

City of St. Helens

Consent Agenda for Approval

CITY COUNCIL MINUTES

Presented for approval on this 18th day of March, 2026 are the following Council minutes:

2025

- Work Session, Executive Session, Public Hearing, and Regular Session Minutes dated January 21, 2026
- Work Session and Regular Session Minutes dated February 4, 2026
- Special Session and Executive Session Minutes dated February 11, 2026
- Work Session, Executive Session, and Regular Session Minutes dated February 18, 2026
- Special Session Minutes dated February 25, 2026

After Approval of Council Minutes:

- Scan as PDF Searchable
- Make one double-sided, hole-punched copy and send to Library Reference
- Minutes related to hearings and deliberations get copied to working file
- Save PDF in Minutes folder
- Update file name & signature block on Word document & copy Word document into Council minutes folder in Shared Drive
- Upload & publish in MuniCode
- Email minutes link to distribution list
- Add minutes to HPRMS
- Add packet and exhibits to HPRMS
- File original in Vault
- Update minutes spreadsheet



COUNCIL WORK SESSION

Wednesday, January 21, 2026

DRAFT MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT

Mayor Jennifer Massey
Council President Jessica Chilton
Councilor Mark Gundersen
Councilor Russell Hubbard
Councilor Brandon Sundeen

STAFF PRESENT

John Walsh, City Administrator
Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder
Crystal King, Communications Officer
Matt Smith, Police Chief
Kolten Edwards, Police Detective
Mouhamad Zaher, Public Works Director
Ashley Wigod, Contracted City Attorney

OTHERS

Erin Salisbury	Nick Hellmich	Steve Topaz
Adam St. Pierre	Joel Haugen	Steve Toschi
Robyn Toschi	Sarah Lu Heath	Scott Jacobson
Jenni Gilbert	Brady Preheim	Tina Curry
Paul Vogel	Jacquie Puett	Jenn Farrington Dougherty
Joe	Steve Denari	KATU News

CALL WORK SESSION TO ORDER – 3:00 p.m.

CLEARING CONFUSION AND SETTING THE FACTS STRAIGHT

1. Response to January 7 Visitor Comments

Mayor Massey reported there were no responses to visitor comments from the January 7 meeting.

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

- ◆ Scott Jacobson, Park and Trails Commission. Spoke about a site visit, requesting RSVPs from Council members. He mentioned that the Port would also be attending and this was his second attempt to coordinate the visit, scheduled for January 31.
- ◆ Steve Topaz. Asked about the legal fees spent by the City last year and why it was not answered from the last meeting. He expressed concerns about the waterfront development plans, specifically regarding apartments on the waterfront. He mentioned previous developers' proposals, including one that was rejected. Topaz urged the Council to review the Maul Foster reports regarding environmental issues at the waterfront, noting that toxic waste had been found during line installation that was not highlighted in the reports. He also expressed concern about

setbacks from the waterfront being reduced from the original 100 feet to 35 feet and potential traffic problems from the proposed development.

- ◆ Adam St. Pierre. Raised concerns about a potential conflict of interest with a Budget Committee member, Steve Toschi, who had inquired about legal expenses set aside for a tourism contractor during last year's budget meetings and is now reportedly representing that same contractor in a claim against the City. He suggested the City consult with the Oregon Ethics Commission on this matter.
- ◆ Jenni Gilbert. Addressed concerns about ethics and public representation, particularly criticizing the Mayor's behavior on social media toward citizens and a former employee who has filed a retaliation claim. She expressed that the Mayor's social media behavior, along with a group of allies including spouses of police officers, creates an atmosphere of intimidation. The Council has the authority to control that behavior. Gilbert also raised concerns about a conflict of interest regarding the Mayor advocating for police funding while being married to a police officer.
- ◆ Brady Preheim. Directed comments to Councilor Gundersen about the Mayor being "in crisis" and needing an intervention based on her social media behavior. He criticized the Mayor for not addressing the cessation of 24/7 police coverage despite demanding the previous mayor resign over the same issue. He also questioned the hiring process of Police Chief Smith, noting the unprecedented use of an NDA in the hiring process and the lack of transparency regarding scoring. Preheim also commented on plans for Main Street to take over CET operations, arguing this was inappropriate given Main Street's limited scope. He also spoke about the side-by-side ordinance being ridiculous.

DISCUSSION TOPICS

2. **Update from Columbia Pacific Economic Development District on Regional Economic Development Programs - Sarah Lu Heath, Executive Director & Jacquie Puett, Program Coordinator**

Sarah Lu Heath, Executive Director of Columbia Pacific Economic Development District (COLPAC), presented an overview of the organization and its services. She explained that COLPAC serves Columbia, Clatsop, Tillamook, and parts of Washington County, with a mission to diversify and strengthen the economy and livability in Northwest Oregon.

Heath outlined their programs including:

- Grant writing and administration, particularly Community Development Block Grants
- Small Business Loan Program (\$700,000 currently available)
- Commercial Property Assessed Clean Energy (C-PACE) financing for energy efficiency projects
- Brownfields Redevelopment Program for contaminated or underperforming properties
- Northwest Oregon Transit Alliance administration
- Transportation Options program
- Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy development

She noted that COLPAC had not updated its membership dues since its founding in 1994 and is likely to request an increase due to the closure of Columbia Economic Team (CET). Heath clarified that while COLPAC had a shared employee agreement with CET, they operated with completely separate Boards.

Council members inquired about what specific services COLPAC had provided to St. Helens over the years and how COLPAC would fill gaps left by CET's dissolution. Heath explained they hope to increase grant writing services and provide more flexible support to communities with increased membership dues.

3. Discussion about Lease of Sand Island

City Administrator Walsh reported that City staff had recently met with the Sand Island operator and conducted a thorough inspection of the facilities. The team consolidated their findings into a report that was not yet ready for this meeting.

Contracted City Attorney Wigod recommended that before presenting the report to Council, the City should meet with the operator to review the items and discuss solutions. She advised providing an update at the next meeting about the timeline rather than setting a specific date for presenting all solutions.

Council emphasized the importance of resolving these issues promptly and keeping the public informed.

4. Review Draft of Side-by-Side Ordinance

Contracted City Attorney Wigod presented a draft ordinance allowing Class 4 all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) on city streets with certain conditions and regulations. The ordinance would be placed in City Code Chapter 10.24.

Key points of the ordinance include:

- Permits required for operators with valid driver's licenses, 18+ years of age
- Oregon state permit and ATV safety education certificate required
- Insurance requirements matching state minimums
- Safety equipment requirements
- Hours of operation restrictions
- Highway 30 restrictions with limited crossing options

Discussion centered on several aspects of the ordinance:

- Whether to specify a designated crossing point on Highway 30 (Police Chief Smith recommended Gable Road due to the traffic light, though Council President Chilton expressed concerns about this location)
- Whether the permit should be for two years (as proposed by Mayor Massey) with a fee of \$200
- Clarification on ownership requirements versus operator requirements
- Enforcement mechanisms and fee structures

The Council and Police Chief Smith discussed how violations would be handled through Municipal Court. Mayor Massey suggested a graduated fine structure: \$100 for first violation, \$250 for second, and \$500 with 12-month permit revocation for third violations.

The Council agreed to have the Municipal Court review the draft and to bring an updated version to the next Council meeting.

5. Update from Police Chief Smith - An update for the City of St. Helens specifically pertaining to the volume of cases the St. Helens Police Department is seeing involving sexual abuse crimes, including crimes against children. This includes, but is not limited to, sexual assault, child exploitation, and child pornography.

Police Chief Smith and Detective Edwards presented on sexual abuse crimes investigations in St. Helens, particularly focusing on crimes against children. They explained the investigation division's current staffing, being just the two of them, and workload.

Their primary responsibilities include:

- Department of Human Services cross reports (receiving approximately 110 reports over a three-month period)
- Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) referrals
- Computer forensic extractions and analysis
- Complex investigations including rape, sexual abuse, and fraud cases

The presenters detailed the forensic interview process, which involves traveling to child advocacy centers where victims may be located. They showed statistics on their caseload, noting a spike in overtime during the St. Helens School District investigation when they worked 6-7 days per week for about three months.

Detective Edwards explained the ICAC investigation process, which typically takes 12-18 months from start to finish. The process involves receiving referrals from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children via the Oregon Department of Justice, drafting search warrants, conducting surveillance, executing search warrants, and coordinating forensic examinations of digital devices. They noted that one recent case involved analyzing a device with 290,000 images.

When asked how St. Helens compares to surrounding areas, Chief Smith indicated that in his experience, St. Helens has a higher volume of child abuse referrals than Forest Grove, which has a larger population. He also mentioned that St. Helens is more advanced in investigating ICAC cases than some neighboring departments, including Scappoose.

Chief Smith advised parents to be cautious about children using platforms like Roblox and Discord, as many of their referrals come from these platforms. Council members expressed interest in another educational presentation for parents similar to a previous well-received social media safety event.

6. Discussion regarding CET Programs - *City Administrator John Walsh*

Paul Vogel provided an update on the dissolution of Columbia Economic Team (CET). He explained that the CET board had voted to dissolve on January 17, with all employment terminated on January 31. Vogel is under contract to manage the administrative wind-down.

He reported that about 80% of the approximately \$600,000 in program funds are being redirected to other entities:

- The GRO program grant (\$93,000 remaining from \$100,000) will return to the City of St. Helens
- The Innovation Hub grant (\$275,000) will be managed by Oregon Entrepreneurs Network
- The ROI grant (\$105,000) is likely to be transferred to the City of Scappoose with a county-wide scope
- Some grants could not be transferred, including an \$81,000 USDA grant

Council expressed interest in ensuring that important programs like GRO, Keep it Local, and tourism initiatives would continue. Walsh mentioned that conversations with City of Scappoose, Port of Columbia County, and Columbia River PUD were ongoing to find ways to preserve these programs.

Erin Salisbury, the new Executive Director of Main Street, clarified that while Main Street is place-based and focused on St. Helens' historic downtown districts, they would like to be part of conversations about county-wide economic development.

The Council requested this topic be included on the next agenda for updates.

7. Discussion regarding Budget Committee Positions

The Council discussed reappointing Ivan Salas, whose term on the Budget Committee was expiring. It was confirmed that Salas was interested in being reappointed and had not yet served two full terms, which is the limit according to City policy. The Council agreed to formally reappoint him at the upcoming regular session.

8. Report from City Administrator John Walsh

- The Project Arcadia deal has been successfully closed, paving the way for the mill's anticipated reopening, which is expected to significantly benefit the community economically.
- Romano Capital's development discussions are making good progress, with a public reveal of massing studies, inclusive of hotel, retail, and housing components, slated for March.

- Planning for the new police station is moving forward, with an important March deadline for code change submissions.
- The reservoir project appraisal process has begun.
- The City has successfully appealed a stormwater violation, leading to a considerable reduction in fines, and is now considering environmental benefit projects in lieu of monetary penalties.
- The Parks & Trails Commission is actively reviewing the trails master plan with an eye on potential updates.
- In terms of tourism, planning for community events is ongoing.
- A dedicated "purge day" was recently conducted at City Hall to clear out old records, allowing for better organization.
- The City's general fund budget is under scrutiny, with potential one-time revenue injections needed to balance it by year-end.
- Department heads are convening weekly to explore cost-saving strategies, which may include freezing positions and reducing services.
- February 2 has been marked for Water Day at the Capitol, where efforts will be made to seek state funding.
- Today marks the start of the "If I Were Mayor" contest, which will run until March.
- Senator Merkley's visit on January 16 highlighted grant and spending initiatives, and similar activities are anticipated during Senator Wyden's visit on Saturday in Columbia City.
- The City currently faces a significant leak adjustment appeal for a large complex.
- An alien exhibit and additional equipment inventories are being assessed, with discussion about surplus.
- Celebratory plans for Project Arcadia's contributions and operations, such as a potential ribbon cutting, are being coordinated with community partners, showcasing excitement about the mill's reopening.

ADJOURN – 5:26 p.m.**EXECUTIVE SESSION**

- ORS 192.660(2)(d) To conduct deliberations with persons appointed to carry out labor negotiations
- ORS 192.660(2)(e) To conduct deliberations with persons designated by the governing body to negotiate real property transactions
- ORS 192.660(2)(f) To consider information or records that are exempt by law from public inspection
- ORS 192.660(2)(h) To consult with legal counsel concerning the legal rights and duties of a public body with regard to current litigation or litigation likely to be filed

Respectfully transcribed by ClerkMinutes and submitted by Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder.

ATTEST:

Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder

Jennifer Massey, Mayor

City of St. Helens CITY COUNCIL

Executive Session Summary

January 21, 2026

Members Present: Jennifer Massey, Mayor
Jessica Chilton, Council President
Mark Gundersen, Councilor
Brandon Sundeen, Councilor
Russell Hubbard, Councilor

Staff Present: John Walsh, City Administrator
Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder

Others: Ashley Wigod, City Attorney with Jordan Ramis PC



At 5:32 p.m., Mayor Massey opened the Executive Session pursuant to the ORS numbers listed below and then gave roll call. Other than Labor Negotiations, authorized representatives of the news media, designated staff, and other persons as approved shall be allowed to attend the Executive Session. All other members of the audience are asked to leave the Council Chambers. Representatives of the news media were specifically directed not to report on or otherwise disclose any of the deliberations or anything said about these subjects during the executive session, except to state the general subject of the session as previously announced. No decision may be made in executive session. Any person in attendance, including the news media, who has a recording device is directed to turn it off.

- ORS 192.660(2)(e) To conduct deliberations with persons designated by the governing body to negotiate **real property transactions**
- ORS 192.660(2)(h) To **consult with legal counsel** concerning the legal rights and duties of a public body with regard to current litigation or litigation likely to be filed
- ORS 192.660(2)(d) To conduct deliberations with persons appointed to carry out **labor negotiations**
 - Nothing was discussed under this provision.
- ORS 192.660(2)(f) To consider information or **records that are exempt** by law from public inspection

The Executive Session was adjourned at 6:24 p.m.



