



**CLEAR TRAIL CPAS**  
Clear Solutions, Clear Results

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2850 SW Cedar Hills Blvd, #2074, Beaverton OR 97005 • 503-586-7170 • ClearTrailCPAS.com

December 31, 2024

To the City Council  
City of St. Helens, Oregon

We have audited the basic financial statements of the governmental activities, the business-type activities, each major fund, and the aggregate remaining fund information of the City of St. Helens for the year ended June 30, 2024. Professional standards require that we provide you with information about our responsibilities under generally accepted auditing standards and *Government Auditing Standards and the Uniform Guidance*, as well as certain information related to the planned scope and timing of our audit. Professional standards also require that we communicate to you the following information related to our audit.

**Purpose of the Audit**

Our audit was conducted using sampling, inquiries and analytical work to opine on the fair presentation of the basic financial statements and compliance with:

- generally accepted accounting principles and auditing standards
- the Oregon Municipal Audit Law and the related administrative rules
- federal, state and other agency rules and regulations related to expenditures of federal awards

**Our Responsibility under U.S. Generally Accepted Auditing Standards and the Uniform Guidance**

As stated in our engagement letter, our responsibility, as described by professional standards, is to express opinions about whether the basic financial statements prepared by management with your oversight are fairly presented, in all material respects, in conformity with U.S. generally accepted accounting principles. Our audit of the basic financial statements does not relieve you or management of your responsibilities. Our engagement letter details our nonaudit services we provide; these services do not constitute an audit under Government Auditing Standards.

In planning and performing our audit, we considered internal control over financial reporting in order to determine our auditing procedures for the purpose of expressing our opinions on the financial statements and not to provide assurance on the internal control over financial reporting. We also considered internal control over compliance with requirements that could have a direct and material effect on a major federal program in order to determine our auditing procedures for the purpose of expressing our opinion on compliance and to test and report on internal control over compliance in accordance with the Uniform Guidance.

As part of obtaining reasonable assurance about whether the basic financial statements are free of material misstatement, we performed tests of its compliance with certain provisions of laws, regulations, contracts, and grants, noncompliance with which could have a direct and material effect on the determination of the basic financial statement amounts. However, providing an opinion on compliance with those provisions is not an objective of our audit. Also in accordance with the Uniform Guidance, we examined, on a test basis, evidence about compliance with the types of compliance requirements described in the OMB's Compliance Supplement applicable to each of the major federal programs for the purpose of expressing an opinion on compliance with those requirements. While our audit provided a reasonable basis for our opinion, it does not provide a legal determination on compliance with those requirements.

Our responsibility for the supplementary information accompanying the basic financial statements, as described by professional standards, is to evaluate the presentation of the supplementary information in relation to the basic financial statements as a whole and to report on whether the supplementary information is fairly stated, in all material respects, in relation to the basic financial statements as a whole.

### **Planned Scope and Timing of the Audit**

An audit includes examining, on a test basis, evidence supporting the amounts and disclosures in the basic financial statements; therefore, our audit involved judgment about the number of transactions examined and the areas to be tested.

Our audit included obtaining an understanding of the City and its environment, including internal control, sufficient to assess the risks of material misstatement of the basic financial statements and to design the nature, timing, and extent of further audit procedures. Material misstatements may result from (1) errors, (2) fraudulent financial reporting, (3) misappropriation of assets, or (4) violations of laws or governmental regulations that are attributable to the City or to acts by management or employees acting on behalf of the City. We also communicated any internal control related matters that are required to be communicated under professional standards.

### **Results of Audit**

1. Audit opinion letter - an unmodified opinion on the basic financial statements has been issued. This means we have given a “clean” opinion with no reservations.
2. State minimum standards – We found no exceptions or issues requiring comment.
3. Federal Awards - We found no issues of non-compliance and no questioned costs. We have responsibility to review these programs and give our opinion on the schedule of expenditures of federal awards, and tests of the internal control system, compliance with laws and regulations, and general and specific requirements mandated by the various awards.
4. Management letter – No separate management letter was issued.

### **Significant Audit Matters**

#### *Qualitative Aspects of Accounting Practices*

Management is responsible for the selection and use of appropriate accounting policies. The significant accounting policies used are described in Note 1 to the basic financial statements. No new accounting policies were adopted and the application of existing policies was not changed during 2024. We noted no transactions entered into during the year for which there is a lack of authoritative guidance or consensus. All significant transactions have been recognized in the basic financial statements in the proper period.

