

City of St. Helens
Consent Agenda for Approval

CITY COUNCIL MINUTES

Presented for approval on this 21st day of May, 2025 are the following Council minutes:

2025

- Work Session, Executive Session, Public Forum, Public Hearing, and Regular Session Minutes dated May 7, 2025

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, May 07, 2025

DRAFT MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT

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

MEMBERS ABSENT

Councilor Mark Gundersen

STAFF PRESENT

John Walsh, City Administrator	Gloria Butsch, Finance Director
Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder	Sharon Darroux, Engineering Manager
Crystal King, Communications Officer	Mike De Roia, Building Official
Joe Hogue, Interim Police Chief	Ashley Wigod, Contracted City Attorney
Jenny Dimsho, Associate Planner & Community Development Project Manager	

OTHERS

Beth Pulito	Margaret Trenchard Smith	Steve Toschi
Steve Topaz	Ron Trommlitz	Mitzi Ponce
Mary Laitala	David Wasylenko	Scott
Chris Iverson	Robyn Toschi	

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

CLEARING CONFUSION AND SETTING THE FACTS STRAIGHT

1. Response to April 16 Visitor Comments - None

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

- ◆ Dr. Margaret Trenchard-Smith, President of the St. Helens noon-time Kiwanis Club, expressed her gratitude to the City for its assistance in preparing for the upcoming St. Helens Kiwanis Community Parade, scheduled for June 21. She extended her thanks to Facilities Maintenance Supervisor Buck Tupper, Public Works Supervisor Ethan Stirling, Community Development Administrative Assistant Angelica Artero, Police Chief Joe Hogue, and Public Works Director Mouhamed Zaher for their efforts. Trenchard Smith explained that this year's parade theme, "Show Off Your Wheels," promises to be enjoyable, with Judy Thompson, Lisa Lewis, and the parade committee members working hard to organize a fantastic event for everyone. She also addressed the Club's inability to volunteer for the City's Fourth of July celebration. She explained that key Club members with experience in organizing parking won't be available, raising safety concerns. Additionally, she mentioned that some questions remained unanswered in time for their decision, prompting the Club to give early notice about their non-participation. Noting that volunteering is a primary way their Club raises money for kids, this decision was particularly regrettable for them. Trenchard Smith thanked Mayor Massey and the City Council for their consideration of the Club's recent letter, which proposed financial support for the Columbia Pacific

Food Bank. She emphasized the importance of raising awareness about an emerging hunger situation, highlighting that, due to rising food prices, \$6M in Federal funding and 4M pounds of food expected from the USDA for Oregon's food banks have been withdrawn. She urged other philanthropic and service organizations, nonprofits, businesses, churches, and other groups to unite in supporting the Columbia Pacific Food Bank, seeking solutions to this growing crisis. Trenchard Smith reinforced the Club's mission of improving the world one child and one community at a time, emphasizing the urgency and significance of supporting food security initiatives, while also expressing the Kiwanis Club's readiness to collaborate with the City and other organizations.

- ◆ Mary Laitala, Executive Director of the South Columbia Chamber of Commerce, addressed the Council with concerns regarding the increasing number of unsheltered individuals around their property, located at the historical train station building in St. Helens. Laitala highlighted several problems stemming from this situation, including safety issues and the negative impact on members and tenants, particularly SAFE (a nonprofit providing help to abused women and children), who are one of their tenants. She elaborated on the challenges posed by the unsheltered individuals, such as trash left behind, loitering, smoking, and the use of aggressive and foul language. These activities accompany the unsheltered individuals' occupation of the benches directly in front of the Chamber property, facing the entrances frequently used by members and guests. Laitala recounted a recent incident involving a large black garbage bag full of trash dumped on their historical bench, a recurrent experience they have reported several times to the non-emergency line. Security concerns have escalated, Laitala noted, with individuals taking paper from the Chamber's recycling bin and lighting fires under parked cars. As a response, Laitala requested increased police patrols as a measure to both witness and potentially apprehend violators. Additionally, she inquired about what rights the Chamber of Commerce has and what legal actions are available to halt these activities. To mitigate these issues, Laitala proposed several solutions: installing surveillance cameras and requesting the City to provide no loitering and no smoking signs, complete with penal codes, to facilitate prosecution of the violators. She reiterated the location's historical significance, being a property leased from ODOT Rail and gifted to the Chamber by the State and questioned how such a site could be better protected.
- ◆ Ron Trommlitz. Expressed frustration with his attempts to acquire documentation through his public records request concerning the March 21, 2022, mediation. Trommlitz detailed his steps in filing the request on April 1, 2025, for a transcript of the mediation, which led to a settlement and mutual release signed by City Administrator Walsh. However, his request was met with a response on April 17, 2025, stating that the City does not have a transcript or documentation of the mediation, suggesting the case was considered closed. Trommlitz questioned the absence of records, emphasizing the need for transparency, particularly with the Pittsburg Road 2MG reservoir rehabilitation failure. He asserted the public deserves an answer regarding the cause and responsibility. His follow-up discussions with Walsh on April 18 revealed conflicting accounts about whether there were recordings or documentation of the mediation, raising concerns about the transparency of the proceedings. Efforts to obtain additional documentation through a letter to City Attorney David Bowser have remained unanswered. Trommlitz criticized the City for a perceived lack of transparency and alleged that Walsh and the City attorneys bear responsibility for the reservoir's ongoing issues. He highlighted the need for an accurate account of past investigations and City actions, pointing to previous assessments and consultants' reports not aligning favorably with the City's interests and stressing the importance of accountability in addressing infrastructural failures.