ATTEST:

Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder

Jennifer Massey, Mayor

An audio recording of this meeting is archived at City Hall.



COUNCIL PUBLIC HEARING

Wednesday, January 21, 2026

DRAFT MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT

Mayor Jennifer Massey
Councilor Mark Gundersen
Councilor Russell Hubbard
Councilor Brandon Sundeen

MEMBERS ABSENT

Council President Jessica Chilton

STAFF PRESENT

John Walsh, City Administrator
Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder
Crystal King, Communications Officer
Jacob Graichen, City Planner

OTHERS

Steve LeSollen	Phyllis Rice	Mark Griffin
Jeff Heller	Reed Hjort	Doug Morten
Nick Flory	Brady Preheim	Tammy Maygra
Patrick Birkle	Nick Hellmich	Robyn Toschi
Susan Stutzman	Claire Catt	Jane Williams
Jeffrey Macdonald	Joe	Judy Thompson
Steve Toschi	Ced	

OPEN PUBLIC HEARING – 6:40 p.m.

TOPIC

1. Annexation of Approximately 6.57 Acres of Property Located South of Sykes Road about 300 feet West of where the BPA Lines Intersect with Sykes Road, and North of the Morten Lane Terminus next to 58990 Morten Lane (Stutzman)

City Planner Jacob Graichen covered preliminary matters. There were no potential or actual conflicts of interest, bias in this matter, ex-parte communications, or site visits. There were no objections from the audience for the Council to make a fair decision. Graichen went on to review the staff report. There is no development proposal for the subject property at this time but the owner feels that there would be more value to the property being annexed.

The Planning Commission recommended approval of the application with a recommendation of R-7 zoning.

One letter of opposition was received from neighbors at 34385 Southview Drive. Graichen created an exhibit showing that this property is located outside the urban growth boundary, approximately 475 feet from it. The closest City property between that residence and the subject property has been within city limits for longer than Graichen's 18-year tenure with the City.

Applicant

- ◆ Susan Stutzman, via Zoom. She and her sister, who lives in Amsterdam, Netherlands, inherited the land in 2021 from their mother, Mary Heumann Adams, who grew up in St. Helens. Stutzman expressed support for annexing the property from Columbia County to the City of St. Helens. The property has been in the County's R-10 vacant forest deferral program. She suggested R-7 zoning to match surrounding properties. Stutzman stated that annexation would benefit the City in terms of future development by avoiding a County property island within City property. She emphasized the importance of being in unison with the City and compatible with surrounding properties. The benefits they seek include police protection and sewer and water services. Annexation would provide flexibility for what they could do with the property while remaining complementary to City planning standards. She clarified they are currently only exploring options for potential use and thanked the Council for consideration.

PUBLIC COMMENT**In Favor**

- ◆ Doug Morten, speaking on behalf of his cousin, Susie Stutzman. He provided extensive family history about the property. His grandfather, Eric Morten, left Sweden around 1882-1883 at age 20 to avoid Russian pressure on Sweden. As a woodsman in Sweden, he came to America following his dream. He got off the train at Warren, Oregon, after meeting people interested in property in the area. The property at one time encompassed approximately 400 acres from Sykes Road up to near Asbury Acres. His grandfather partnered with someone who fronted money to buy and log the property, which consisted largely of old growth fir. A railroad line, which became Sykes Road, came up to the property for logging operations. His grandfather, Eric Morten, ultimately settled on 75 acres after logging revenues and transactions. He was partnered with another person named Wikstrom, who settled in the Warren area. They horse-logged the area, with logs going directly to a landing area on Sykes Road and then to the mill. Eric sent for his wife Mary from Sweden, which took six years. She cooked along the way from New York to Oregon, including at the Klondike in St. Helens, where Eric would bring her by horse and buggy. They had three children: Edwin, who inherited the farmhouse and property extending to Sykes Road; Helma, who married Heinie Heumann and owned the piece now being discussed, from Bachelor Flat Road to Sykes Road; and Arch Morten, Doug's father, an all-state football player who married Doug's mother, a Columbia County Rose Festival queen. Doug and his brother developed the Art Morten section and part of the Edwin Morten section, creating a housing development with mixed 2-acre and 5-acre parcels. Given this heritage, Morten spoke very favorably for Susie, who inherited the property from Helma. He emphasized that Stutzman wants to do the right thing and desires flexibility. He noted that without annexation, the property would become an island, as City properties including the Heller's property and the Bonneville substation surround it.
- ◆ Jeff Heller. The property has been in their family for almost 130-140 years. He and his brother own property to the west, which is in City limits. His grandfather was mayor of St. Helens and always looked to the City's future, having developed St. Helens Street to create a complete circle through the City. Heller stated it doesn't make sense to leave the property in the County and believes it would be a great asset to the City. He asked the Council to consider Stutzman's testimony and her briefing on the aspects of bringing the property into the City.
- ◆ Nick Flory. His house is adjacent to the property on the map. He supported the annexation partly for his own well-being, as there have been break-ins and car prowlers in the neighborhood. He believed developing the land would increase police presence in the area and prevent crime. He

also considered economic factors, noting the paper mill reopening and anticipating more large businesses in the City. While current housing criteria are met, he thought having more opportunity for residential housing on that side of the highway would be good for the City. Currently an open field, he acknowledged people behind it enjoy their view, but he thinks it would be good for the City.

Neutral

- ◆ Phyllis Rice. Asked a clarifying question about whether 6.57 acres zoned R-7 would be allowed to build, questioning if seven acres were required. Graichen clarified that R-7 means the minimum lot size for a single-family dwelling is 7,000 square feet, not seven acres. It is not like zoning designations requiring 80 acres or similar.

Opposition – None

CLOSE PUBLIC HEARING – 7:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder.

ATTEST:

Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder

Jennifer Massey, Mayor



COUNCIL REGULAR SESSION

Wednesday, January 21, 2026

DRAFT MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT

Mayor Jennifer Massey
Councilor Mark Gundersen
Councilor Russell Hubbard
Councilor Brandon Sundeen

MEMBERS ABSENT

Council President Jessica Chilton

STAFF PRESENT

John Walsh, City Administrator
Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder
Crystal King, Communications Officer
Jacob Graichen, City Planner

OTHERS

Steve LeSollen	Phyllis Rice	Mark Griffin
Jeff Heller	Reed Hjort	Doug Morten
Nick Flory	Brady Preheim	Tammy Maygra
Patrick Birkle	Nick Hellmich	Robyn Toschi
Susie Stutzman	Claire Catt	Jane Williams
Jeffrey Macdannald	Joe	Judy Thompson
Steve Toschi	Ced	

CALL REGULAR SESSION TO ORDER – 7:11 p.m.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

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

- ◆ Nick Flory. Thanked the Mayor and Council for their service and expressed appreciation for the work being done on behalf of the City, acknowledging that their time and effort were not always sufficiently compensated.
- ◆ Tammy Maygra. Addressed the Council regarding a previously submitted request for the release of the full Band report. She noted that at the prior meeting she had asked for the document's full release and observed that it had not yet been made public. She referenced statements the Mayor had made prior to taking office regarding transparency, accountability, and the need to scrutinize withheld documents, and urged the Mayor to release the entire report, stating that taxpayers had a right to its contents as they had funded it.
- ◆ Robyn Toschi. spoke in opposition to a proposed ordinance that would allow side-by-sides (utility terrain vehicles) on city streets. She raised several concerns: the financial and staffing burden of administering a vehicle registration program at a time when the City is already stretched thin,

including recent layoffs and budget pressures; the lack of cost or staffing studies accompanying the proposal; and the dismissal at a prior work session of the retained attorney's suggestions to limit side-by-sides to one side of the highway and to hold a public comment event before finalizing the draft. She raised safety concerns regarding seat belt requirements, noting that the Mayor had indicated seat belts would not be mandated on vehicles not originally manufactured with them, and questioned insurance coverage requirements. She also referenced the Police Chief's recommendation that crossing points be limited to Gable Road to keep side-by-sides off Highway 30. Toschi concluded by urging the Council to vote no on the ordinance, characterizing it as an unnecessary risk to the City and its citizens.

- ◆ Brady Preheim. Began by defining the terms "street" and "city," emphasizing distinctions between city, town, and rural populations. Preheim criticized the City's consideration of allowing Columbia County Economic Team (CET), a county organization, to be run by Main Street, an entity focused on the City and not the County. He objected to Paul Vogel's involvement, stating that Vogel had caused problems and harassed staff, and questioned why Vogel was being treated as a savior when staff members had reported abuse and harassment, and Vogel allegedly owed over \$600,000 in unpaid taxes. Preheim expressed concern that the City might absorb these costs. He questioned the \$60,000 payment to Erin as an executive director for Main Street, especially when City staff had not received raises and there was no union agreement regarding cost-of-living increases. Preheim asked for clarification on whether the City's contingency funds were depleted, given statements that the City might not have money by the end of the year to meet payroll. He also called for accountability regarding the tourism director, whom he accused of lying on the public record about the size of a train tank, stating the train was unusable because it had a three-gallon tank when that was not true. Preheim suggested it might be time for a different contractor to manage the train and questioned the City's plan to auction off a boat. He also noted that when he was on the Budget Committee, there was no discussion about reappointing him, contrasting this with the City's current standard of reappointing people to committees.
- ◆ Nick Hellmich. Congratulated City staff on recent approvals, though noting he was "putting the cart before the horse" as approvals were still pending. He expressed support for the side-by-side ordinance and stated he did not see how it could cost more money beyond implementation. Hellmich emphasized his belief in "live and let live" and Darwinism, suggesting that people who do dumb things face consequences. He clarified that he forms his own opinions and does not always agree with Brady Preheim, despite previous perceptions that he was a mouthpiece for Preheim and Steve Toschi. Hellmich reflected on how nervous he used to be when first speaking at Council meetings and how the group now feels like "one big dysfunctional family." He expressed hope that the City could get its affairs in order and reiterated his support for allowing side-by-sides on the road.
- ◆ Phyllis Rice. Supports the side-by-side ordinance. She encouraged those using side-by-sides for fun to keep it under control and not jeopardize opportunities for individuals who are handicapped and need alternative transportation methods.
- ◆ Steve Toschi, via Zoom. Spoke against the side-by-side ordinance based on his experience with thousands of auto accident cases. Toschi explained what it means to see people die on the roadway and stated that the ordinance would result in injuries and deaths that would not occur if people were in automobiles. He criticized Mayor Massey's statement that she is "not an expert in anything," calling it a statement from "quite an ignorant person." Toschi emphasized that seat belts make a difference and questioned whether seat belts could even be installed in ATVs to

make them safer. He noted that most fatal accidents occur at speeds of 25 miles per hour or less and that restraining occupants prevents injuries even at low speeds. Toschi warned Councilors that they could find themselves in a situation where a low-speed accident involving a side-by-side results in a death, leaving them potentially at fault and facing loss of livelihood and lawsuits. He emphasized that Oregon law does not recognize "survival of the fittest" or assumption of risk as defenses for side-by-side users. Toschi urged the Council not to enact the ordinance, stating it is unsafe, but if they proceeded, they should consult appropriate experts to analyze the risks and determine if it is the right thing for the community.

Mayor Massey made a brief comment in response to the visitor comments, questioning whether the City should also ban motorcycles and scooters in St. Helens, noting they present similar safety concerns.

DELIBERATIONS

1. Annexation of Approximately 6.57 Acres of Property Located South of Sykes Road about 300 feet West of where the BPA Lines Intersect with Sykes Road, and North of the Morten Lane Terminus next to 58990 Morten Lane (Stutzman)

Motion: Motion made by Councilor Hubbard and seconded by Councilor Gundersen to advance the recommendation of staff and Planning Commission and approve the annexation. **Vote:** Yea: Mayor Massey, Councilor Hubbard, Councilor Sundeen

RESOLUTIONS

2. **Resolution No. 2065:** A Resolution to Adopt Rate Study to Establish Methodology for Water, Sewer, and Storm Drainage Utility Rates and Schedule Adjustments

Mayor Massey read Resolution No. 2065 by title. **Motion:** Motion made by Councilor Gundersen and seconded by Councilor Sundeen to adopt Resolution No. 2065. **Vote:** Yea: Mayor Massey, Councilor Gundersen, Councilor Hubbard, Councilor Sundeen

APPROVE AND/OR AUTHORIZE FOR SIGNATURE

3. Third Contract Amendment with Consor North America, Inc. for Professional Services for the Wastewater Capacity Improvements to Sanitary Sewer Mains in Basins 4, 5, & 6 to Advance the Design of the Sewer Pump Station No. 7 Capacity Upgrades to the 60% Design Level

Motion: Motion made by Councilor Sundeen and seconded by Councilor Gundersen to approve '3' above. **Vote:** Yea: Mayor Massey, Councilor Gundersen, Councilor Hubbard, Councilor Sundeen

APPOINTMENTS TO CITY BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

4. Appoint Patrick Birkle to Planning Commission

Motion: Motion made by Councilor Sundeen and seconded by Councilor Gundersen to approve '4' above. **Vote:** Yea: Mayor Massey, Councilor Gundersen, Councilor Hubbard, Councilor Sundeen

CONSENT AGENDA FOR ACCEPTANCE

5. Library Board Minutes dated December 8, 2025
6. Parks & Trails Commission Minutes dated December 8, 2025
7. Planning Commission Minutes dated December 9, 2025

Motion: Motion made by Councilor Gundersen and seconded by Councilor Sundeen to approve '5' through '7' above. **Vote:** Yea: Mayor Massey, Councilor Gundersen, Councilor Hubbard, Councilor Sundeen

CONSENT AGENDA FOR APPROVAL

8. City Council Minutes dated January 7, 2026
9. OLCC Licenses
10. Accounts Payable Bill Lists

Motion: Motion made by Councilor Sundeen and seconded by Councilor Gundersen to approve '8' through '10' above. **Vote:** Yea: Mayor Massey, Councilor Gundersen, Councilor Hubbard, Councilor Sundeen

WORK SESSION ACTION ITEMS

Motion: Motion made by Councilor Sundeen and seconded by Councilor Gundersen to reappoint Ivan Salas to the Budget Committee. **Vote:** Yea: Mayor Massey, Councilor Gundersen, Councilor Hubbard, Councilor Sundeen

COUNCIL MEMBER REPORTS

Councilor Sundeen reported...

