



COUNCIL WORK SESSION

Wednesday, October 19, 2022

DRAFT MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT

Mayor Rick Scholl
Council President Doug Morten
Councilor Patrick Birkle
Councilor Stephen R. Topaz
Councilor Jessica Chilton

STAFF PRESENT

John Walsh, City Administrator
Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder
Crystal King, Communications Officer
Jacob Graichen, City Planner
Jenny Dimsho, Associate Planner/Community Development Project Manager
Bill Monahan, City Attorney
Tina Curry, Event Coordinator

OTHERS

Michael Curri	Andy Bates
Brady Preheim	Ben Tiscareno
Jenai Fitzpatrick	Lori Armstrong

CALL WORK SESSION TO ORDER – 2:00 p.m.

VISITOR COMMENTS - *Limited to three (3) minutes per speaker*

- Brady Preheim. Noted Spirit of Halloweentown had been going well, and visitors loved the train. He thanked Public Works for trimming the hedge near his house and for their quick response, noting his neighbor had almost been hit by a bus, too. He disagrees with the City spending money on the Waterfront project until Council had more confidence in and a better understanding of the City's financial forecasts and all the issues from the previous Finance Director. He is not opposed to the project, but a developer was needed, and it should be delayed, as well as the police station.
- Lori Armstrong. Has lived in St. Helens for 52 years. She had seen many distracted drivers and was almost hit by one while in a crosswalk outside of City Hall. A route many people took up the hill, 2nd Street, brought in a lot of traffic, and she was concerned about being hit by a car as many of those people were not sure where they were going. She shared her observations of chaos in and around Halloweentown. Halloween was Satan's holiday as it celebrated death, fear, and darkness. Halloweentown was attracting more evil, such as witches and warlocks. Using the event to bring in more people for businesses is ridiculous; good food and customer service builds business. A majority of people are coming with good intentions, and she was not opposed to fun, but not everyone had the City's or the County's best interest at heart. She loved the city but felt many people do not understand the darkness Halloweentown brings. City Council works for the people, who have rights. She wanted Halloweentown dropped as a City event, noting several business owners agreed.

DISCUSSION TOPICS - *The Council will take a break around 4:00 p.m.***1. Presentation by Strategic Network Group (SNG) for Broadband Survey Results**
- Michael Curri

Michael Curri reviewed the Broadband Survey results via PowerPoint, a copy of which is included in the archive packet for this meeting. Key highlights included St. Helens' broadband challenges and the work and research showing the City could move forward with the necessary digital infrastructure. He sought input on whether Council wanted to move forward with the infrastructure and if so, if they wanted to take next steps, including exploring funding options from both public and private sources.

City Administrator Walsh asked why network coverage was so patchy.

- Mr. Curri explained providers had a business case to make when investing three to five years ago, noting more businesses and affluent neighborhoods were more likely to connect and would buy higher packages offering a higher return, as opposed to lower income, less dense areas which were less likely to be connected; therefore, increasing the digital divide.

Councilor Birkle noted this was certainly something the Council needed to look at, but more time was needed for it to be absorbed.

Mayor Scholl said he wanted to proceed with the next step since federal money would be available, noting the City was well-equipped to be a very competitive broadband area. He added the school district had simply created their own system to ensure connectivity.

Councilor Chilton would like to see what other cities had done to see what those next steps look like.

Council President Morten pointed out the City of Sandy had already done it, noting cities around that size were independent and had their own system. He sat on the League of Oregon Cities Committee on Broadband about six or seven years ago which was well-represented by cities that had laid their own cable.

- Mr. Curri added there was a whole possible spectrum noting the City of Sandy was a great success story. In terms of the options, the community, city, or region would have a partnership with a provider that would subsidize that. He noted the challenge behind the unserved and underserved was because service providers did not see a return in those areas. Such cases lead to public investments such as roads, electrical grids, and sewer systems as those goods outweighed the direct returns, a good model being the Airport Authority. Having the community own its own digital roads was important to ensure interested providers got access not to just the street, but the premise. As an economist, he was against having public subsidies to one provider or business entity over another. An even playing field that gave the consumer a choice to choose providers that would then ensure good service and competitive prices was ideal. Nodes could be put in the good service areas for providers to expand and upgrade their services. The data the team had could show the provider where to expand and could also be used to make a competitive bid for the federal and state funds that are available to be used in the unserved or underserved areas.
- City Administrator Walsh agreed looking at other cities was a good point, adding he looked forward to the staff doing that research.