- ◆ Steve Toschi. Expressed his views on several issues during the Council Work Session. He brought attention to the Amani Center's waiver of System Development Charges (SDC) and urged the City Council to engage the Budget Committee in a broader discussion on SDC policies. Toschi noted that while Portland is waiving SDC charges to encourage housing development, there are also numerous housing projects in St. Helens that are stalled. He suggested that the Budget Committee should develop a coherent policy on whether to waive SDC charges, especially for developers or housing projects, before deciding on waivers for charitable organizations, which might be more equipped to pay the charges than private developers facing significant risks. Toschi also voiced his concerns regarding the proposed police station project. He commented that none of the current options were satisfactory and suggested that the City should consider expanding the existing police station rather than embarking on building an entirely new facility. He referred to past Budget Committee meetings where it was indicated that the City Administrator was unable to find a solution to get the new police station built without burdening the public with an additional \$2M in costs. Toschi highlighted that the original police station was designed to be expanded, yet this option had never been considered. He argued that the City has already spent at least \$2.6M pursuing the idea of constructing a city center near the roundabout when the primary goal should have been to establish a functional police station. In a critique of current project management, Toschi suggested that the responsibility for the police station project be transferred from City Administrator Walsh to Public Works Director Zaher and stay within a \$10M or \$8M budget.
- ◆ Steve Topaz. Raised several issues during his address to the Council, focusing on the accuracy of Council minutes and the integrity of recorded data. He emphasized the significance of maintaining precise records, particularly concerning water reservoir issues and the potential use of the lagoon as a dumpsite. Topaz noted that important details had been omitted from the minutes and stressed that this could lead to significant financial repercussions for the City. Furthermore, he highlighted an instance where City Administrator Walsh allegedly made a presentation proposing the use of the lagoon for disposing of materials related to Portland Harbor cleanup, and Topaz questioned whether this action was authorized by the City Council or ever properly documented. Topaz pointed out the ethical concerns surrounding the firm's involvement in both the City's and Portland Harbor's assessments, and he urged the City to address these ethical considerations immediately. He also mentioned a presentation from a previous meeting where concerns about liquefaction were raised, noting that critical information about the lagoon had been ignored, potentially affecting the project's oversight and future costs. Topaz concluded by underscoring the need for transparency, as the withholding of pertinent information to the public could ultimately cost the City significantly if historically relevant concerns regarding the lagoon and water reservoir projects are not adequately addressed.

DISCUSSION TOPICS

2. Quarterly Reports from Departments and Divisions (Informational)

Finance Director Gloria Butsch presented a detailed finance report. Her discussion focused on tourism revenue and expenses, specifically Spirit of Halloweentown. She provided an income statement from the City's system and broke down the financial details of both events, offering clarity and transparency on their financial outcomes. According to Butsch, the Spirit of Halloweentown event successfully generated a net income of \$489,000, thereby providing the City with a net gain of \$465,000 after accounting for the 5% profit sharing stipulated in the contract. In contrast, the Christmas event resulted in a net loss of \$113,000, highlighting the financial dynamics between different City events.

Furthermore, Butsch provided a snapshot of the current financial status of the tourism account, revealing its balance as of March 31, 2025, stood at \$269,000. She also elaborated on the interfund loan from the community to the tourism account, initially totaling \$200,000, emphasizing that it was fully repaid within

the same fiscal year, thus having a net-zero effect on the City's finances. Mayor Massey and Council members engaged with Butsch in a discussion on the reports, expressing their appreciation for the detailed breakdown of the tourism events' financials and the overall format of the reports.