- The Parks and Trails Commission held a meeting where they discussed the need for a new master plan. They are reviewing the current plan, identifying completed items, and compiling a list of future additions.
- One vacancy remains on the Parks & Trails Commission after a prior call for applicants yielded no responses. He encouraged community members interested in parks, trails, bicycles, and public spaces to apply.
- Met with Judy Thompson to discuss plans for the America 250 celebration. An initial meeting attracted over 30 attendees from various organizations such as Kiwanis Club, Lions Club, the Highway 30 Cruisers, local artists, authors, and the Garden Club.
- The Kiwanis are marking their centennial year, with the parade theme incorporating the 250th anniversary of the nation and the Kiwanis' 100th.
- In response to Mayor Massey's question, he confirmed that Judy Thompson is reaching out to Arcadia representatives, as they are also celebrating their centennial this year.
- He is researching youth advisory council models across the state and developing ideas to improve the City's previous model, aiming to present them in a broader discussion at an upcoming meeting.
- He shared a historical note that 75 years ago, the St. Helens Chamber of Commerce hosted Carl Brandenfels, a Yankton-area resident with over 200 patents, at their event. Some of Brandenfels' inventions are held at the Columbia County Museum, which is relocating to the John Gumm building with plans for a soft opening in February.

Councilor Hubbard reported...

- Noted a busy schedule with many meetings.
- Thanked those involved in planning work sessions for their efforts.

Councilor Gundersen reported...

- Nothing to report.

MAYOR MASSEY REPORTS

- Expressed gratitude to City staff, mentioning Deputy City Recorder Scholl and City Recorder Payne (absent) for preparing the Council for meetings and City Administrator Walsh for keeping the Council informed on issues during a busy December.
- Mayor Massey, like Councilor Sundeen, is collecting information about youth advisory councils from other Oregon towns, aiming to formulate a youth program by year-end.

- She proposed an agenda item for the next council meeting to discuss youth advisory councils, acknowledging the need to begin applications by spring and suggesting the Council handle initial groundwork to avoid staff overload.
- Mayor Massey addressed the side-by-side ordinance topic, articulating that side-by-side owners are unlikely to misuse vehicles that cost \$40,000 to \$100,000. She compared side-by-sides to motorcycles, which also lack seat belts and present similar or greater risks, referencing a past motorcycle incident on Columbia Boulevard. While recognizing the safety concerns and emphasizing the severity of proposed fines, she stressed her belief in responsible citizen behavior and the value of offering this benefit to taxpayers. She has no personal interest in using side-by-sides but acknowledged their appeal to other residents, awaiting the ordinance's final version and considering the need for seat belts.

PROACTIVE ITEMS

OTHER BUSINESS

ADJOURN – 7:43 p.m.

Respectfully transcribed by ClerkMinutes and submitted by Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder.

ATTEST:

Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder

Jennifer Massey, Mayor



COUNCIL WORK SESSION

Wednesday, February 04, 2026

DRAFT MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT

Mayor Jennifer Massey
Council President Jessica Chilton
Councilor Mark Gundersen
Councilor Russell Hubbard
Councilor Brandon Sundeen

STAFF PRESENT

John Walsh, City Administrator	Suzanne Bishop, Library Director
Kathy Payne, City Recorder	Shanna Duggan, Recreation Manager
Crystal King, Communications Officer	Jacob Graichen, City Planner
Doug Treat, Police Lieutenant	Ashley Wigod, Contracted City Attorney
Gloria Butsch, Finance Director	

OTHERS PRESENT

Nathan Hughes	Adam St. Pierre	Courtney Madruga
Steve Topaz	Kaelyn Cassidy	Richard Mason
Steve Toschi	Lance Tillotson	Mark Pacheco
Brady Preheim	Robyn Toschi	Nick Hellmich
Tina Curry	Tyler Miller	Tammy Maygra
Jeremy Hipes		

CALL WORK SESSION TO ORDER - 3:00 p.m.

CLEARING CONFUSION AND SETTING THE FACTS STRAIGHT

1. Response to January 21 Visitor Comments

Mayor Massey noted that there were no responses to visitor comments from the January 21 meeting.

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

- ◆ Richard Mason, a 20-year resident of the waterfront district, spoke in opposition to the proposed side-by-side ordinance. He characterized the measure as an "80/20 situation" that would create a "logistical, administrative nightmare just to appease a few people," and stated that the City had "bigger fish to fry."
- ◆ Robyn Toschi. Spoke in opposition to the side-by-side ordinance, calling it self-serving to one council member and a small group of her friends who own ATVs, and referenced City of St. Helens Resolution 1509, Section 1, which states that the City's powers and resources are to be used for the benefit of the public rather than any official's personal benefit. She raised safety concerns about the Gable Road and Highway 30 intersection, describing it as a busy school zone with protected left turns and heavy pedestrian traffic. Toschi also expressed strong objection to her name being used in what she described as a slanderous manner, alleging that the City had incurred expense not because of her public records request, but because the City had chosen not

to produce the records. She urged the Council to vote independently and for public safety. She additionally requested that the City issue a new, documented RFP for the Millard Road property and return it to the market, stating, "We need the money, not a levy."

- ◆ Steve Toschi. Addressed the Council regarding Resolution 1509, citing provisions related to public trust, avoiding the appearance of impropriety, and placing long-term public benefit above special interests. He referenced the side-by-side ordinance as an example of special interest influence. He raised concerns about what he characterized as corruption within the Police Department, citing a vote of no confidence against the Police Chief and City Administrator, and arguing that the City had been mismanaging its funds through pay increases while purposefully not hiring officers. He called on Council members to consider censuring the Mayor for what he described as a conflict of interest in police matters and suggested that a councilor or the council president take over those discussions. He also urged the Council to wait for the Budget Committee meetings before proceeding with any levy. Toschi's comments extended beyond his initial three minutes.
- ◆ Tammy Maygra. Briefly addressed the Council, stating that the Mayor was being disrespectful and rude to members of the public while they were speaking, and urged the Mayor to show "more couth and manners." She yielded her remaining time to Toschi.

Contracted City Attorney Ashley Wigod confirmed, when asked, that it is permissible for a citizen to yield their remaining time to another speaker.

- ◆ Steve Toschi. Further argued that the mayor's conflict of interest was harming the community and urged councilors to step up and enforce their ethical rules.
- ◆ Lance Tillotson. Spoke in support of the side-by-side ordinance. He noted that his vehicles are fully street-legal with lights, a horn, and a license plate, and stated that he found them to be practical and not particularly loud. He observed that other vehicles in the city — such as loud cars at the four-way stop — cause far more noise disturbance. He stated that he was not asking to operate them on the highway and thanked the City for its consideration.
- ◆ Brady Prehiem. Addressed the Council on multiple topics. He alleged that the Mayor was violating a Non-Disclosure Agreement involving a former City employee, Matt Brown, by discussing City matters with him on a podcast, and called on the Council to enforce that NDA. He stated the Mayor owed City Administrator Walsh an apology. He expressed strong opposition to the 9-1-1 levy on the grounds that the 9-1-1 District currently holds approximately \$4 million in reserves, and questioned how the City could justify asking citizens for more money while that surplus sits unused. He also spoke about the alien exhibit, asserting that he was the person who ran it and that City Administrator Walsh did not have full knowledge of it. He raised concerns about the City purchasing properties only to declare them surplus, including a second Recreation Center.
- ◆ Adam St. Pierre. Responded to Steve Toschi's comments on ethics by raising his own ethics concerns, alleging that Toschi had a direct conflict of interest on the Budget Committee, as he was reportedly representing a client who is suing the City. He suggested the Oregon Ethics Board should investigate whether Toschi's participation on the Budget Committee was appropriate given that potential conflict. He stated he found it hypocritical for someone with potential personal interests to lecture the Council on ethics.
- ◆ Steve Topaz. Raised procedural concerns, noting that a question he had asked at a previous meeting appeared on the agenda but was not recorded in the minutes and received no answer.

He argued this represented a systemic problem with how citizen comments and questions are handled. He questioned whether the Council holds secret meetings to discuss public comments, or whether responses are fabricated. He also raised concerns about freedom of speech, noting that the time limit for public comment had been reduced from five minutes to three, and referenced a recent situation in which a community member was barred from school property after speaking at a School Board meeting. He further commented that executive session minutes should reflect when no executive session occurred. He closed by stating that St. Helens is in a poor position in terms of public perception at the State level and urged the Council to change course.

- ◆ Tina Curry. Yielded her time to Robyn Toschi.
- ◆ Robyn Toschi defended her husband, Steve Toschi, against comments made by Adam St. Pierre, stating that Toschi's participation in budget meetings was motivated solely by the best interests of the City and its citizens. She objected to characterizations of his conduct as self-interested and stated that he is "fighting for the citizens of this City."

DISCUSSION TOPICS

2. Request from Columbia 9-1-1 Communications District for Support for Local Option Levy on May Ballot - *Executive Director Jeremy Hipes*

Executive Director Jeremy Hipes presented information about the Columbia 9-1-1 Communications District's request for a five-year local option operations levy of 29 cents per \$1,000 of assessed property value on the May ballot, which would generate a total of approximately \$10,914,819 over the five-year period. He noted that he was presenting in his official capacity and therefore could not personally solicit support, but could share facts and answer questions.

Hipes provided background on his qualifications, noting 26 years of experience in the 9-1-1 industry and five months in his current role, during which he has been focused on staffing stability, funding, and radio system assessment. He described an ongoing investigation of all radio sites in the county, during which each tower is being taken offline for approximately six hours to test every piece of equipment. The resulting report will inform a plan to stabilize the system with available funding, which he acknowledged would not be a permanent replacement but a necessary stopgap measure. He noted that the system is 30 years old and described its condition as being "in the Band-Aid phase," with parts increasingly difficult to find and technical expertise for the aging system becoming scarce. He stated frankly that a catastrophic failure "could be really kind of any day."

Hipes acknowledged that the district holds reserve funds, including a facilities reserve and an equipment reserve, both established since 1991. He explained that a prior attempt to replace the system using reserve funds fell through when the levy failed and Motorola backed out of the contract, as the levy revenue was needed to guarantee ongoing contract payments.

He also confirmed that conversations had begun between Sheriff Pixley and the District about the possibility of the County or Sheriff's Office taking control of the radio system as a collaborative effort. He explained that under such a model, costs would be distributed among user agencies based on call volume.

Mayor Massey thanked Hipes for his presentation and expressed concern that the system had not been adequately managed historically, noting that a 30-year-old system approaching failure is analogous to failing to phase out gas monitors in confined spaces. She asked Hipes to consider returning to a future meeting to provide additional public education on the topic.

Tyler Miller, a Scappoose City Councilor and elected member of the 9-1-1 District Board of Directors, presented an opposing view. He prefaced his remarks by stating that there may be a path forward, as

conversations between Sheriff Pixley and Director Hipes show some promise, but that his current opposition stems from a documented history of financial mismanagement. He noted that he was elected to the 9-1-1 board in May 2025 with 61.36% of the vote over a 22-year incumbent, which he interpreted as a public mandate for change and accountability. He stated that both the Republican and Democratic Central Committees had voted in bipartisan opposition to the levy, the Democrat Central Committee having done so 9-0 the prior evening, mirroring their opposition to the two previous failed levies for the same tax rate and stated purpose, which he argued represents no material change.

Miller presented a series of documented examples of what he described as financial mismanagement spanning over a decade, including: \$66,720 spent on a Radio IP software solution that was never installed despite first responders requesting it; hundreds of thousands of dollars spent on a consultant whose comprehensive 2012 report was largely ignored; \$778 spent on an iPad gifted to a retiring board member; \$400,000 spent on a radio site on Pisgah Home Road that was never made operational and became overgrown with invasive plants; and \$925,000 wasted due to failure to conduct competitive bidding. He stated that these documented examples total approximately \$2 million in waste, with records available to support each claim.

Miller described two officer-involved incidents he attributed to radio system failures. On March 31, 2022, Sheriff Pixley responded to a call without knowing the subject was a homicide suspect because a radio transmission relaying that critical information failed to reach him, resulting in a gun battle that Pixley was fortunate to survive. On July 30, 2025, an officer attempted to radio a shots-fired incident, but St. Helens police officers arrived on scene with no knowledge that an officer-involved shooting had occurred. Miller argued that these failures had been known for years and that funding existed to address them but nothing was done.

He also described his own experience of being issued a no-trespass letter by the 9-1-1 district in February 2023 after he publicly opposed a \$35 million proposal and gave an interview to Koin 6 News. He filed a federal civil rights complaint, a judge issued an immediate temporary injunction, and in August 2025, a federal district court found the 9-1-1 district guilty of First Amendment civil rights violations and entered a permanent injunction. He estimated attorney's fees alone would total at least \$1.2 million, noting he did not sue for personal damages. He also raised concerns about the District's ongoing use of an HOA attorney from Bend at \$495 per hour, including billing for drive time, rather than a government entity law specialist, and noted that the general fund had absorbed over \$686,000 in legal costs since 2022.

Miller concluded by stating that his opposition was not about dismissing the hard work of 9-1-1 staff, but about the governing body's pattern of mismanagement. He expressed cautious hope that the conversations between the sheriff and Hipes could lead to a structural solution, particularly one placing the radio system under a public safety agency, that might eventually earn his support, provided meaningful assurances and guardrails are in place.

Mayor Massey proposed that the Council consider a resolution establishing that the City council would not formally support or oppose external ballot measures, leaving such decisions to voters, and allowing the Council to instead serve as a platform for balanced public education. Council President Chilton agreed with the approach of providing a forum for presentations without taking formal positions. City Attorney Wigod indicated she was willing to review such a resolution and identify any legal considerations.