Council President Morten noted that with the street development the City would do, the infrastructure should be built with the capacity to install things without having to dig up again, using large enough conduit, for example. The entire system did not need to be underground. The City had both a hard wired and wireless system to serve the City. Columbia River People's Utility District (CRPUD) needed to be very involved in the process, especially in terms of any shift to underground vaults in their own wiring processes. This would be a first stop for the City to see what could happen, and if it was a hub, how far out it could go.

Mayor Scholl noted ARPA funding was boosted due to COVID and the lack of services in rural America. How would the City fit within the radar of what SNG had seen? Did St. Helens need to belong in those criteria?

- Mr. Curri replied there was no upcoming digital equity program that St. Helens was eligible for. He offered to get back to the Council with ARPA details and how that could be applied to St. Helens, as well as the upcoming bid, noting the data SNG had could make a strong case as no one else had that level of detail except Jefferson and Hermosa who SNG also worked with to show those economic and community benefits.

The Council directed Mr. Curri to work with City Administrator Walsh and return to Council in the future.

2. Planning Semi-Annual Report - *Jacob Graichen and Jenny Dimsho*

City Planner Graichen and Associate Planner Dimsho presented the Semi-Annual Planning Department report. A copy of the report was included in the archive packet for this meeting. Council was updated on several planning projects and activities within the city, which included projects on tonight's regular agenda, as well as key legislative items and funding programs impacting the City and the status of the Planning Department's workload and need to address burnout and add staff in Engineering.

Councilor Topaz asked if a marketing study had been conducted for the St. Helens Industrial Business Park, given the sewer plant deficiency, waterfront contamination and overall geology of the site.

- Ms. Dimsho replied she was uncertain, but if the City had conducted a market study for that site it would be out of date.
- Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) currently had a public comment period for the preferred remediation alternative it had selected and that was being paid for by OfficeMax on the Boise site. The Planning Department would also be providing comments. At the community interest meeting that Councilor Topaz and she had attended, Jeff Schatz, the project manager mentioned multiple times that the preferred remediation alternative would not prohibit the City from using the site for industrial uses in the future. It would be important for the City to stay involved with the project, especially as the concept design evolved. Because the design was not complete, they were not prepared to answer Councilor Topaz' questions about building within the water.

Councilor Topaz noted DEQ was not allowed to use the preferred remediation alternative at the Willamette Cove operation in Portland. Additionally, the Army Corps of Engineers had not been consulted.

Councilor Topaz noted the Comstock Subdivision was allowed even though the sewer line capacity was questionable. He did not want to set a precedent that any development could move forward without adequate infrastructure.

Council President Morten disagreed any precedent was being set.

Mayor Scholl reported the City had allocated an impact fee on the subject area and had a been approved for a DEQ loan to begin the sewer line improvement projects, which the City understood was happening prior to the subdivision approval. He assured Council was not setting precedents to allow anyone to illegally do whatever they wanted.

Council generally consented to move forward with the proposed sanitary sewer fee and not enact a moratorium.

3. Review of Proposed Increases in Planning Department Fees – *Jacob Graichen*

City Planner Graichen reviewed the proposed increases in Planning Department fees. A copy of his report was included in the archive packet for this meeting. He noted the City periodically increased fees every one or two years and the new fee structure would become effective November 1st if approved by the Council.

Councilor Topaz confirmed that the fee increases would not offset or pay the cost of hiring a new employee for the department as a salary would still draw from the General Fund. He noted the need for additional personnel to keep up with the workload and that city's growth would slow down if City Planner Graichen did not get help.

Break - 4:07 p.m.