Council members recognized the importance of these reports for allowing them to have a clear understanding of the financial implications and dynamics involved. They agreed that such detailed reporting should feature regularly in quarterly reports to ensure ongoing transparency and informed decision-making processes. Butsch stressed that these reports were facilitated with the cooperation of Treadway Events, who provide monthly information, which the City reconciles to maintain accurate financial records. This practice ensures that all parties are aligned, and financial management remains robust.

Mayor Massey and Council took the opportunity to clarify the City's role in managing the tourism fund, making it clear that the Wauna account is owned and reconciled by the City and is not a joint account with Treadway Events. However, Treadway has been given access to pay expenditures and make deposits into this account, while the overall management, reconciliation, and control remain under City jurisdiction. The discussion underscored the City's commitment to effective tourism fund management while efficiently utilizing the financial data to guide strategic decisions and event planning in the future.

3. Additional Information on Timber Insurance Proposal - *Chris Iverson and David Wasylenko from Hagan Hamilton Insurance*

David Wasylenko from Hagan Hamilton Insurance presented additional information on the timber insurance proposal. He explained that the policy would cover fire damage to the City's timber resources, with a tiered payout system based on the severity of the burn. The deductible for firefighting expenses would be \$200,000. Wasylenko addressed Council questions about policy exclusions, such as subterranean fires and drought, and agreed to provide further clarification on these points.

The total cost for the 12-month policy period would be \$100,739.70. Council members expressed interest in the policy but requested more information on specific exclusions and definitions.

4. Request to Support New Amani Center Building (continued from April 16) - *Beth Pulito, Deputy Director*

Beth Pulito, Deputy Director of the Amani Center, provided a comprehensive letter outlining their request for fee waivers, including SDC charges. Pulito emphasized the center's role in serving children in the community and the importance of expanding their capacity.

Mayor Massey and Council members acknowledged the significance of the Amani Center's work but expressed concerns about waiving fees, particularly SDCs. They discussed the need to balance support for charitable organizations with the City's financial obligations. The Council agreed to consider the request further and discuss it at tonight's Regular Session.

5. Review Amendment No. 2 to the Financing Contract with Oregon Business Development Department for the Waterfront Redevelopment Project - *Associate City Planner & Community Development Project Manager Jenny Dimsho & Finance Director Gloria Butsch*

Associate Planner & Community Development Project Manager Jenny Dimsho presented the amendment and explained that it primarily extends the project completion deadline to October 2025, although they anticipate completing everything by June 30. Dimsho confirmed that there are no changes to the total project cost or funding amounts.

Mayor Massey and Council members reviewed the details of the amendment and the status of grant reimbursements. They were satisfied with the progress and had no major concerns about the amendment.

6. Review Gable Road Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacon (RRFB) Installation at Mid-Block Crossing Near Wal-Mart and Broadleaf Apartments - *Engineering Manager Sharon Darroux*

Engineering Manager Sharon Darroux presented information on the RRFB and explained that the installation was prompted by safety concerns and recent incidents involving pedestrians. The project is estimated to cost just under \$60,000 and will be similar to existing RRFBs in the City.

Council members expressed support for the project and discussed the importance of pedestrian safety in the area.

7. Review Reservoir Siting Study - *Engineering Manager Sharon Darroux*

Engineering Manager Sharon Darroux briefly discussed the reservoir siting study, explaining that the next steps involve conducting a hydraulic study to determine the best location for the new reservoir. She mentioned that they have already identified potential properties and are moving forward with the process.

8. Request from RSG Telecom for Letter of Support for Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Grant Program for Columbia County-led Broadband Project

9. Request from Astound Broadband for Letter of Support for Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Grant Program

City Administrator John Walsh presented the two above requests. The City's support would contribute to the application scores. Council members discussed the merits of supporting multiple broadband initiatives and agreed that it would be beneficial to provide letters of support for both RSG Telecom and Astound Broadband.

10. Review Proposed Amendments to Governing Policy and St. Helens Municipal Code Section 2.12.030 regarding City Administrator Duties - *City Attorney Ashley Wigod*

City Attorney Ashley Wigod presented the proposed amendments, offering an insightful look into the different types of governing structures in Oregon and their implications for St. Helens. Wigod's review emphasized the common forms of governance, such as the commission, mayor-council, and council-administrator structures, highlighting the rationale behind recommending changes for the City. The Council engaged in extensive discussions, exploring several key areas for potential amendments.