3. Quarterly Reports from City Departments/Divisions - Finance & Municipal Court (Informational)

Mayor Massey noted that she had reviewed the quarterly reports and had no additional comments. No Council members raised questions or comments on the staff reports.

4. Review of Proposed Side-by-Side Ordinance

Contracted City Attorney Ashley Wigod presented an overview of updates to the proposed Class 4 ATV (side-by-side) ordinance following public comment and Council discussion at the January 21, 2026 Council meeting.

Key amendments included the removal of the City ATV permit, which was determined to be administratively burdensome without a corresponding safety benefit. Despite this removal, all safety and regulatory requirements remain in effect, and violations remain citable in Municipal Court. The definition section was updated to remove redundant references to Class 1, 2, and 3 ATVs, which are already defined in state law. The definition of "streets" was clarified to expressly exclude Highway 30 except as otherwise provided. The financial responsibility section was updated to include a specific citation to the state law governing minimum insurance liability limits. Safety equipment requirements were consolidated into a single section, with the addition of requirements for a horn and safety roll bar, and an express prohibition on nonstandard lights, addressing a question raised by a Councilor at the prior meeting. The seatbelt requirements section was amended to expressly incorporate the state law language regarding children of all ages, for clarity. The section governing where Class 4 ATVs may be operated was updated to designate Gable Road as the approved crossing point, as recommended based on law enforcement input at the prior meeting.

Following the presentation, Mayor Massey offered an extended statement on the ordinance. She emphasized that the measure was not motivated by personal benefit, she does not own or plan to operate a side-by-side, and that she had championed it in response to community members who had requested it prior to her election. She pushed back on allegations that the ordinance violated Resolution 1509, calling those characterizations "manifested" and without basis. She addressed public concerns about noise, citing decibel comparisons: side-by-sides operate at levels comparable to or below a leaf blower (110 dB), far below chainsaws (125 dB), fireworks (140–160 dB), or sirens (120 dB), and noted that existing ORS provisions for excessive vehicle noise would also apply. She stated that no increase in city insurance rates would result from adoption, having confirmed this with the City's insurance contact, and compared the liability exposure to that of hosting a third-party parade. She also noted that a State House Bill currently moving through the legislature would permit Class 1, 2, and 3 ATVs to operate on highways and freeways. She characterized fear-mongering about the ordinance as illogical, noting that motorcycles are permitted without seatbelts and that the City does not ban scooters. She expressed frustration that legitimate work on behalf of citizens is met with misinformation and personal attacks, stating: "This is why elected officials don't do it."

Council President Chilton stated for the record that she still believes Columbia Boulevard would be a safer crossing point than Gable Road, and that directing any additional traffic to the Gable Road intersection remains a concern.

5. Review of Revenue Options to Refer to Voters for May Election

Prior to City Administrator Walsh's presentation, Mayor Massey read her conflict of interest disclosure for the record, stating that her spouse is employed by the City as a police officer. She noted that because the budget includes compensation and benefits for City positions, she was announcing an actual conflict under ORS 244.120, as amended by Senate Bill 983, Oregon Laws 2025, Chapter 466, and confirmed that she is permitted to participate in discussion and vote on adoption of the local budget after making this disclosure.

Walsh introduced the topic, noting that the City is on a path to exhaust the General Fund by June 30 and that staff had been working to present the Council with revenue and expenditure options.

Finance Director Butsch outlined a projected budget shortfall of \$150,000 for the current fiscal year (FY 25-26), which may require a supplemental budget to reduce expenditures through the end of the year.

More significantly, she projected a shortfall of approximately \$1 million for FY 26-27 if services remain at their current level. She presented two options to increase revenue, both requiring voter approval.

The first option is a Municipal Services Fee charged to utility bill accounts based on equivalent dwelling units (EDUs), one per single-family home, two per duplex, per-unit for apartments, and per-hookup for RV parks. A preliminary analysis showed that a fee of \$24 per EDU per month would generate approximately \$1,757,952 annually, sufficient to maintain existing services with a 10% reserve, which Butsch cautioned is the absolute minimum and not recommended. To achieve a 20% reserve, which she described as the responsible floor, the fee would need to be approximately \$35.30 per month per EDU, generating approximately \$2,585,292 annually. She noted key advantages of the Municipal Services Fee: it is collected monthly rather than in a lump sum; it is not subject to Measure 5 tax compression, meaning the City receives 100% of what is collected; and it more directly impacts occupants, including renters who pay utilities directly.

The second option is a Local Option Property Tax Levy, a temporary, voter-approved property tax of up to five years. A levy of \$1.49 per \$1,000 of assessed market value would generate sufficient funds to maintain existing services with a 10% reserve, expiring in 2031. Unlike the Municipal Services Fee, the levy is subject to Measure 5 and Measure 50 compression, meaning the City may not receive the full projected amount. It is assessed on July 1 and collected largely in November.

Butsch provided a bar graph showing that St. Helens has one of the lowest permanent property tax rates in the state, and noted that even with the proposed additions, the City would remain well below comparable cities, particularly when factoring in that the comparison cities also carry their own local option levies and municipal fees not reflected in the chart. Contracted City Attorney Wigod echoed this point.

Butsch also outlined the departments and services funded by the General Fund that would be affected by a failure to pass either measure, including police, library, parks, recreation, community development, administration, and municipal court. She warned that the City could be forced to shut down City Hall one or more days per week if revenue is not secured.

Discussion among Council members reflected shared concern about the likelihood of either measure passing, with Council President Chilton and Councilor Sundeen both expressing skepticism that voters would approve a new fee or levy. Council President Chilton suggested the Council be cautious about spending too much time and money pursuing a measure that may not pass, and recommended spending more effort planning for service reductions. Councilor Sundeen agreed, noting that residents have historically wanted full services without paying more, a position that is "no longer a reality." Mayor Massey acknowledged the skepticism but argued that the Council's role is to present the options to voters with full transparency about what is at stake, and that the Council can simultaneously pursue other revenue-generating strategies.

Councilor Hubbard raised a question about how commercial and industrial properties would be treated under the EDU model, and Butsch clarified that each business unit or industrial property connected to a meter would count as one EDU, and that apartment units would each count separately. Councilor Hubbard observed that industrial property owners might prefer the fee to a property tax levy, and Mayor Massey noted that regardless of mechanism, costs are typically passed down to renters and end users.

Mayor Massey expressed a preference for the Municipal Services Fee, citing the 100% dollar collection rate and the equity of the EDU model in capturing renters and properties not subject to property taxes. She argued for pursuing the 20% reserve target (\$35 fee), stating it would be irresponsible to do otherwise, and that the citizens and voters deserve to know exactly what services are at stake. Butsch agreed that the 10% reserve was insufficient and could quickly become inadequate in the event of unexpected costs or difficult union negotiations.

The Council was asked for direction to staff on which path to prepare for the next meeting. Wigod clarified the procedural options: a unanimous vote would allow adoption of the Municipal Services Fee Ordinance in a single reading at the next regular meeting; without unanimity, two special meetings would be required, one for each reading, 14 days apart, in order to meet the February 27 deadline for filing with the County. A local option levy resolution could be adopted by majority vote at the next regular meeting. Staff also noted they had internally agreed that placing both options simultaneously on the ballot would be confusing to voters and did not recommend that approach.

The general consensus of the majority of the Council was to direct staff to prepare the Municipal Services Fee ordinance at the 20% reserve level (approximately \$35 per EDU per month) with a 10-year sunset provision. Councilor Hubbard stated he wished to abstain and indicated he needed more time to review the materials. Because the Council did not achieve unanimity during the work session, Wigod advised that the matter would need to proceed through two special meetings rather than a single unanimous vote at the regular meeting, ensuring Councilor Hubbard and all members have sufficient time for additional review.

Mayor Massey stated that the Council would respect every member's voice and would proceed with two special sessions as required.

6. Review Request for Leak Adjustment at 2250 Gable Road

Mayor Massey presented the leak adjustment request submitted by Broadleaf Arbor for the account at 2250 Gable Road. She summarized that the account has been active since September 15, 2023, has received 11 late fees, has had no prior leak adjustments granted, and no prior late fee reversals. She noted a communication breakdown appeared to have occurred, with a City staff member apparently attempting to contact Broadleaf Arbor representative who was no longer there. The request was submitted outside of the 45-day submission window, though the requestor included emails that appear to show good-faith attempts to make contact. The Council was presented with two options: a partial adjustment of \$28,069.52 or a full adjustment of \$56,139.04.

Mayor Massey indicated her inclination to deny the request. The Council agreed to move the item to the regular session agenda for a formal vote later that evening.

7. Review of Final Partition Plat for 80 S. 21st Street - *City Planner Jacob Graichen*

City Planner Graichen briefly explained the item, noting that a final partition plat, which involves the creation of three or fewer parcels in a calendar year, does not typically require the signature of an elected official unless public right-of-way is being dedicated. In this case, public right-of-way is being dedicated, so the Mayor's signature is required. The item was scheduled for formal action at the regular session that evening.

8. Discussion regarding Alien Exhibit - *City Administrator John Walsh*

City Administrator Walsh introduced the discussion, acknowledging that Brady Preheim was correct in stating that Walsh was not present for the alien exhibit's installation and does not have full knowledge of its history. Walsh indicated that Treadway had conducted an investigation and submitted a detailed memo, but was unable to attend the meeting due to a scheduling conflict.

Walsh summarized the memo's findings: the alien exhibit has a hardware/cabinet component and a software/story file component. The media company that produced the software has since gone bankrupt. According to Treadway's investigation, the alien exhibit has never functioned as designed due to technology deficiencies, having been used only once and not to its full capacity. The exhibit has since been replaced in the relevant space by a reptile experience that has generated revenue.

Mayor Massey raised several concerns. She noted that a \$150,000 figure has been referenced in connection with the exhibit but has not been confirmed. She observed that a purchase of that magnitude would have required Council approval and that she could find no record of such approval. She also raised the question of whether the exhibit should appear on the City's insurance policy as an asset. Additionally, she asked whether there are any outstanding contractual obligations, including through the story file contract, which references "City of St. Helens" and lists Tina Curry as a signatory, that could limit the City's ability to declare the item surplus property or impose financial liability.

Councilor Hubbard asked whether the exhibit had actually been used, and Council President Chilton confirmed it had been used once, not to full capacity, and has not been used since. The Council noted there are no plans to use it again.

City Attorney Wigod indicated she had not yet reviewed the relevant materials but offered to do so. The Council directed her to review the available documentation, particularly the story file contract, to determine whether the City can lawfully declare the exhibit surplus property and whether there are any restrictions or outstanding obligations that would affect that determination.

9. Discussion regarding Use of Recreation Center Building (1810 Old Portland Rd)

City Planner Graichen provided a land use overview of the Recreation Center building and surrounding property, noting that the parcel is approximately seven acres in size and zoned light industrial. He explained that light industrial zoning permits a range of industrial and some non-industrial uses. He walked through the history of uses on the property: when the City acquired it from the mill, the building was already being used as a recreation facility, so no land use change was required when the City established its recreation program there. When police offices were later added, a formal zoning process was required to classify the building as a public facility, which was completed. He noted that the Council may wish to consider whether to rezone the property and suggested the topic would be well suited for the upcoming joint meeting with the City Council and Planning Commission in March.

Mayor Massey raised the idea of developing a high-end RV park on the property as a recurring revenue stream. She noted that she had researched several comparable parks, including Pacific Shores Motor Coach Resort and Dundee Hills RV Resort, and had gathered preliminary revenue figures. Based on 70 sites at 85% capacity, she estimated gross annual revenue ranging from approximately \$535,000 (at \$750/month) to approximately \$785,400 (at \$1,100/month). She noted that higher-end parks in the region charge up to \$1,500/month in peak season. She emphasized that she envisioned a well-managed, higher-end facility with strict age-of-RV requirements and occupancy limits to avoid social service concerns, and suggested the building itself could serve as a clubhouse with gym amenities, as is common at comparable facilities, further increasing its appeal.

Graichen confirmed that a recreational vehicle park is a permitted use under the light industrial zoning, meaning no rezoning would be required. He also noted that the building is within the 100-year floodplain but is grandfathered, and that a clubhouse use would likely not trigger substantial improvement thresholds requiring upgrades.

Council President Chilton acknowledged the RV park concept as a longstanding idea, noting that she walks by the site regularly and that it has always seemed like a suitable location. She raised the question of upfront financing, noting that infrastructure such as electrical hookups would need to be installed. She suggested looking at tourism funding, Travel Oregon grants, and hotel tax revenue as potential financing mechanisms.

City Administrator Walsh confirmed that a prior study and multiple iterations of plans had been developed for the site, including concepts involving a trail along the creek. He noted the previous plans had stalled due to other priorities, including the police station, the paper mill, and waterfront projects. The Council agreed to include the topic on the agenda for the upcoming joint meeting with the Planning Commission.

Mayor Massey reiterated the broader principle: a one-time property sale provides only a temporary infusion to the General Fund, whereas the City needs legacy, recurring revenue. She also referenced the Ross Road property as another potential revenue-generating asset. The Council expressed general enthusiasm for the concept and directed staff to bring the discussion to the joint Planning Commission meeting, with Mayor Massey offering to share her research on comparable RV park operations.