4. Review of Proposed Changes to Sidewalk Construction and Repair Code – *Jacob Graichen*

City Planner Graichen reviewed the proposed changes to Sidewalk Construction and Repair Code noting there was a white paper attached to the memorandum which talked about sidewalk liabilities. A copy was included in the archive packet for this meeting.

Mayor Scholl asked about the process of removing street trees, noting a tree was damaging the sidewalk at the CCMH Cornerstone building that they wanted to repair, but also get rid of the tree, which could cause additional damage. He believed the City's street trees were planted precariously.

City Planner Graichen said staff and CCMH discussed removing the street tree and replacing it with an alternative. Staff would look into it and contact their maintenance person.

Council President Morten noted there was an ordinance in place for street trees, which were required.

Council President Morten noted in Portland, the local and city ordinances placed the responsibility on the adjacent property owner to repair and clear sidewalks, as well as potentially removing and replacing the tree. Some tree species were deep rooted and would not cause sidewalk damage.

5. Discussion on Citizens' Day in the Park Event - *Crystal King and Lisa Scholl*

Communications Officer King and Deputy City Recorder Scholl updated the Council on the Citizens Day in the Park event. A copy of the report was included in the archive packet for this meeting.

- Parks and Recreation Division requested a quote from Peak Electric to upgrade electrical services at the park due to the number of growing vendors at the event.
- CC Rider has volunteered free shuttle service from the Recreation Center to Citizens' Day
- Received a \$1,000 grant for the event from Columbia River PUD.
- There will be City booths next year.
- More volunteers are needed. The Councilors were asked to work within their networks of community groups and start soliciting volunteers now for next year's event.

Council agreed it needed more community involvement and that nonprofit City grant recipients should be required/asked to volunteer in helping facilitate the event.

Enlarging the event was also suggested due to the great turnout of vendors and attendees.

6. Review Rules of Conduct for City Facilities – *John Walsh*

City Administrator Walsh reviewed the proposed rules of conduct to increase safety and security, noting the resolution stemmed from an incident at City Hall and the rules were developed after reviewing several other public facility rules. Next steps would include a security system and cameras, as well as better lighting outside the building and in the parking lot.

Councilor Topaz asked if the City had a policy to always have more than one person in the building. City Administrator Walsh responded that would be ideal but was not always the case as others are in meetings.

Discussion continued about having consistent rules of conduct policies across all public property, parks, and spaces and to have the Parks & Recreation Commission consider additional rules to increase safety.

Council agreed the rules were good for the public facilities moving forward as the resolution would help police officers enforce the law.

7. Report from City Administrator John Walsh

City Administrator Walsh presented his report.

- Attended the League of Oregon Cities (LOC) Conference.
- The Task Force on homelessness created by the Mayor's Association, allocated per capita funding to cities, resulting in St. Helens receiving \$500,000 and potentially additional resources.
 - Council discussed how the City was already addressing homelessness and the factors prolonging the issues, including state policies and the lack of a comprehensive approach regarding the services provided.
- Boating Ad Hoc Committee update. No decisions were made about dock stay limits
- Reviewed the recruitment process for a new Finance Director.
- The upcoming Riverwalk and Street and Utilities Projects would start November 2.
 - Two informational meetings would be held October 24. The meetings would be noticed that a quorum of Council members could be in attendance.
 - The Riverwalk project was getting a lot of media attention and had appeared on a couple front newspaper covers.
- There are City-owned docks the City could repair, which involved onerous permitting, water work windows, fish habitat, etc.; however, it was better to do repairs when the City had the financial resources to do so.
- The Sand Island developer/owner was looking at a water source and using a septic system.
- He described other potential funding opportunities for the City beyond the DEQ program for the sewer improvements, which included Community Development Block Grants, principal loan forgiveness and other programs. The primary consideration was that local rates equaled the states average for sewer fees, which was currently \$50.92.

Mayor Scholl confirmed the City had an official program for fire prevention that included thinning trees and clearing the forest. The program was cost-neutral, but he was unsure how effective it would be to cite the program for how forward looking the city is from a publicity point of view.

ADJOURN – 5:00 p.m.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Respectfully submitted by Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder.

ATTEST:

Kathy Payne, City Recorder

Rick Scholl, Mayor