One primary area of focus was the hiring processes for department heads and City employees. City Council discussed whether to maintain a flexible or a more structured approach. The current practice includes a collaborative process between Council liaisons, the city administrator, and department heads, but the proposed shift leans towards allowing department heads more autonomy in hiring, subject to city administrator confirmation, which could present an opportunity for improving the efficiency and clarity of recruitment processes.

Additionally, supervision and discipline procedures were scrutinized, where the proposal suggested refining the city administrator's role in oversight, potentially minimizing City Council's direct involvement, thus delineating clearer roles for management and operational duties. A related topic was the termination process; currently, the City Council is involved in the termination of department heads, but discussions leaned towards adjusting this to align more with the council-administrator model, giving the city administrator primary responsibility.

The evaluation of performance was another significant topic. The City Council expressed the desire for annual performance evaluations, with members proposing potential inclusion of language allowing for more frequent evaluations if deemed necessary, enhancing accountability and opportunities for addressing performance concerns more dynamically. Walsh and Wigod noted the importance of having human resources professionals involved to guide the evaluation process and ensure fairness.

Finally, decision-making processes for policy interpretations were examined, specifically regarding employment issues. Discussions sought to clarify the role of Council liaisons in this context, particularly in efforts to prevent conflicts arising from employment-related interpretations. Council members proposed removing council liaisons from direct involvement in performance evaluations, thereby focusing on maintaining clear boundaries between policy deliberation and operational management.

Wigod agreed to incorporate the Council's feedback, including adding provisions that would ensure policy issues not related to employment disputes would be handled separately, and committed to preparing revised versions of the amendments for further review. This would further refine the governance framework, aligning with best practices and improving the City's administrative operations.

11. Discussion regarding Council Liaison Roles & Responsibilities - *Requested by Mayor Massey on 4/16*

Mayor Massey initiated a discussion about Council liaison roles and responsibilities, expressing concern about the limited time available to address proactive initiatives and goals. She proposed adding a regular agenda item for discussing and tracking progress on Council goals and initiatives.

Council members agreed to add a "Proactive Items" section to the regular meeting agenda, where councilors can report on their individual projects and goals. They also discussed the importance of balancing new initiatives with existing responsibilities and the need to prioritize effectively.

12. Report from City Administrator John Walsh

- Condolences to the family of former Public Works Supervisor Dave Elder, who recently passed away. Employees can take the time to attend his memorial service.
- Associate Planner & Community Development Project Manager Jenny Dimsho announced that she will be leaving the City in July.
- Thanked Public Works for the improvements to the City parking lot. It looks very nice.
- Progress on the Riverwalk project and street and utility projects.
- Increased interest in Waterfront development.
- Planning for 13 Nights on the River and other community activities.
- Advancement of the PGE substation project and Project Arcadia.
- Upcoming lease agreements for the Senior Center and Columbia Learning Center.
- Progress on performance evaluation processes.
- Upcoming bargaining dates with collective bargaining units.
- Held a staff brainstorming session on budget savings and revenue generation.
- Police chief interviews will be held May 29.
- Discussion on the "Clearing Confusion and Setting the Record Straight" agenda item. The Council discussed the process for identifying and addressing topics, agreeing to streamline the process and focus on Council-identified issues rather than having staff review all meeting minutes for potential topics.

ADJOURN – 5:05 p.m.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

- Real Property Transactions, under ORS 192.660(2)(e)
- Exempt Records/Confidential Attorney-Client Privileged Memo, under ORS 192.660(2)(f)

- Consult with Counsel/Potential Litigation, under ORS 192.660(2)(h)

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

May 7, 2025

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

Members Present: Mark Gundersen, Councilor

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

Others: Ashley Wigod, City Attorney with Jordan Ramis PC
Kaelyn Cassidy, Columbia County Spotlight Newspaper



At 5:12 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.

- **Real Property Transactions, under ORS 192.660(2)(e)**
 - Update on Proposed New Police Station
 - Update on Millard Road Property
- **Exempt Records/Confidential Attorney-Client Privileged Memo, under ORS 192.660(2)(f)**
 - Update of Privileged and Confidential Memorandum dated April 15, 2025, from City Attorney Ashley Wigod
- **Consult with Legal Counsel & Potential/Pending Litigation, under ORS 192.660(2)(h)**
 - Update on the status of the complaint filed by Joseph Hogue
 - Update on litigation with St. Helens Assets

The Executive Session was adjourned at 5:26 p.m.