10. Report from City Administrator John Walsh

- Reported on federal grants available for the reservoir project.
- A waterline project bid came in at \$229,000, below the \$320,000–\$380,000 engineering estimate range, with 10 bids received.
- There is optimism for similar bidding outcomes for the police station project, which is preparing to go out to bid through Howard S. Wright.
- Sand Island environmental project updates include invasive species removal and tree planting, progressing through a DEQ penalty process and partnership with the Soil and Water Conservation District.
- Project Arcadia permitting and transfer work continues.
- A meeting with Councilors Hubbard and Gundersen, and Romano Capital reviewed building massing concepts. Legal counsel is developing a Letter of Intent (LOI) to protect the City's interests, which may influence the timeline; conversations are noted as "productive and exciting."
- The City received an award for excellence for its streets and utilities project at a ceremony attended by himself, Public Works Director Zaher, Engineering Manager Darroux, and Engineer II Bird.
- Ongoing work with GRO and CET involves asset transfer discussions with Paul Vogel and Tony Hyde. Scappoose will manage assets, with a Memorandum of Understanding similar to a previous arrangement being developed.
- Mayor Massey discussed the following:
 - Requested a written explanation from Contracted City Attorney Wigod for the "Clearing Confusion and Setting the Facts Straight" agenda item for the next Council meeting to address public confusion.
 - She would not attend the March 4 meeting in person due to a work obligation but confirmed with Council President Chilton about presiding.
 - Reviewing the Council liaison structure to ensure roles are relevant and appropriately scoped. Councilor Sundeen noted liaisons in other cities are often external-facing and agreed to revisit.
 - Developing a Youth Council, with Mayor Massey collecting 17 sample frameworks and drafting a resolution with a target of implementation by September. Collaboration with Councilor Sundeen, who initially proposed the youth council, will continue, with a proposal to be brought back to the council.

ADJOURN – 5:43 p.m.

EXECUTIVE SESSION – NOT HELD

Respectfully transcribed by ClerkMinutes and submitted by Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder.

ATTEST:

Kathy Payne, City Recorder

Jennifer Massey, Mayor



COUNCIL REGULAR SESSION

Wednesday, February 04, 2026

DRAFT MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT

Mayor Jennifer Massey
Council President Jessica Chilton
Councilor Mark Gundersen
Councilor Russell Hubbard
Councilor Brandon Sundeen

STAFF PRESENT

John Walsh, City Administrator
Kathy Payne, City Recorder
Crystal King, Communications Officer
Suzanne Bishop, Library Director
Doug Treat, Police Lieutenant
Ashley Wigod, Contracted City Attorney

OTHERS

Patrick Leavy	Nick Flory	Mercedes Massey	Mellisa Warner
Blake Hawkins	Colleen DeShazer	Levi DeShazer	Emily Riley
Randie Stockwell	Tony Stockwell	Cliff Warner	Paul DeShazer
Terry	Delores	Maxwell	Tyrus
Molly	Zack Watson	Beverly Stevens	Joe Hall
Robyn Toschi	Steve Toschi	Jeff MacDannald	Mike Cotton
Brady Preheim	Mary Hubbard	Mike Lackey	Alysia Meness
Keith DeSpain	G. Berry	Zach Davis	Jax Ogle
Alisha Murphy	Jordan Walter	James Merritt	Hannah Davis
Nicholas Hellmich	Taylor Deshaw	Jim Coleman	Amy Nevitt
Cortney Madruga	Emily Riley	Tammy Maygra	Lance Tillotson

CALL REGULAR SESSION TO ORDER – 7:00 p.m.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

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

- ◆ Steve Toschi. Opened by expressing his opposition to any ballot measures. He raised concerns over the Mayor's appearance on a podcast labeled as "mob boss" during possible police union racketeering, suggesting it risked public perception and ethics. He urged the Council to hold the Mayor accountable for this and emphasized the necessity for fiscal responsibility. Additionally, he advised City Administrator Walsh against seeking more taxpayer funds without significant justification.
- ◆ Jim Coleman. Voiced concerns about the all-terrain vehicle (ATV) ordinance's public involvement process. He noted the announcement of the ordinance was made on the Mayor's personal

Facebook page rather than through formal public notice channels. He questioned the adequacy of public review, particularly after changes made during the Work Session, and disclosed that he had not been provided with the final version for the vote.

- ◆ Nick Flory. Expressed opposition to any additional tax burdens on the community but showed support for the ATV ordinance and the residential development annexation. He cited the benefits it could provide for families and individuals with disabilities, suggesting it enhances community living.
- ◆ Emily Riley. A UTV owner since 2021, described her positive experiences driving in other states and referenced the responsible nature of the UTV community. She highlighted practical applications of UTVs, such as using them to navigate in snowstorms and supporting local businesses, showing how they could enhance community accessibility.
- ◆ Joe Hall. A resident of fourteen years, shared insights on UTVs' potential in fostering emergency preparedness. He recounted past instances where severe ice storms occurred, during which he used his 4-wheel drive vehicle to deliver essentials to neighbors, suggesting that UTVs could serve a similar community-support role.
- ◆ Paul DeShazer. A long-time community member, expressed enthusiastic support for the UTV ordinance, while countering opposition's negative labels toward supporters. He praised modern side-by-sides for their safety features and likened them to street-legal motorcycles, indicating that the vehicles run parallel to bikes already allowed on the road.
- ◆ Brady Preheim. Carried out a broad criticism of the Mayor's ethics and fiscal management, arguing against the ATV ordinance due to anticipated costs and insurance concerns. He launched personal attacks on a fellow speaker and maintained that the City should function within its existing budget, opposing tax increases.
- ◆ Jeff MacDannald. A builder of UTVs designed for emergency use, emphasized the advanced engineering and safety features of current UTV models, which he differentiated from older recreational dune buggies. He offered potential assistance with costs associated with their adoption or implementation.
- ◆ Colleen Deshazer. A former Port Commissioner, supported the UTV ordinance, highlighting its potential benefits for individuals who can't obtain a driver's license but are still able to drive. She urged the Council not to succumb to the pressure faced by the Port Commission in the past and emphasized the positive impact UTVs could have on the community.
- ◆ Mike Cotton. Shared his experience as a long-time advocate for UTV use and emphasized the safety and affordability of these vehicles. He illustrated that UTVs are as safe as other recreational vehicles and commended the Council for their consideration.
- ◆ Keith DeSpain. Acting as a representative of Columbia River Motorsports, exhibited steadfast support for the UTV proposition. He affirmed the company's readiness to aid in making the vehicles street legal and committed to providing educational resources about the sport to the community.

- ◆ Tammy Maygra. Expressed her concern over the City's handling of a public records lawsuit, noting the City's daily fines and the financial burden it poses. She urged the Council to release public records promptly and reduce unnecessary legal expenses.
- ◆ Lance Tillotsen. Shared a positive experience using a side-by-side UTV to assist a neighbor during a snowstorm, highlighting the practical benefits of allowing UTVs on city streets. He supported the ordinance as a positive addition to the community.
- ◆ Levi DeShazer. Emphasized the adherence to traffic laws and safety standards that UTV operators must follow, likening them to other road-legal vehicles. He confirmed strong support from the community and reinforced the well-maintained nature of UTVs.
- ◆ Patrick Leary. Stressed that the turnout at the meeting demonstrated strong community support for the side-by-side ordinance, urging the Council to recognize this and approve the measure.
- ◆ Mercedes Massey. The Mayor's daughter, delivered a spirited defense both for the ordinance and her mother. She vehemently condemned the misinformation being spread and personal attacks lodged against supporters, singling out inappropriate online comments directed at her. She assured attendees that the ordinance complied with proper procedures, symbolizing responsible governance.
- ◆ Robyn Toschi. Yielded her time to Steve Toschi.
- ◆ Steve Toschi. Reinforced his critique of preemptive commitments regarding the ordinance, advising each party involved to avoid making personal attacks on those with opposing viewpoints. He highlighted the potential safety risks involved with UTVs when engaged in accidents with motor vehicles.
- ◆ Melissa Warner. Expressed support for the UTV ordinance, citing it as a positive initiative for the community amidst negative publicity. She noted that owners are accountable for lawful operation and insurance.
- ◆ Taylor Deshaw. Shared a personal experience of surviving a significant drop in his UTV without injury and likened the safety of UTVs to motorcycles, arguing for their safe operation at regulated speeds within city limits.
- ◆ Amy Nevitt. She provided a counter-opinion, arguing that off-road vehicles should remain off-road. Her point focused on questioning why recreational desires, potentially provided by UTVs on city streets, should take priority over other community issues requiring attention.
- ◆ Nicholas Hellmich. Argued for personal autonomy in safety decisions, stating that residents should have the freedom to use UTVs. He compared it to firearm ownership, advocating for less government intervention and trusting individuals to make responsible choices.

ORDINANCES – *First Reading*

1. **Ordinance No. 3319:** An Ordinance to Annex and Designate the Zone of Certain Property Located Between the Northern Terminus of Morten Lane and the South Side of Sykes County Road

Mayor Massey read Ordinance No. 3319 by title. The final reading will be at the next meeting.

2. **Ordinance No. 3320:** An Ordinance Authorizing the Operation of Class IV All-Terrain Vehicles on Streets located within the City of St. Helens, Oregon, and Providing a Penalty for the Violation Thereof

Mayor Massey read Ordinance No. 3320 by title. The final reading will be at the next meeting.

Mayor Massey clarified confusion among attendees who expected a vote, explaining that first readings don't require voting and the ordinance would return for second reading and potential adoption. She noted this process allows additional public input opportunities.

City Recorder Payne confirmed the ordinance would be effective 30 days after adoption if passed at the next meeting on February 18. Mayor Massey corrected misinformation about her role, stating her commitment was only to bring the ordinance forward for Council review, not to guarantee its passage.

AWARD BID/CONTRACT

3. Award Bid and Authorize Mayor to Sign Contract with Common Ground Excavation LLC for Railroad Ave – South 1st Street Watermain Replacement Project No. W-485, in the Amount of \$229,998.94

Motion: Motion made by Council President Chilton and seconded by Councilor Hubbard to award the bid and authorize the mayor to sign. **Vote:** Yea: Mayor Massey, Council President Chilton, Councilor Gundersen, Councilor Hubbard, Councilor Sundeen

APPROVE AND/OR AUTHORIZE FOR SIGNATURE

4. Final Partition Plat for 80 S. 21st Street
5. Agreement with St. Helens School District for Mutual Use of Facilities

Motion: Motion made by Councilor Sundeen and seconded by Councilor Gundersen to approve '4' and '5' above. **Vote:** Yea: Mayor Massey, Council President Chilton, Councilor Gundersen, Councilor Hubbard, Councilor Sundeen

CONSENT AGENDA FOR ACCEPTANCE

6. [Ratify] Agreement with Christine Landers for Pro Tem Prosecutorial Services

Motion: Motion made by Council President Chilton and seconded by Councilor Gundersen to approve '6' above. **Vote:** Yea: Mayor Massey, Council President Chilton, Councilor Gundersen, Councilor Hubbard, Councilor Sundeen

CONSENT AGENDA FOR APPROVAL

7. OLCC Licenses
8. Accounts Payable Bill Lists

Motion: Motion made by Councilor Sundeen and seconded by Councilor Gundersen to approve '7' and '8' above. **Vote:** Yea: Mayor Massey, Council President Chilton, Councilor Gundersen, Councilor Hubbard, Councilor Sundeen

WORK SESSION ACTION ITEMS

Direction on Ballot Measure

Motion: Motion made by Councilor Sundeen and seconded by Council President Chilton to direct staff and legal counsel to prepare an ordinance to adopt a Municipal Services Fee to refer to the voters on the May 19, 2026, ballot, which is to be used for general fund staffing, programs and services in police, library, parks, recreation, community development, administration and municipal court, to maintain current services and create a 20% reserve, which is the minimum reserve best practice.

Councilor Hubbard sought clarification that the fee would apply to all Equivalent Dwelling Units (EDUs) and expressed concern about the 20% reserve requirement. Councilor Sundeen clarified this was directing preparation of an ordinance for voter consideration, not final approval.

Contracted City Attorney Wigod clarified that the Council was voting to direct the City Administrator to prepare an ordinance for review at a special meeting, not voting to refer a measure to voters that evening.

Vote: Yea: Mayor Massey, Council President Chilton, Councilor Gundersen, Councilor Hubbard, Councilor Sundeen

Leak Adjustment at 2250 Gable Road (Broadleaf Arbor Apartments)

Motion: Motion made by Council President Chilton and seconded by Councilor Gundersen to deny the Broadleaf Arbor leak adjustment. **Vote:** Yea: Mayor Massey, Council President Chilton, Councilor Gundersen, Councilor Hubbard, Councilor Sundeen

COUNCIL MEMBER REPORTS

Councilor Sundeen reported...

- Announced the upcoming dedication of a wind phone at McCormick Park on February 19 at 10:30 a.m. and mentioned he would remind everyone at the next meeting.

Council President Chilton reported...

- Nothing to report.

Councilor Hubbard reported...

- Nothing to report.

Councilor Gundersen reported...

- Reported a productive meeting with Romano Capital, with plans to present something to the Council at the next meeting.
- Described a walking tour of Milton Creek Reserve, emphasizing its unique urban natural setting and creek access.

MAYOR MASSEY REPORTS

- Expressed appreciation for citizen involvement and the passionate engagement shown by meeting attendees, emphasizing that providing opportunities for public participation is fundamental to their role. She noted it was particularly encouraging to see people get involved when they care about specific issues.

PROACTIVE ITEMS

OTHER BUSINESS

ADJOURN – 7:55 p.m.

Respectfully transcribed by ClerkMinutes and submitted by Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder.

ATTEST:

Kathy Payne, City Recorder

Jennifer Massey, Mayor



COUNCIL SPECIAL SESSION

Wednesday, February 11, 2026

DRAFT MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT

Mayor Jennifer Massey
Council President Jessica Chilton (via Zoom)
Councilor Mark Gundersen
Councilor Russell Hubbard
Councilor Brandon Sundeen

STAFF PRESENT

John Walsh, City Administrator	Suzanne Bishop, Library Director
Kathy Payne, City Recorder	Shanna Duggan, Recreation Manager
Crystal King, Communications Officer	Gloria Butsch, Finance Director
Matt Smith, Police Chief	Ashley Wigod, Contracted City Attorney
Doug Treat, Police Lieutenant	

OTHERS

Howard Blumenthal	Steve Toschi
Cortney Madruga	Jennifer Gilbert
Tina Curry	Brady Preheim

CALL SPECIAL SESSION TO ORDER – 4:00 p.m.

Mayor Massey disclosed that her spouse is employed by the City of St. Helens as a police officer, announcing an actual conflict of interest under ORS 244.120 as amended by Senate Bill 983. She stated that she may participate in discussion and vote on adoption of the local budget after making this disclosure.