Accounting estimates are an integral part of the basic financial statements prepared by management and are based on management’s knowledge and experience about past and current events and assumptions about future events. Certain accounting estimates are particularly sensitive because of their significance to the basic financial statements and because of the possibility that future events affecting them may differ significantly from those expected. The most significant estimates in the financial statements are the actuarial estimate of the City’s portion of the statewide Net Pension Liability (or Asset) and Other Post Employment Benefits. Other sensitive estimate(s) affecting the basic financial statements were Management’s estimate of Accounts Receivable and Capital Asset Depreciation, which is(are) based on estimated collectability of receivables and useful lives of assets. We evaluated the methods, assumptions, and data used to develop these estimates in determining that they are reasonable in relation to the basic financial statements taken as a whole.

Certain financial statement disclosures are particularly sensitive because of their significance to financial statement users. The financial statement disclosures are neutral, consistent, and clear.

*Difficulties Encountered in Performing the Audit*

We encountered no significant difficulties in dealing with management in performing and completing our audit.

*Corrected and Uncorrected Misstatements*

Professional standards require us to accumulate all known and likely misstatements identified during the audit, other than those that are clearly trivial, and communicate them to the appropriate level of management. Management has corrected all such misstatements or determined that their effects are immaterial. In addition, none of the misstatements detected as a result of audit procedures and corrected by management were material, either individually or in the aggregate, taken as a whole. There were immaterial uncorrected misstatements noted during the audit which were discussed with management. The uncorrected misstatements or the matters underlying them could potentially cause future period financial statements to be materially misstated, even if, in our judgment, such uncorrected misstatements are immaterial to the financial statements under audit.

*Disagreements with Management*

For purposes of this letter, a disagreement with management is a financial accounting, reporting, or auditing matter, whether or not resolved to our satisfaction, that could be significant to the basic financial statements or the auditors' report. We are pleased to report that no such disagreements arose during the course of our audit.

*Management Representations*

We have requested certain representations from management that are included in the management representation letter.

*Management Consultations with Other Independent Accountants*

In some cases, management may decide to consult with other accountants about auditing and accounting matters, similar to obtaining a "second opinion" on certain situations. If a consultation involves application of an accounting principle to the basic financial statements or a determination of the type of auditors' opinion that may be expressed on those statements, our professional standards require the consulting accountant to check with us to determine that the consultant has all the relevant facts. To our knowledge, there were no such consultations with other accountants.

*Other Audit Findings or Issues*

We generally discuss a variety of matters, including the application of accounting principles and auditing standards with management each year prior to our retention as the auditors. However, these discussions occurred in the normal course of our professional relationship and our responses were not a condition to our retention.

*Required Supplementary Information*

We applied certain limited procedures to the required supplementary information that supplements the basic financial statements. Our procedures consisted of inquiries of management regarding the methods of preparing the information and comparing the information for consistency with management's responses to our inquiries, the basic financial statements, and other knowledge we obtained during our audit of the basic financial statements. We did not audit the required supplementary information and do not express an opinion or provide any assurance on it.

*Supplementary Information*

We were engaged to report on the supplementary information, which accompany the basic financial statements but are not required supplementary information. With respect to this supplementary information, we made certain inquiries of management and evaluated the form, content, and methods of preparing the information to determine that the information complies with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America, the

method of preparing it has not changed from the prior period, and the information is appropriate and complete in relation to our audit of the basic financial statements. We compared and reconciled the supplementary information to the underlying accounting records used to prepare the basic financial statements or to the basic financial statements themselves.

### *Other Information*

We were not engaged to report on the other information, which accompanies the basic financial statements but is not required supplementary information. Such information has not been subjected to the auditing procedures applied in the audit of the basic financial statements, and accordingly, we do not express an opinion or provide any assurance on it.

### **Other Matters – Future Accounting and Auditing Issues**

In order to keep you aware of new auditing standards issued by the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants and accounting statements issued by the Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB), we have prepared the following summary of the more significant upcoming issues:

#### **GASB 101 – COMPENSATED ABSENCES**

The requirements of this Statement are effective for fiscal years beginning after December 15, 2023, and all reporting periods thereafter. The objective of this Statement is to better meet the information needs of financial statement users by updating the recognition and measurement guidance for compensated absences. That objective is achieved by aligning the recognition and measurement guidance under a unified model and by amending certain previously required disclosures.

This Statement requires that liabilities for compensated absences be recognized for (1) leave that has not been used and (2) leave that has been used but not yet paid in cash or settled through noncash means. A liability should be recognized for leave that has not been used if (a) the leave is attributable to services already rendered, (b) the leave accumulates, and (c) the leave is more likely than not to be used for time off or otherwise paid in cash or settled through noncash means. Leave is attributable to services already rendered when an employee has performed the services required to earn the leave. Leave that accumulates is carried forward from the reporting period in which it is earned to a future reporting period during which it may be used for time off or otherwise paid or settled. In estimating the leave that is more likely than not to be used or otherwise paid or settled, a government should consider relevant factors such as employment policies related to compensated absences and historical information about the use or payment of compensated absences. However, leave that is more likely than not to be settled through conversion to defined benefit postemployment benefits should not be included in a liability for compensated absences.