ATTEST:

Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder

Jennifer Massey, Mayor

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



COUNCIL PUBLIC FORUM

Wednesday, May 07, 2025

DRAFT MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT

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

MEMBERS ABSENT

Councilor Mark Gundersen

STAFF PRESENT

John Walsh, City Administrator
Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder
Crystal King, Communications Officer
Joe Hogue, Interim Police Chief
Jacob Graichen, City Planner

OTHERS

Dave Lintz, OTAK	Jennifer Shoemaker
Scott	Brady Preheim
Paul Carroll	Jenni Gilbert
Jane Garcia	Kit Gardes

OPEN PUBLIC FORUM – 6:00 p.m.

TOPIC

1. Presentation on Proposed Site for New Police Station

Mayor Massey disclosed a potential conflict of interest, stating that her husband is a City of St. Helens police officer, but expressed confidence in her ability to act objectively in the best interest of the City.

City Administrator John Walsh introduced Dave Lintz, the project manager for the construction of the police station.

Dave Lintz, OTAK Senior Project Manager and Project Executive, provided a detailed presentation on the various sites considered for the new police station. He explained the evaluation criteria used to assess each site and presented a matrix comparing the costs and benefits of different locations.

Lintz discussed five potential sites:

1. 1771 Columbia Blvd.
2. Existing police station site
3. Old Kaster Road site (no longer in contention)
4. Gable Road site

5. Sheriff's office site

The presentation included cost estimates for each site, with the 1771 Columbia Boulevard location emerging as the most cost-effective option at approximately \$15.8 million. Lintz emphasized the importance of building a new police station that could withstand seismic events and meet the City's long-term needs.

Council members and City officials engaged in a discussion about the various sites, their pros and cons, and the financial implications of each option. They addressed concerns about parking requirements, environmental studies, and the potential impact on the surrounding area.

Mayor Massey highlighted that the City had already lost approximately \$685,000 in arbitrage fees due to delays in building the police station over the past five years.

Public Comment

- ◆ Brady Preheim. Expressed concerns about the timing of the public forum and the perceived lack of transparency in the decision-making process. He questioned the affordability of the project and its potential impact on residents' utility bills, suggesting that the whole process be delayed to get the City's finances in order.
- ◆ Jenni Gilbert. Criticized the decision-making process as disingenuous and expressed opposition to financing the proposed site. She suggested demolishing the existing police station or using the community center (later corrected as recreation center) as a substation to save costs.
- ◆ Jennifer Shoemaker. Inquired whether environmental tests had been conducted on the proposed site, concerned about potential environmental surprises.

City officials addressed some of the concerns raised, explaining the extensive site selection process that had taken place over the past few years and the reasons for preferring the 1771 Columbia Boulevard site. Walsh emphasized that there had been over 20 meetings with an evaluation committee to consider various potential sites. This process included assessing different locations using a set of evaluation criteria. Lintz elaborated that the 1771 Columbia Boulevard site emerged as the top choice due to its location and the overall cost-effectiveness, highlighted by an estimated cost of approximately \$15.8 million. The site was favored for maintaining a central presence in town, ensuring proper urban police dispatch visibility. City officials reiterated that seismic safety was a critical concern, and the chosen site was the most feasible option to build a properly designed station that could withstand seismic events. Additionally, they discussed previous challenges with other sites, such as floodplain issues and higher costs, which influenced the decision to prioritize the Columbia Blvd. location.

CLOSE PUBLIC FORUM – 6:43 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder.

ATTEST:

Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder

Jennifer Massey, Mayor



COUNCIL PUBLIC HEARING

Wednesday, May 07, 2025

DRAFT MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT

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

MEMBERS ABSENT

Councilor Mark Gundersen

STAFF PRESENT

John Walsh, City Administrator
Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder
Crystal King, Communications Officer
Joe Hogue, Interim Police Chief
Jacob Graichen, City Planner
Sharon Darroux, Engineering Manager

OTHERS

Dave Lintz, OTAK	Jennifer Shoemaker
Scott	Brady Preheim
Paul Carroll	Jenni Gilbert
Jane Garcia	Kit Gardes
Nicholas Hellmich	Lynne Pettit

OPEN PUBLIC HEARING – 6:44 p.m.

TOPIC

- 1. Zone Map Amendment (ZA.1.25) to change portion of property at 1771 Columbia Blvd. from General Commercial (GC) to Houlton Business District (HBD), make entire property HBD (City)**

City Planner Jacob Graichen introduced the Zone Map Amendment request to change part of the property at 1771 Columbia Blvd. from General Commercial (GC) to Houlton Business District (HBD), aiming to convert the entire property into HBD. This hearing was legislative, with the applicant being the City of St. Helens.

