gannon, a local resident, expressed frustration with the City's priorities and the potential cuts to the library. He argued against putting additional financial burdens on residents and suggested reconsidering spending on projects like waterfront development.
- Linda Sprau spoke in support of the Library and the various programs it offers the senior citizens and younger citizens.
- Nick Flori, spoke on behalf of the St. Helens Parks and Trails Committee, expressing concerns on maintenance for the new waterfront, urging the Committee to keep this in mind for future Parks Budget. Flori also spoke in favor for the library budget and concern over additional fees.

- Christina Sullivan expressed concern about the ongoing deficit and questioned the fairness of adding a \$42 fee to residents' bills. She suggested looking at other areas for potential savings, such as Police wages, Council pay, and Unrepresented Staff pay scales.
- Charlotte Hart spoke about the history of the library and its importance to the community. She emphasized the Library's role in providing activities and resources for children and adults alike.
- Kathy Payne, City Recorder and Human Resources Coordinator, spoke in opposition to any changes that would adversely affect the Employees' pay, including furlough days. Payne further requested the need to balance the budget not be placed on Employees.
- Joe, a long-time resident, spoke about the changing nature of St. Helens as a commuter town and the financial struggles of many residents. He urged the Committee to consider the impact of any fee increases on the community.
- Wayne, a 30-year resident, questioned the allocation of funds from previous fees, particularly regarding the Recreation Center.
- JoAnn Dohn, a resident of St. Helens who is a Therapist in this County, expressed concern that the \$42.10 fee will have a significant impact on the most vulnerable citizens.
- Shauna Stroup-Harrison discussed a petition she started regarding concerns about the proposed \$42 water bill fee. She highlighted the City's financial challenges and urged finding solutions that don't burden existing consumers.
- Angel, a renter in St. Helens, expressed concern about the proposed fee increase and its impact on lower-income residents. She questioned why water rates in St. Helens are so high compared to other areas.
- Jameson, a local resident who had lived in various other states, commented on the high-water rates in St. Helens compared to other places she had lived.
- Rick Scholl, former Mayor, discussed the Police Department budget and suggested that the Council needs to take more proactive measures to address budget issues. He recommended considering cuts to the Police Department and exploring other revenue sources.

Additional public comments were written and provided to the Committee prior to the meeting.

Approval of Minutes

1. Budget Committee Minutes dated 5/1/2025

Motion: Motion made by Committee Member Jennifer Gilbert to approve the Budget Committee Minutes from 5/1/2025, seconded by Council President Jessica Chilton.

Voting Yea: Councilor Gundersen, Councilor Hubbard, Councilor Sundeen, Vice Chair Mason, Committee Member Gilbert, Committee Member Salas, Committee Member Toschi

Review Submitted Questions & Staff Responses

Chair Mason advised the Committee was emailed the submitted questions and staff responses. Finance Director Butsch asked if there were additional questions.

Gloria Butsch presented various budget scenarios to the Committee. These included:

1. The proposed budget with a 2.5% COLA and a \$42.10 fee.
2. A scenario with 2.5% COLA, 12 furlough days a year (except for police officers), and a \$16 fee.
3. A scenario with no COLAs, no furloughs, a hiring freeze, and a \$13.70 fee.

Butsch also presented potential revenue-generating ideas, such as increasing business license fees for multi-unit residential rentals and commercial rentals and adding an impact fee on event ticket sales.

The Committee discussed these options and asked questions about various aspects of the budget, including Police staffing levels, the Tourism program, and potential cuts to different departments.

Review Staff Revisions

Butsch presented staff revisions to the budget, including reductions in personnel services, pausing the vehicle replacement program, and reducing professional development across departments. She also discussed potential new revenue sources, such as increased business license fees and an impact fee on event ticket sales.

The Committee engaged in extensive discussion about these revisions, particularly focusing on the Police Department budget, the Tourism program, and potential ways to increase revenue or reduce expenses.

Opportunity Discussion

The Committee discussed assorted topics, including:

1. The Police station project and its budget constraints.
2. The potential sale of surplus property, including the Millard Road property and the mill property.
3. The Tourism program and ways to potentially increase revenue from events like Spirit of Halloweentown.
4. The possibility of reducing or eliminating certain community events to save money.
5. The need for more information from the Police Chief about potential budget reductions.

The Committee requested that the Police Chief be present at the next meeting to answer questions about the Department's budget and staffing needs.

Open & Close Public Hearing for State Shared Revenue

Chair Mason opened the public hearing for State Shared Revenue. Butsch explained that the State Shared Revenue includes taxes collected by the State, such as cigarette and liquor taxes, which are then shared with cities. To receive these funds, the City must hold a public hearing and demonstrate that it funds police or fire services.

No public comments were made during this hearing.

Chair Mason closed the public hearing for State Shared Revenue.

Check In for Adjournment to May 29, 2025

The Committee agreed to check in for adjournment to May 29, 2025. They discussed items to be addressed at the next meeting, including having the Interim Police Chief present to answer questions about the Department's budget.

Motion: motion was made by Committee Member Jennifer Gilbert to adjourn at 9:14 p.m., seconded by Councilor Brandon Sundeen.

Adjourned at 9:14 p.m. to May 29, 2025,

Respectfully submitted by Jamie Edwards, Accountant III, with assisted transcription by ClerkMinutes.