TOPIC

1. Ordinance No. 3321 and Ordinance No. 3322: Adoption of a General Services Fee

Discuss Ordinance No. 3321 and Ordinance No. 3322 to determine whether Council would like to adopt a General Services Fee and if so, which amount of the fee to adopt.

Presentation by City Administrator and Finance Director

Finance Director Butsch presented the follow-up to the February 4, 2026 City Council Work Session discussion regarding the budget shortfall of \$2,214,000 if services funded by the General Fund are to remain at current levels. She explained that the City has used one-time revenue sources to fill budget gaps in recent years, but those sources are not available for future years.

Butsch noted that St. Helens has a permanent tax rate of \$1.91 per thousand assessed value, which is one of the lowest in Oregon. The City Council had previously directed staff to prepare for consideration a \$35.30 general services fee to be referred to voters at the May 19, 2026 election.

Two options were presented:

Option 1 (Ordinance 3321): A \$35.30 per EDU per month fee that would maintain current staffing and service levels while creating a 20% reserve.

Option 2 (Ordinance 3322): A \$24.00 per EDU per month fee generating \$1,757,552 annually, requiring a \$456,000 reduction in staffing and services expenses, but maintaining a 20% reserve.

Both ordinances would establish the fee for 10 years (July 1, 2026 through June 30, 2035), collected in a dedicated account for General Fund services including police, library, parks, recreation, community development, administration, information technology, and municipal court. The City would provide quarterly reports and annual audits of the fee collection and use.

City Administrator Walsh emphasized that the City has already lost 14-15 positions over the past four years since ARPA funding ended, and is already at a critical service level where any additional cuts would be difficult to absorb.

Public Comment – *Limited to three (3) minutes per speaker*

- ◆ Howard Blumenthal. Expressed concerns about the meeting being scheduled at 4:00 p.m. when working people cannot attend. He questioned whether the public comment period after today's vote would be meaningful, worried about the financial impact on seniors, and asked whether apartment residents would pay the same fee as homeowners. He suggested the City should have addressed these budget issues years ago and requested senior discounts be reinstated. He also questioned the cost of holding a special election in May.

Mayor Massey clarified that the police station funded by the existing \$10 fee will be built by mid-2027, with Councilor Hubbard actively working on the project. She emphasized that the fee structure ensures every EDU pays, including all apartment units, making it more equitable than a property tax levy. She explained that with a fee, 100% of collected funds go to designated services, unlike tax levies that are subject to compression.

Council Deliberation

The discussion revealed significant concerns about child exploitation and abuse cases in the community. Mayor Massey expressed a strong concern for the ongoing issue, emphasizing support for dedicating two full-time detectives specifically to child exploitation, child pornography, sexual abuse, domestic violence, and ICAC (Internet Crimes Against Children) cases. She highlighted alarming statistics revealing St. Helens has a 30% higher rate of these incidents than similar agencies serving populations 10,000 larger, leaving 110 cross-reports unaddressed. Mayor Massey stressed the importance of addressing these systemic issues, expressing a firm stance that nothing is more important than the safety of the children in the community.

Chief Smith confirmed the extent of the issue, mentioning that he had recently completed a week-long trial on a large sex abuse investigation, underscoring the need for dedicated officers to handle these cases full-time. He stated that, if the proposed fee passed, his intent would be to hire enough patrol staff to fill the current coverage gaps and then allocate these detectives to focus on the mountain of pending child abuse investigations.

Council President Chilton, however, disagreed with prioritizing detectives over patrol officers, noting the pressing need to address the ongoing overtime costs and working towards restoring 24/7 patrol coverage in the city. Lieutenant Treat elaborated that for full patrol coverage, the department would need a minimum of 15 officers. He confirmed that five officers are currently in training, with a projected return to full 24/7 patrol coverage by July 1, pending successful completion of their training program.

Beyond the law enforcement discussions, the Council also debated the potential impact and duration of the fee. Concerns were voiced over the 10-year term of the fee, with Councilors Gundersen and Hubbard

advocating for a mandatory review after five years. This review would be crucial in assessing whether the City's financial situation had improved enough to warrant a reduction in the fee. Councilor Gundersen expressed a cautious approach to the immediate voting, preferring more deliberation under the constraints of the May ballot deadline. This deliberation reflects the balance the Council seeks between fiscal foresight and responsive action to public safety needs.

Finance Director Gloria Butsch strongly advised against reducing the 20% reserve. She warned that lowering it to 15% or less could trigger recurring budget shortfalls in the next two-three years. Her analysis emphasized the need to ensure financial stability over a longer term, aligning with the Council's broader fiscal strategy.

The Council also broached the idea of holding a town hall meeting to provide transparency and educate the public about the fee proposals. Inspired by the previously successful utility rate study presentation by Steve Donovan, Mayor Massey highlighted the need to furnish factual information to counteract misinformation and answer community questions. After extensive discussions on the ordinance language and amendment necessities, the Council reached a consensus to incorporate a provision mandating a Budget Committee's review and recommendation after five years, held accountable for both ordinances, thus ensuring a systematic evaluation of the fee's impact on the City's financial health.

2. Ordinance No. 3321: An Ordinance to Establish Chapter 13.34, General Services Fee, if approved by the voters at a citywide election (\$35.30)

Motion: Motion made by Councilor Sundeen and seconded by Councilor Gundersen to approve the first reading of Ordinance No. 3321, an Ordinance to Establish Chapter 13.34, General Services Fee, if approved by the voter at a citywide election, with the amendment that the ordinance be amended to add a mandatory review and recommendations from the Budget Committee after five years. **Vote:** Yea: Mayor Massey, Council President Chilton, Councilor Gundersen, Councilor Hubbard, Councilor Sundeen

3. Ordinance No. 3322: An Ordinance to Establish Chapter 13.34, General Services Fee, if approved by the voters at a citywide election (\$24.00)

Motion: Motion made by Councilor Sundeen and seconded by Councilor Gundersen to approve the first reading of Ordinance No. 3322, an Ordinance to Establish Chapter 13.34, General Services Fee, if approved by the voters at a citywide election, with the amendment that the ordinance be amended to add a mandatory review and recommendations from the Budget Committee after five years. **Vote:** Yea: Mayor Massey, Council President Chilton, Councilor Gundersen, Councilor Hubbard, Councilor Sundeen

ADJOURN – 5:18 p.m.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

- ORS 192.660(2)(h) To consult with legal counsel concerning the legal rights and duties of a public body with regard to current litigation or litigation likely to be filed.

Respectfully transcribed by ClerkMinutes and submitted by Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder.

ATTEST:

Kathy Payne, City Recorder

Jennifer Massey, Mayor

City of St. Helens CITY COUNCIL

Executive Session Summary

February 11, 2026

Members Present: Jennifer Massey, Mayor (left the room at 5:38 p.m.)
Mark Gundersen, Councilor
Brandon Sundeen, Councilor
Russell Hubbard, Councilor

Members Absent: Jessica Chilton, Council President

Staff Present: John Walsh, City Administrator
Kathy Payne, City Recorder

Others: Ashley Wigod, City Attorney with Jordan Ramis PC
Chris Dolan, City Attorney with Jordan Ramis PC (via Zoom)
Bob Steringer, Attorney for Jennifer Massey (Via Zoom; left the room at 5:38 p.m.)



At 5:22 p.m., Mayor Massey opened the Executive Session pursuant to the ORS numbers listed below and then gave roll call. Other than Labor Negotiations, representatives of the news media, designated staff, and other persons as approved shall be allowed to attend the Executive Session. All other members of the audience are asked to leave the Council Chambers. Representatives of the news media were specifically directed not to report on or otherwise disclose any of the deliberations or anything said about these subjects during the executive session, except to state the general subject of the session as previously announced. No decision may be made in executive session. Any person in attendance, including the news media, who has a recording device is directed to turn it off.

- ORS 192.660(2)(h) To **consult with legal counsel** concerning the legal rights and duties of a public body with regard to current litigation or litigation likely to be filed

The Executive Session was adjourned by Councilor Gundersen at 5:58 p.m.



ATTEST:

Kathy Payne, City Recorder

Jennifer Massey, Mayor

An audio recording of this meeting is archived at City Hall.



COUNCIL WORK SESSION

Wednesday, February 18, 2026

DRAFT MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT

Mayor Jennifer Massey
Council President Jessica Chilton – left at 4:00 p.m.
Councilor Mark Gundersen
Councilor Russell Hubbard – arrived at 3:40 p.m.
Councilor Brandon Sundeen

STAFF PRESENT

John Walsh, City Administrator	Mouhamad Zaher, Public Works Director
Kathy Payne, City Recorder	Aaron Kunders, Water Quality Manager
Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder	Sharon Darroux, Engineering Manager
Gloria Butsch, Finance Director	Ashley Wigod, Contracted City Attorney
Jacob Graichen, City Planner	

OTHERS

Steve Topaz	Eddie Dunton	Erin Salisbury
Steve Toschi	Jim Coleman	Seth Otto, Maul Foster Alongi
Robyn Toschi	Adam St. Pierre	Cem Gokcora, Maul Foster Alongi
Brady Preheim	Tina Curry	

CALL WORK SESSION TO ORDER – 3:00 p.m.

CLEARING CONFUSION AND SETTING THE FACTS STRAIGHT

1. Response to February 4, 2026 Visit Comments

Mayor Massey addressed clarifications regarding statements made during visitor comments at the February 4, 2026 Council meeting. She explained that a citizen had stated the City was being fined related to public records litigation, but clarified that at that time, the City was not being fined. The plaintiff had requested fines be imposed, and a hearing was held on February 17 where the judge heard arguments. The judge is reviewing the request but has not made a decision.

The Mayor explained the "Clearing the Confusion" process, which was added to help the public receive accurate information on topics that have caused confusion or where inaccurate statements were made during visitor comments. The process allows any Council member or staff to request review of statements they believe may be confusing or factually incorrect. The City Administrator then asks staff to research the statement and propose clarification, with legal review when needed. If beneficial, the correction is placed on a future Council agenda.

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

Contracted City Attorney Wigod clarified a procedural issue from the previous Council meeting, explaining that while public hearings for land use sometimes allow citizens to give their time to others, the Council rules do not permit this practice. Citizens can request additional time from the Mayor, but this is not required to be granted.

- ◆ Steve Topaz. Raised concerns about DEQ's involvement in various local environmental issues, including the Sykes Road Boise waste dump, Scappoose Bay dredging, Pulp and Talbot remediation projects, and Columbia County's high cancer rates. He asked three questions: whether the Council has had communications with DEQ, if they plan to start communicating with DEQ, and whether City Administrator Walsh has asked the governor why DEQ appears to be hindering St. Helens' development.
- ◆ Steve Toschi. Spoke positively about the City's lagoon, noting it doesn't create odor problems like sewage treatment plants in other cities. He strongly opposed the concept of filling the lagoon with toxic waste, calling it "a nonstarter" and expressing concern about potential environmental disaster if there were a breach. He advocated for putting the lagoon project on pause or ending it entirely, suggesting the City focus on more pressing infrastructure needs like water treatment and sewage management.
- ◆ Jim Coleman. Raised ethics concerns about the Mayor lobbying for new detective positions while her husband works for the Police Department, suggesting this creates a conflict of interest. He also opposed the off-road vehicle ordinance, criticizing what he perceived as coordinated advocacy from the Mayor's family members. Coleman noted the ordinance would have costs for signage and enforcement that the City hadn't adequately considered, comparing it unfavorably to Rainier's permit-based system.

DISCUSSION TOPICS

2. **Presentation by Maul Foster Alongi on Central Waterfront Project Update - *Seth Otto, Principal Planner***

Seth Otto from Maul Foster Alongi presented an updated analysis of the Central Waterfront Lagoon Project, explaining significant changes from previous proposals. City Administrator Walsh prefaced the presentation by emphasizing that filling the lagoon with toxic waste had never been contemplated.

Otto outlined the project's evolution over the past decade, starting with the goal of redeveloping the waterfront with minimal fiscal impact on the City. The original concept involved creating a disposal facility for Portland Harbor Superfund cleanup materials to generate revenue while creating usable land.

However, recent studies revealed three major constraints: extreme variations in depth to bedrock across the lagoon, liquefaction risks from silty material, and a floating liner issue. These challenges significantly increased costs and reduced feasible areas for development.

The Wastewater Treatment Plant analysis, conducted by Cem Gokcora, determined that a new facility would be necessary regardless, with intensified activated sludge technology recommended. This facility would require solid ground and cost approximately \$100 million.

Otto presented two options: the original concept (Option 1) which would now have negative net present value due to increased costs and reduced capacity, and a revised concept (Option 2) focusing on preparing for the inevitable Wastewater Treatment Plant replacement using local fill materials rather than Portland Harbor sediments.

The recommendation was to proceed with Option 2, using remaining State grant funds to design and permit cell A for the new Wastewater Treatment plant, while potentially filling areas B and C with local materials for recreational use.

Council President Chilton expressed doubt about the project's viability, suggesting the City had missed its window of opportunity and should focus on other priorities. Councilor Hubbard agreed, noting the City's financial constraints and other pressing needs.

Mayor Massey questioned the Treatment Plant's lifespan and strategic planning implications. Public Works Director Zaher indicated the existing system has several years of life remaining but would eventually need replacement, with costs being astronomical. He supported continuing the engineering work since it was funded by grants.

Water Quality Manager Kunders explained the regulatory timeline, noting the current permit expires in December 2029 and that DEQ would likely provide a compliance schedule rather than immediate strict enforcement of new limits.

The Council reached consensus to proceed with the remaining grant-funded engineering work for Option 2, emphasizing this would not involve City funds and would position the City for future needs.

Council President Chilton left at 4:00 p.m.

3. Quarterly Reports from City Departments/Divisions - Public Works (Informational)

Public Works Director Zaher presented his comprehensive quarterly report. Mayor Massey noted the thoroughness of the report and appreciated the inclusion of IT services. No specific issues were raised by Council members, with Zaher indicating his department continues to face challenges while serving citizens effectively.