Mayor Massey disclosed a potential conflict of interest as her husband works as a City of St. Helens police officer. She affirmed her confidence in remaining unbiased and fair in the decision-making process, emphasizing that accusations did not equate to facts or evidence and due process remained crucial.

Graichen asked if anyone in the audience objects to the Council's ability to make a fair decision. Brady Preheim objected, citing Mayor Massey's involvement in a lawsuit alongside her husband and acting police chief, questioning the entire Council's ability to make an unbiased decision. He expressed concerns that the decision to rezone seemed predetermined, especially with conversations alluding to intentions

of placing a police station on the premises. Jenni Gilbert echoed these concerns, criticizing the perceived dishonesty and deception in the City's process regarding the rezoning.

Council responded to the objections.

Mayor Massey reiterated that being accused of something doesn't result in an assumption of guilt and stated that zoning was beneficial to the City and independent of both financial concerns and personal bias. She questioned the logic presented by the objectors, suggesting it was more of a personal attack.

Councilor Sundeen backed Mayor Massey, stating the planned rezoning was justified with or without the proposed police station project, urging the focus remain on resolving the spot zone issue and enhancing land utility.

Council President Chilton agreed, highlighting the importance of addressing zoning irregularities for cohesive community planning.

Councilor Hubbard acknowledged the concerns but emphasized the need to focus on the zoning correction.

Graichen added that, previously, a portion of the property was retained as GC due to the owner's interest in multifamily development, with the 2015 Ordinance update already removing barriers to ground-level residential there. His overarching emphasis remained on eliminating past "spot zones."

Maps illustrating current zoning, comprehensive plans, and historical contexts were presented by Graichen. He introduced the Zone Map Amendment with a focus on changing part of the property from GC to HBD, with the primary goal of eliminating a "spot zone" that had been a historical issue, rather than just facilitating the construction of a police station. Graichen shared a detailed backstory, mentioning past uses of the site by Portland General Electric and addressing why a portion of the property remained as GC due to the owner's interest in multifamily development. The prohibition of ground-level residential had been removed in 2015, an update which corrected a previous imbalance in zoning restrictions, making the future development of the area more flexible.

Graichen emphasized that the purpose of the amendment was to create uniformity and improve the utility of the land, by matching the zoning to reflect the Comprehensive Plan and, essentially, cleaning up "the quintessential spot zone." He described the Planning Commission's initial concerns regarding the spot zone and their eventual understanding of its elimination as beneficial for the overall plan. He asserted that the zoning changes would apply independently of whether a police station was ultimately constructed there. While presenting the maps, Graichen explained that the changes were consistent with the strategic planning similar to what was done with the Riverfront District, incorporating aspects like parking requirements and utilization constraints tailored to Houlton's developed district.

During this process, the Council responded to the information and agreed that the rezoning efforts were justified. Each Council member seemed comfortable with continuing the plan without any newly addressed conflicts, affirming the shared understanding of both the need for reform and the neutral benefits of the proposed zoning adjustment. The emphasis remained on historical precedents and avoiding blight while enhancing the neighborhood's commercial and residential cohesion.

PUBLIC COMMENT

In Favor - None

In Neutral - None

In Opposition

- ◆ Brady Preheim. Expressed opposition to the zone change, stating that he believed it was a "sham" and that the City had already made a decision to put a police station on the property. He objected to what he perceived as dishonesty and deception in the process.
- ◆ Nicholas Hellmich. Voiced opposition to the situation, stating that he felt public comments didn't have much impact. He mentioned that he believed there were better options available but did not elaborate further.

Rebuttal - None

No questions from Council.

CLOSE PUBLIC HEARING – 7:04 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder.

ATTEST:

Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder

Jennifer Massey, Mayor



COUNCIL REGULAR SESSION

Wednesday, May 07, 2025

DRAFT MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT

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

MEMBERS ABSENT

Councilor Mark Gundersen

STAFF PRESENT

John Walsh, City Administrator
Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder
Crystal King, Communications Officer
Joe Hogue, Interim Police Chief
Jacob Graichen, City Planner
Sharon Darroux, Engineering Manager

OTHERS

Dave Lintz, OTAK	Jennifer Shoemaker	Amani Center
Scott	Brady Preheim	Nicholas Hellmich
Paul Carroll	Jenni Gilbert	Lynne Pettit
Jane Garcia	Kit Gardes	

CALL REGULAR SESSION TO ORDER – 7:04 p.m.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