This Statement requires that a liability for certain types of compensated absences—including parental leave, military leave, and jury duty leave—not be recognized until the leave commences. This Statement also requires that a liability for specific types of compensated absences not be recognized until the leave is used.

This Statement also establishes guidance for measuring a liability for leave that has not been used, generally using an employee’s pay rate as of the date of the financial statements. A liability for leave that has been used but not yet paid or settled should be measured at the amount of the cash payment or noncash settlement to be made. Certain salary-related payments that are directly and incrementally associated with payments for leave also should be included in the measurement of the liabilities.

With respect to financial statements prepared using the current financial resources measurement focus, this Statement requires that expenditures be recognized for the amount that normally would be liquidated with expendable available financial resources.

This Statement amends the existing requirement to disclose the gross increases and decreases in a liability for compensated absences to allow governments to disclose only the net change in the liability (as long as they

identify it as a net change). In addition, governments are no longer required to disclose which governmental funds typically have been used to liquidate the liability for compensated absences.

### **GASB 102 – CERTAIN RISK DISCLOSURES**

The requirements of this Statement are effective for fiscal years beginning after June 15, 2024, and all reporting periods thereafter. The requirements of this Statement will improve financial reporting by providing users of financial statements with essential information that currently is not often provided. The disclosures will provide users with timely information regarding certain concentrations or constraints and related events that have occurred or have begun to occur that make a government vulnerable to a substantial impact. As a result, users will have better information with which to understand and anticipate certain risks to a government's financial condition.

State and local governments face a variety of risks that could negatively affect the level of service they provide or their ability to meet obligations as they come due. Although governments are required to disclose information about their exposure to some of those risks, essential information about other risks that are prevalent among state and local governments is not routinely disclosed because it is not explicitly required. The objective of this Statement is to provide users of government financial statements with essential information about risks related to a government's vulnerabilities due to certain concentrations or constraints.

This Statement defines a *concentration* as a lack of diversity related to an aspect of a significant inflow of resources or outflow of resources. A *constraint* is a limitation imposed on a government by an external party or by formal action of the government's highest level of decision-making authority. Concentrations and constraints may limit a government's ability to acquire resources or control spending.

This Statement requires a government to assess whether a concentration or constraint makes the primary government reporting unit or other reporting units that report a liability for revenue debt vulnerable to the risk of a substantial impact. Additionally, this Statement requires a government to assess whether an event or events associated with a concentration or constraint that could cause the substantial impact have occurred, have begun to occur, or are more likely than not to begin to occur within 12 months of the date the financial statements are issued.

If a government determines that those criteria for disclosure have been met for a concentration or constraint, it should disclose information in notes to financial statements in sufficient detail to enable users of financial statements to understand the nature of the circumstances disclosed and the government's vulnerability to the risk of a substantial impact. The disclosure should include descriptions of the following:

- The concentration or constraint
- Each event associated with the concentration or constraint that could cause a substantial impact if the event had occurred or had begun to occur prior to the issuance of the financial statements
- Actions taken by the government prior to the issuance of the financial statements to mitigate the risk.

### **Best Practices – Not Significant Deficiencies**

#### 1. FTE Comment

The organization should consistently evaluate its Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) capacity within the finance and accounting department. In recent years, the accounting department has faced a substantial increase in workload due to the need to adhere to demanding GASB requirements, manage new COVID-related grants, and navigate various state and federal regulations tied to grants and other financial matters. It's not explicitly suggested that the department is understaffed, as we lack daily presence, but it is crucial to conduct an annual assessment during the budget cycle. This ensures that the department does not operate at a stretched capacity, safeguarding against potential strain on its capabilities.

2. Accounting Shortage

As auditors, we have observed a widespread shortage of governmental accountants across the state. This deficit is attributable to various factors, primarily stemming from the escalating demand for financial expertise in a swiftly changing landscape. Firstly, the evolving regulatory environment and the increasing intricacies of bodies such as FASB, GASB, IRS, OMB and Oregon Division of Audits have the need for specialized accounting professionals. Additionally, the aging workforce in the accounting field contributes to the shortage, with a considerable number of seasoned accountants approaching retirement age. To address this shortage, entities can proactively implement measures such as investing in educational programs to attract and train new talent, providing competitive compensation packages to retain experienced professionals, and harnessing technological advancements like automation to streamline routine tasks. This approach allows accountants to concentrate on more complex and value-added activities.

This information is intended solely for the information and use of the City Council and management and is not intended to be and should not be used by anyone other than these specified parties.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ken Allen", written in a cursive style.

Kenneth Allen, CPA  
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