4. Review Right-of-Way Dedication Deed for 80 S. 21st Street - City Planner Jacob Graichen

City Planner Graichen explained this was a follow-up to a previous agenda item involving a combined lot line adjustment and partition plat. He clarified that while the partition portion could be dedicated via the plat, which Council had previously authorized, the lot line adjustment portion required a separate dedication deed. This represented the completion of the two-part process that hadn't been fully addressed initially. This is on tonight's agenda for a decision.

5. Discuss Council's Role on Taking Position on Ballot Measures

Mayor Massey initiated discussion about whether the Council should adopt a formal policy limiting its role in endorsing ballot measures outside the City. She suggested it might be more appropriate to allow educational presentations from both sides of issues rather than taking official positions that could alienate citizens.

Contracted City Attorney Wigod provided research from other jurisdictions, explaining that typically only elected officials from the sponsoring public body can advocate for ballot measures at Council meetings, while staff cannot advocate due to public funds restrictions. Opposition voices would typically be heard during public comment rather than as formal agenda items.

Councilor Sundeen expressed ambivalence about the need for such positions, questioning whether citizens actually base voting decisions on City Council endorsements. After discussion, the Council decided to table the item rather than adopt a formal resolution, preferring to maintain flexibility for future situations while being mindful of the guidelines provided.

6. Discussion regarding Roles and Responsibilities of Council Members

Mayor Massey requested to table this item to the next meeting, indicating insufficient time for proper research and preparation. The Council agreed to postpone discussion to the second meeting in March.

7. Report from City Administrator John Walsh

- Outlined items for tonight's Council meeting including:
 - Morten Lane annexation
 - All-terrain vehicle ordinance approval
 - Service provider contract amendment

- Reservoir siting study extension
- Ratify AFSCME bargaining agreement
- Various intergovernmental agreements
- Positive progress on the police station project:
 - Construction to begin in June
 - 12-month build timeline
 - Meetings about finishes and design details
 - Solar carport grants were unsuccessful, but staff will continue to pursue funding opportunities
- Updates were provided on:
 - Reservoir siting project
 - Project Arcadia permit transfers
 - Ongoing negotiations for a potential development project with legal work to protect City interests while establishing reasonable timelines and milestones
 - Announced February 25 ballot measure meeting as the final opportunity for public input on proposed fees before the May election deadline. Mayor Massey added that there has been some confusion about this. This is a rush and did not have time to go to the Budget Committee first. There are timelines to be met.
 - Regional economic development coordination through Columbia County coalitions
 - Upcoming presentations on Independence Day celebration planning
 - Attended the City County Quarterly Dinner
 - Met with Councilor Gundersen and Fire Chief Smythe about buildings
 - Community Day in the Park and 13 Nights on the River is being planned
 - The meeting with the School District was cancelled and will be rescheduled
- Mayor Massey emphasized:
 - Time-sensitive nature of the ballot measure process
 - Praised the Parks and Trails Commission's enthusiasm and dedication to community improvement projects

ADJOURN – 4:20 p.m.**EXECUTIVE SESSION**

- ORS 192.660(2)(d) To conduct deliberations with persons appointed to carry out labor negotiations
- ORS 192.660(2)(e) To conduct deliberations with persons designated by the governing body to negotiate real property transactions
- ORS 192.660(2)(f) To consider information or records that are exempt by law from public inspection
- ORS 192.660(2)(h) To consult with legal counsel concerning the legal rights and duties of a public body with regard to current litigation or litigation likely to be filed
- ORS 192.660(2)(i) To consider employment related performance of Chief Officer

Respectfully transcribed by ClerkMinutes and submitted by Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder.

ATTEST:

Kathy Payne, City Recorder

Jennifer Massey, Mayor

City of St. Helens CITY COUNCIL

Executive Session Summary

February 18, 2026

Members Present: Jennifer Massey, Mayor
Jessica Chilton, Council President (arriving at 5:00 p.m.)
Mark Gundersen, Councilor
Brandon Sundeen, Councilor
Russell Hubbard, Councilor

Staff Present: John Walsh, City Administrator
Kathy Payne, City Recorder

Others: Ashley Wigod, City Attorney with Jordan Ramis PC
David Rabbino, City Attorney with Jordan Ramis PC (via Zoom from 4:30-5:10 p.m.)
Chris Dolan, City Attorney with Jordan Ramis PC (via Zoom from 5:11-5:35 p.m.)



At 4:30 p.m., Mayor Massey opened the Executive Session pursuant to the ORS numbers listed below and then gave roll call. Other than Labor Negotiations, representatives of the news media, designated staff, and other persons as approved shall be allowed to attend the Executive Session. All other members of the audience are asked to leave the Council Chambers. Representatives of the news media were specifically directed not to report on or otherwise disclose any of the deliberations or anything said about these subjects during the executive session, except to state the general subject of the session as previously announced. No decision may be made in executive session. Any person in attendance, including the news media, who has a recording device is directed to turn it off.

- ORS 192.660(2)(f) To consider information or **records that are exempt** by law from public inspection:
- ORS 192.660(2)(h) To **consult with legal counsel** concerning the legal rights and duties of a public body with regard to current litigation or litigation likely to be filed:
- ORS 192.660(2)(e) To conduct deliberations with persons designated by the governing body to negotiate **real property transactions**:
- ORS 192.660(2)(d) To conduct deliberations with persons appointed to carry out **labor negotiations**:
- ORS 192.660(2)(i) To **consider employment related performance of Chief Officer**:
 - Nothing was discussed under this provision.

The Executive Session was adjourned at 5:58 p.m.



ATTEST:

Kathy Payne, City Recorder

Jennifer Massey, Mayor

An audio recording of this meeting is archived at City Hall.



COUNCIL REGULAR SESSION

Wednesday, February 18, 2026

DRAFT MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT

Mayor Jennifer Massey
Council President Jessica Chilton
Councilor Mark Gundersen
Councilor Russell Hubbard
Councilor Brandon Sundeen

STAFF PRESENT

John Walsh, City Administrator
Kathy Payne, City Recorder
Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder
Sharon Darroux, Engineering Manager
Ashley Wigod, Contracted City Attorney

OTHERS

Steve Toschi	Adam St. Pierre	Eddie Dunton
Melissa Warner	Mike Warner	Nick Flory
Emily Riley	Paul DeShazer	Mercedes Massey
Levi DeShazer	Jeff MacDannald	Brady Preheim
Jason Moon	CR	Art Leskowich
Jim Coleman		

CALL REGULAR SESSION TO ORDER – 7:00 p.m.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

VISITOR COMMENTS – *Limited to three (3) minutes or less per speaker*

- ◆ Nick Flory. Expressed continued support for the UTV ordinance, calling it fun and good for the city. However, he voiced concerns about the sewage reservoir project, stating that given the City's current financial situation, he didn't believe it was appropriate to move forward with such a large capital investment at this time. He agreed with postponing the project until the budget was in better shape, noting he appreciated the democratic process that allows citizens and taxpayers to voice their opinions.
- ◆ Steve Toschi. Commended Council President Chilton's decision to press the "no go button" on the lagoon project, calling it a non-starter. He argued that St. Helens should not be taking sludge from the Willamette and Portland to solve their own problems, warning about "golden handcuffs" where others help with planning but tie the City to their solutions. He expressed concern that the Public Works Department wasn't working on a plan B, noting they have 10 more years of sewer capacity. Toschi suggested using the engineering plans already provided but tasking Public Works to solve St. Helens' problems without taking on Portland's waste. He also raised concerns about

the upcoming development work and potential litigation, emphasizing the need for flexibility in development options.

- ◆ Jason Moon, former Columbia County Small Business Resource Center Director, thanked the Council for their support and announced that grants from the dissolved CET were being transferred. He shared that he would continue running the Northwest Innovation Hub through the Oregon Entrepreneurs Network, serving Columbia, Clatsop, and Tillamook counties. Moon noted that Scappoose had agreed to take over some grants, including the Growing Rural Oregon Ford Family Foundation grant, and hoped St. Helens would support this transition.
- ◆ Brady Preheim. Criticized the mayor extensively, calling the ATV ordinance another failed "moneymaker scheme." He listed what he characterized as the mayor's failures, including moving public comments to the end of meetings, canceling town halls, and budget problems. Preheim criticized the proposed \$47 water bill fee, predicting it would not pass. He referenced being on the Budget Committee three years ago when the current crisis was predicted, arguing that a 5% cut then (equivalent to closing City Hall two hours early on Fridays) could have prevented the current need for 20% cuts. He questioned where \$300,000 from tourism funds had gone and criticized the lack of action on budget problems.
- ◆ Levi DeShazer. Spoke in support of the UTV ordinance, emphasizing that the UTV community understands when to follow rules both recreationally and on public roads. He noted UTV users follow campground rules, federal land regulations, and safety requirements including flags, fire extinguishers, seat belts, and helmets for children. DeShazer offered to donate his time and materials to install up to four road signs, noting his employer is 3M and ODOT certified for road sign installation following the Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices.
- ◆ Mercedes Massey. Responded to suggestions that her opinions shouldn't matter because she's the mayor's daughter, asserting her right as a resident to express views about ordinances affecting her community. She addressed claims of being "attacked," suggesting such claims arise when baseless online accusations are met with facts and evidence. Massey noted that a public post about the ordinance had generated 106 supportive comments, reflecting community desire. She emphasized that productive dialogue should be grounded in facts rather than personal feelings, clarifying that neither she nor her significant other own a side-by-side vehicle.
- ◆ Jim Coleman. Thanked Mercedes Massey for her "tirade" and stated he was opposing the ordinance without needing to be attacked for his opinion. He referenced earlier signage discussions where he felt the mayor had signaled he wasn't telling the truth. Coleman pointed to contract language requiring the City to post signs and insurance requirements without verification mechanisms, arguing these would cost the City money and tax the understaffed Police Department. He concluded the City wasn't ready for this expense given budget constraints.
- ◆ Jeff MacDannald. Supported the ATV ordinance and offered to personally cover any costs for the few signs needed if the City faced fees. He emphasized that UTV owners maintain full coverage insurance on vehicles worth \$20,000 to \$100,000, not just liability coverage. MacDannald noted all vehicles have required safety equipment and road kits including blinkers and horns.
- ◆ Adam St. Pierre. Thanked Council for their work and noted the ordinance demonstrated overwhelming local support. He expressed support for the General Services Fee to return to 20% reserves quickly, then removing the fee. St. Pierre emphasized the need for additional detective

positions, particularly for investigating child abuse and sexual assault cases. He made concerning allegations about an individual's comments regarding children, suggesting additional detectives were needed to investigate such behavior.

- ◆ Art Leskowich. Supports the Council's work and commented on the lagoon studies. He noted over \$1 million in grant funding had been spent and remaining funds should be utilized since Council appeared to oppose filling the lagoon with external sediments. Leskowich emphasized the lagoon contains contaminated sediments from previous mill operations and the Wastewater Treatment Plant will need future upgrades. He noted some contaminants were appearing in drinking water intake downstream, though below concern limits. Leskowich advocated for information-based rather than emotional decisions, noting the project's economics had shifted from a "golden goose" to requiring \$50-80 million in private partnerships that no firms had pursued over three years.

ORDINANCES – Final Reading

Before proceeding, Contracted City Attorney Wigod addressed conflict of interest concerns raised during public comments. She explained Oregon ethics law regarding actual and potential conflicts of interest, noting these focus on financial benefits or detriments to officials or relatives. Wigod provided examples and asked if any Councilors wished to declare conflicts on agenda items. None were declared.

1. **Ordinance No. 3319:** An Ordinance to Annex and Designate the Zone of Certain Property Located Between the Northern Terminus of Morten Lane and the South Side of Sykes County Road

Mayor Massey read Ordinance No. 3319 by title. **Motion:** Motion made by Council President Chilton and seconded by Councilor Gundersen to adopt Ordinance No. 3319. **Vote:** Yea: Mayor Massey, Council President Chilton, Councilor Gundersen, Councilor Hubbard, Councilor Sundeen

2. **Ordinance No. 3320:** An Ordinance Authorizing the Operation of Class IV All-Terrain Vehicles on Streets located within the City of St. Helens, Oregon, and Providing a Penalty for the Violation Thereof

Mayor Massey read Ordinance No. 3320 by title. **Motion:** Motion made by Council President Chilton and seconded by Councilor Hubbard to adopt Ordinance No. 3320. **Vote:** Yea: Mayor Massey, Council President Chilton, Councilor Gundersen, Councilor Hubbard, Councilor Sundeen

Mayor Massey congratulated supporters, noting they would be "very lucky."

APPROVE AND/OR AUTHORIZE FOR SIGNATURE

3. Amendment No. 1 to Contract with Hasa, Inc. to Extend Contract for Delivery of Bulk Sodium Hypochlorite to the Wastewater Treatment Plant

Motion: Motion made by Council President Chilton and seconded by Councilor Gundersen to approve '3' above. **Vote:** Yea: Mayor Massey, Council President Chilton, Councilor Gundersen, Councilor Hubbard, Councilor Sundeen

4. Ratify AFSCME Collective Bargaining Agreement for 7/1/25-6/30/28

Motion: Motion made by Councilor Gundersen and seconded by Councilor Hubbard to approve '4' above. **Vote:** Yea: Council President Chilton, Councilor Gundersen, Councilor Hubbard, Councilor Sundeen; Nay: Mayor Massey

5. First Amendment to Keller Associates, Inc. Agreement for the Reservoir Siting Study Project No. W-484

Motion: Motion made by Councilor Sundeen and seconded by Councilor Gundersen to approve '5' above.
Vote: Yea: Mayor Massey, Council President Chilton, Councilor Gundersen, Councilor Hubbard, Councilor Sundeen

6. Intergovernmental Agreement with the Oregon Department of Transportation for the Transportation System Management Plan Update

Motion: Motion made by Council President Chilton and seconded by Councilor Sundeen to approve '6' above. **Vote:** Yea: Mayor Massey, Council President Chilton, Councilor Gundersen, Councilor Hubbard, Councilor Sundeen

7. Right-of-Way Dedication Deed for 80 S. 21st Street

Motion: Motion made by Councilor Sundeen and seconded by Councilor Gundersen to approve '7' above.
Vote: Yea: Mayor Massey, Council President Chilton, Councilor Gundersen, Councilor Hubbard, Councilor Sundeen

8. Subgrant Agreement with City of Scappoose for Continued Implementation of the Growing Rural Oregon (GRO) Initiative Grant

Motion: Motion made by Councilor Gundersen and seconded by Council President Chilton to approve '8' above. **Vote:** Yea: Mayor Massey, Council President Chilton, Councilor Gundersen, Councilor Hubbard, Councilor Sundeen

Council thanked Jason Moon and wished him good luck with his future endeavors.