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

- ◆ Kit Gardes. Shared a letter she wrote to the Council expressing her concerns about a dangerous intersection at Gable Road and Highway 30. She described a near-miss incident that occurred on May 6 at approximately 3:30 PM. Gardes explained that she was the first in line in the left-turn lane on Gable Road between Safeway and U.S. Bank. As the light turned green, a semi-truck with a trailer, heading east on Highway 30, entered the intersection, ignoring the red light. Gardes noted that the truck did not slow down at all. If she had entered the intersection a second earlier, she might not have survived to tell her story. She expressed her ongoing distress over the incident and acknowledged the difficulty in continuously monitoring the intersection. She proposed installing a traffic camera at the intersection to hold dangerous drivers accountable, citing the effectiveness of such technology in other cities like Portland in reducing traffic rule violations and potentially saving lives. Gardes emphasized that a camera might be a more cost-effective solution than hiring additional police officers for monitoring purposes.
- ◆ Brady Preheim. Expressed concerns about the selection process for the chief of police, suggesting that Council members should not be involved in it. He believed that the process was being set up

deliberately to avoid selecting a new chief and that it should be outsourced. Preheim expressed his frustration, noting that it had been multiple weeks since any updates had been provided, potentially exacerbating an already existing lawsuit against the Council. Additionally, he addressed several issues with the Waterfront Redevelopment Project. Preheim criticized the cracks already visible in the recently laid pavement and questioned whether these were due to design, construction, or material problems, emphasizing that the improvements were expected to last for decades, not just a few months. He pointed out the poor aesthetics of certain elements, noting, for example, an unsightly black patch of asphalt in front of Lotus that had been used to fill a cut in the concrete, which he felt lowered the overall quality of the development. He also highlighted the rusty appearance of the new guardrails, comparing them unfavorably to something that might have been salvaged from the Titanic. Preheim was also dissatisfied with the landscaping work, suggesting that the job was poorly executed and proposing that he could have done better himself. He assumed that the partially buried plants would eventually have mulch cover them but remarked on their unattractiveness. Additionally, he criticized the guardrails further, noting that they should have been powder-coated to prevent issues such as rust transfer, which currently made them a poor choice for a new, expensive infrastructure project. He offered to spray paint visible cracks throughout the City in orange to further illustrate the extent of the issues.

- ◆ Jenni Gilbert. Criticized the Council's handling of the police station zoning issue, stating that the decision to build on property not owned by the City was illogical. She accused the Council of gaslighting the public by pretending to seek public input after already making up their minds. Gilbert argued against constructing a "Taj Mahal" of a police building when the City evidently cannot afford to hire officers. She suggested the existing site should be reconsidered to save costs. In addition to her criticism about the police station zoning, Gilbert voiced her concerns about potential conflicts of interest regarding Mayor Massey's involvement in Police Department decisions, specifically relating to her husband's role as a police officer in St. Helens. Gilbert noted that Mayor Massey's dismissal of accusations was problematic and that such conflicts should be addressed, especially given the existing lawsuit involving the Police Department.
- ◆ Nicholas Hellmich. Raised concerns about the potential increase in water bills and the significant impact it could have on vulnerable populations, particularly senior citizens and those with limited financial means. He shared insights from his experience working at the Community Action Team, noting that higher water bills could force residents to choose between buying medication or food. Hellmich proposed exploring alternative funding methods for the police station, such as incorporating the cost into property taxes, to lessen the monthly financial burden on residents. He emphasized the importance of making decisions that would not negatively affect citizens, especially the elderly and those most vulnerable in the community. Hellmich also referred to the definition of a conflict of interest, expressing concerns about Mayor Massey's potential to benefit from decisions related to the police station due to her husband's involvement. In closing, he highlighted that even dual-income households like his own would need to make cutbacks if water bills increased, reinforcing the need for thoughtful financial planning by the Council.

DELIBERATIONS

1. Zone Map Amendment (ZA.1.25) to change portion of property at 1771 Columbia Blvd. from General Commercial (GC) to Houlton Business District (HBD), make entire property HBD

Mayor Massey disclosed a potential conflict of interest due to her husband being a St. Helens Police Officer but stated she could act objectively in the best interest of the City.

Councilor Sundeen praised City Planner Graichen report and supported the amendment, noting it would clean things up regardless of whether a police station is built there. Council President Chilton agreed, mentioning initiatives to improve the Houlton Business District.

Mayor Massey noted that the zoning change would allow a broader range of residential uses. Councilor Hubbard pointed out that RV use would be prohibited but overall supported the change.