APPOINTMENTS TO CITY BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

9. Appoint Lori Baker to the Parks & Trails Commission

Motion: Motion made by Councilor Sundeen and seconded by Councilor Gundersen to appoint Lori Baker to the Parks & Trails Commission. **Vote:** Yea: Mayor Massey, Council President Chilton, Councilor Gundersen, Councilor Hubbard, Councilor Sundeen

CONSENT AGENDA FOR ACCEPTANCE

10. Library Board Minutes dated January 12 and 28, 2026
11. Parks & Trails Commission Minutes dated January 12, 2026
12. Planning Commission Minutes dated January 13, 2026

Motion: Motion made by Council President Chilton and seconded by Councilor Hubbard to approve '10' through '12' above. **Vote:** Yea: Mayor Massey, Council President Chilton, Councilor Gundersen, Councilor Hubbard, Councilor Sundeen

CONSENT AGENDA FOR APPROVAL

13. OLCC Licenses
14. Accounts Payable Bill Lists

Motion: Motion made by Councilor Sundeen and seconded by Council President Chilton to approve '13' and '14' above. **Vote:** Yea: Mayor Massey, Council President Chilton, Councilor Gundersen, Councilor Hubbard, Councilor Sundeen

WORK SESSION ACTION ITEMS

None

COUNCIL MEMBER REPORTS

Councilor Sundeen reported...

- Attended the annual Police Awards Banquet, praising officers and recognizing Officer Luke Marshall as officer of the year.
- Lori Baker was welcomed to the Parks and Trails Commission, highlighted for her decades of parks experience.
- The Wind Phone dedication on February 19 at the McCormick Park Veterans Pavilion was funded by Columbia Health Services with private donations, not City funds. He addressed misinformation about the Wind Phone and stressed the importance of factual information.
- Reported on America 250 celebration planning, led by Judy Thompson, involving local groups and organizations.
- Shared St. Helens' history of winning a national competition in the 1950s and the 1976 development of Columbia Botanical Gardens.
- Encouraged the Parks & Trails Commission and community to create lasting projects for the nation's 250th anniversary.

Council President Chilton reported...

- Attempted to share a Waterfront project video but was faced with technical difficulties. Council agreed to play it at the next meeting.

Councilor Hubbard reported...

- There is a meeting with the Waterfront developer in March to finalize agreements.
- The police station construction will begin in June.

Councilor Gundersen reported...

- Announced his upcoming attendance at the Eagle Scout ceremony.

MAYOR MASSEY REPORTS

- Thanked City staff, including City Recorder Payne, Deputy City Recorder Scholl, and Communications Officer King, for supporting Council meetings.
- Criticized misinformation regarding the UTV ordinance, particularly a Facebook post claiming it was for her daughter and son-in-law, calling it "BS" and "false information."
- Emphasized her daughter's rights as a taxpaying citizen to support or oppose ordinances, condemning the post as bullying and harassment.
- Clarified that someone offered to donate and manufacture UTV signs and mentioned she would connect them with the Public Works Director.
- Explained the decision to eliminate fees for the ordinance, stating administrative costs would exceed potential revenue, thus benefiting citizens.
- Addressed lagoon project funding, stressing that work was funded by grants, not City funds, and remaining grants should be used efficiently with potential future wastewater treatment needs in mind.
- Reported attending the well-attended Library event for Columbia County authors and committed to writing something for the 250th-anniversary celebration.
- Promoted Columbia County Stories by the River Festival events, featuring a whodunit mystery event on February 24 with former Councilor Birkle.
- Highlighted the Library's cultural passes offering free admission to ten locations, like the Japanese Gardens and Evergreen Aerospace Museum.
- Described visiting McBride Elementary classrooms for the "If I Were Mayor" Student Contest, noting students' love for parks and desire for a local arcade and Panda Express.
- Praised student feedback about the waterfront, splash pad, and parks.

- Announced upcoming school visits to Lewis and Clark and Columbia City, and her planned attendance at the Eagle Scout ceremony.

PROACTIVE ITEMS

OTHER BUSINESS

ADJOURN – 7:54 p.m.

Respectfully transcribed by ClerkMinutes and submitted by Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder.

ATTEST:

Kathy Payne, City Recorder

Jennifer Massey, Mayor



COUNCIL SPECIAL SESSION

Wednesday, February 25, 2026

DRAFT MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT

Mayor Jennifer Massey
Councilor Mark Gundersen
Councilor Russell Hubbard
Councilor Brandon Sundeen

MEMBERS ABSENT

Council President Jessica Chilton

STAFF PRESENT

John Walsh, City Administrator
Kathy Payne, City Recorder
Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder
Matthew Smith, Police Chief
Suzanne Bishop, Library Director
Ashley Wigod, Contracted City Attorney

OTHERS

Nancy Whitney	Robyn Toschi
Ed Whitney	Shauna Stroup-Harrison
Tammy Maygra	Joe
Brady Preheim	SB
Tina Curry	

CALL SPECIAL SESSION TO ORDER – 4:00 p.m.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this Special Session is to consider adoption of an ordinance for a General Services Fee and referral of that ordinance for voter approval. The General Services Fee is proposed to be used for general fund staffing, programs, and services for police, library, parks, recreation, community development, administration, information technology (IT), and municipal court.

DISCUSSION

1. This agenda item is to discuss Ordinance No. 3321 and Ordinance No. 3322 to determine whether Council would like to adopt a General Services Fee and if so, which amount of the fee to adopt and refer to voters.

Contracted City Attorney Wigod addressed conflicts of interest. She explained that because the ordinance would be referred to voters, Councilors could only have potential conflicts of interest rather than actual conflicts. She recommended that Councilors disclose potential conflicts related to their Council stipends. Mayor Massey disclosed both a potential conflict due to her stipend and an actual conflict because her spouse is employed as a City police officer, noting that under recent legislative changes, she could still participate and vote. Councilors Hubbard, Gundersen, and Sundeen each disclosed potential conflicts related to their Council stipends.

Presentation by City Administrator John Walsh

City Administrator Walsh presented the background on the General Services Fee proposal. He explained that at the February 4 meeting, staff had forecasted a shortfall of approximately \$2.2 million to maintain current service levels and reach the Council's adopted 20% reserve target. The City had been relying on one-time revenues such as federal grants, state grants, timber sales, and property sales to fill budget gaps, but these sources were no longer sustainable.

Walsh noted that St. Helens has one of the lowest permanent tax rates in the state at \$1.91/\$1,000, yet many communities with higher tax rates still need to refer ballot measures for desired services. He presented charts showing that the General Fund represents only about 13% of the City's \$92 million overall budget, with Enterprise Funds (water, sewer, storm) making up 38% and Special Projects 13%. Police services comprise approximately 50% of the General Fund budget.

Walsh outlined two ordinance options: Ordinance 3321 at \$35.30 per month per equivalent dwelling unit (EDU) would maintain current staffing and service levels, while Ordinance 3322 at \$24.00 per month per EDU would require some service reductions but still achieve the 20% reserve target. Both options would have a 10-year term starting July 1, with the Budget Committee evaluating the fee after five years. The fee would be indexed annually but capped at 3% increases based on the Consumer Price Index.

Public Comment

- ◆ Nancy Whitney. Commended the City on the river turnaround project but objected to business signs in the area. She referenced Portland's illegal attempt to add money to water bills years ago, which resulted in refunds to citizens, and advised the Council to reconsider the proposal while suggesting Councilors discontinue their stipends.
- ◆ Tammy Maygra. Discussed records released from a recent court ruling, detailing issues with police scheduling and overtime costs. She cited findings from an expert report about Police Department management and criticized the significant budget increases given to the Police Department over recent years. She expressed concern about what she characterized as unethical dealings between the Police Association and City leadership.
- ◆ Brady Preheim. Criticized the Council's approach and questioned the timing of the 4:00 p.m. meeting. He referenced communications showing tensions between Police Association members and City staff, expressing concern about officer conduct and employment decisions. Expressed distrust of the Finance Director, who he says has lied about tourism as well as adding \$300,000 into the tourism budget that they knew they would not get.

Mayor Massey commented that the City disagrees with defamatory statements made about the Finance Director.

- ◆ Robyn Toschi. Emphasized the importance of ethics and expressed concern about conflicts of interest related to the fee proposal. She discussed corruption allegations and urged Councilors to carefully consider their responsibilities in handling public funds.
- ◆ Steve Toschi. Echoed his wife's comments about financial management and discussed concerns about Police Department activities revealed in recently released documents. He emphasized the need for proper oversight of the significant police budget increases over recent years.
- ◆ Shauna Stroup-Harrison. Expressed embarrassment about the community situation and concerns about the fee being viewed as taxation without representation. As a local realtor, she noted

concerns from potential home buyers and questioned the sustainability of adding fees to utility bills while the sewer and storm water systems need attention.

Council Deliberation

Mayor Massey led a detailed discussion of budget issues she had identified through reviewing the trial balance. She analyzed police overtime costs, noting that while the department appeared over budget on overtime, having unfilled full-time positions actually resulted in cost savings when considering salary and PERS benefits. She questioned Police Chief Smith about the costs and benefits of 8-hour versus 10-hour shifts, with the Chief explaining that 10-hour shifts provide necessary overlap time and better work-life balance, ultimately reducing overtime costs.

The Mayor also highlighted significant professional services costs, totaling approximately \$552,000 in legal fees outside of insurance coverage across recent fiscal years. She expressed concern about these costs and suggested the need for better budget monitoring and mitigation strategies.

Councilor Hubbard agreed with the analysis, particularly regarding legal expenses, noting the challenge of defending against litigation while seeking ways to reduce costs through internal decision-making rather than relying solely on attorney guidance.

The Council discussed the broader budget context, with Walsh clarifying that the General Fund has limited revenue sources and cannot receive transfers from Enterprise Funds due to legal restrictions. The Mayor emphasized that St. Helens' property tax rate of 1.91 percent is significantly lower than neighboring cities like Vernonia at 5.82% and Rainier at 7.09%, yet the City attempts to provide comprehensive services.

Councilors expressed the difficulty of the decision, with Sundeen noting that many Oregon cities face similar challenges and use utility bill fees, though few refer such measures to voters. Gundersen emphasized hopes that the measure would pass to avoid service cuts, while also supporting efforts to identify cost savings.

The discussion revealed tension between maintaining current service levels and fiscal responsibility, with library and recreation services potentially facing reduced hours and programs if funding is not secured.

ORDINANCE - *Final Reading*

Contracted Attorney Wigod explained the need to choose only one for adoption.

- 2. Ordinance No. 3321:** An Ordinance to Establish Chapter 13.34, General Services Fee, if Approved by the Voters at a Citywide Election (*\$35.30 per month per EDU*)

Councilor Gundersen read Ordinance No. 3321 by title. **Motion:** Motion made by Councilor Gundersen and seconded by Mayor Massey to adopt Ordinance No. 3321.

The Council debated whether the higher fee amount would provide necessary funding to maintain current services versus the lower amount that would require cuts. Councilors Sundeen and Hubbard expressed preference for the lower amount that would require the City to tighten operations, while Mayor Massey and Councilor Gundersen supported maintaining current service levels.

Vote: Voting Yea: Mayor Massey, Councilor Gundersen; Voting Nay: Councilor Hubbard, Councilor Sundeen; motion fails with a tie

- 3. Ordinance No. 3322:** An Ordinance to Establish Chapter 13.34, General Services Fee, if Approved by the Voters at a Citywide Election (*\$24.00 per month per EDU*)

Councilor Gundersen read Ordinance No. 3322 by title. **Motion:** Motion made by Councilor Gundersen and seconded by Councilor Sundeen to adopt Ordinance No. 3322.

Limited additional discussion occurred, with Councilors acknowledging this option would require service cuts but demonstrate fiscal restraint.

Vote: Yea: Mayor Massey, Councilor Gundersen, Councilor Hubbard, Councilor Sundeen

RESOLUTION

- 4. Resolution No. 2066:** A Resolution of the City of St. Helens City Council Referring to the Voters of the City of St. Helens at the May 19, 2026, Election, a Ballot Measure Authorizing the Adoption of Chapter 13.34, General Services Fee (\$35.30)

No motion was made on this resolution since the corresponding ordinance was not adopted.

- 5. Resolution No. 2067:** A Resolution of the City of St. Helens City Council Referring to the Voters of the City of St. Helens at the May 19, 2026, Election, a Ballot Measure Authorizing the Adoption of Chapter 13.34, General Services Fee (\$24)

Councilor Gundersen read Resolution No. 2067 by title. **Motion:** Motion made by Councilor Gundersen and seconded by Councilor Sundeen.

Mayor Massey emphasized that a significant factor in her decision was the approximately \$650,000 in legal fees outside insurance coverage, suggesting the need for strategies to reduce these costs. Councilors agreed on the importance of analyzing and potentially reducing professional services expenses while continuing efforts to generate additional revenue for the City.

Vote: Yea: Mayor Massey, Councilor Gundersen, Councilor Hubbard, Councilor Sundeen

ADJOURN – 5:35 p.m.

Respectfully transcribed by ClerkMinutes and submitted by Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder.

ATTEST:

Kathy Payne, City Recorder

Jennifer Massey, Mayor