Motion: Motion made by Council President Chilton and seconded by Councilor Hubbard to approve the Zone Map Amendment to change a portion of property at 1771 Columbia Blvd. from GC to HBD. **Vote:** Yea: Mayor Massey, Council President Chilton, Councilor Hubbard, Councilor Sundeen

ORDINANCES – First Reading

2. **Ordinance No. 3308:** An Ordinance Adopting the Economic Opportunities Analysis, Stormwater Master Plan, Wastewater Master Plan, and the Water Master Plan as Addendums to the St. Helens Comprehensive Plan and Amending the St. Helens Municipal Code Chapters 19.08 and 19.24, and Adding Chapters 19.38, 19.40, and 19.42

Mayor Massey read Ordinance No. 3308 by title. The final reading will be at the next meeting.

AWARD BID/CONTRACT

3. Award Bid and Authorize Mayor to Sign Contract with Keller Associates for Reservoir Siting Study, Project No. W-484

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

4. Award Bid and Authorize Mayor to Sign Contract with T.F.T. Construction for Gable Road Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacon (RRFB) Installation, Project No. R-721, in the amount of \$42,190

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

APPROVE AND/OR AUTHORIZE FOR SIGNATURE

5. City Council Minutes dated April 16, 2025
6. Amendment No. 2 to the Financing Contract with Oregon Business Development Department for the Waterfront Redevelopment Project
7. Amendment No. 3 to Agreement with Otak CPM for Public Safety Building Construction Project Management
8. Letter of Support on behalf of RSG Telecom for Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Grant Program for Columbia County-led Broadband Project
9. Letter of Support on behalf of Astound Broadband for Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Grant Program
10. Letter of Engagement with CDR Labor Law, LLC for Legal Services related to Labor and Employment Law
11. Contract with Grayling Engineers for Belton Sewer Step System Capacity Study, Project No. S-685

Motion: Motion made by Council President Chilton and seconded by Councilor Sundeen to approve '5' through '11' above.

Discussion.

Councilor Hubbard expressed concerns about the Belton Sewer Step System Capacity Study, noting the cost seemed high at approximately \$200,000 for potentially connecting three lots. Council President

Chilton noted that the funds were already budgeted and that the Engineering Division claimed they lacked the capability to perform the study internally. She emphasized the importance of having a budget that can roll over funds to the next year if not used. City Administrator Walsh confirmed that delaying the study was within the Council's authority but warned potential cost increases later. Councilor Sundeen stated he was comfortable delaying the study if it was not urgent. Engineering Manager Darroux, speaking remotely, clarified that the actual cost of the contract with Grayling Engineers was around \$170,000 and reaffirmed the benefit of signing the contract now due to budget availability. Mayor Massey noted they did not have enough information to confirm the system's capacity for new connections when last inquired about a year and a half ago.

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

Motion: Motion made by Council President Chilton and seconded by Councilor Sundeen to approve '5' through '10' above. **Vote:** Yea: Mayor Massey, Council President Chilton, Councilor Hubbard, Councilor Sundeen

Motion: Motion made by Council President Chilton and seconded by Councilor Sundeen to approve '11' above. **Vote:** Yeah: Councilor Sundeen; Nay: Mayor Massey, Council President Chilton, Councilor Hubbard

APPOINTMENTS TO CITY BOARDS & COMMISSIONS

12. Appoint Erin Wheeldon to the Library Board

Motion: Motion made by Councilor Sundeen and seconded by Council President Chilton to appoint Erin Wheeldon to the Library Board. **Vote:** Yea: Mayor Massey, Council President Chilton, Councilor Hubbard, Councilor Sundeen

CONSENT AGENDA FOR ACCEPTANCE

13. Library Board Minutes dated March 10, 2025
14. Library Board Special Meeting Minutes dated May 10, 2025

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

CONSENT AGENDA FOR APPROVAL

15. Accounts Payable Bill Lists

Motion: Motion made by Councilor Hubbard and seconded by Council President Chilton to approve '15' above. **Vote:** Yea: Mayor Massey, Council President Chilton, Councilor Hubbard, Councilor Sundeen

WORK SESSION ACTION ITEMS

Responses to Visitor Comments

Mayor Massey confirmed that the Council would direct Walsh to verify any public comments or information, ensuring that King would be directed through Walsh for these tasks.

Proactive

Council members agreed to discuss individual or collective Council Goals under a Proactive line item at the end of Regular Sessions, promoting transparency and accountability.

Amani Center Request for Financial Assistance

Council members acknowledged the invaluable services provided by the Amani Center, particularly its work with vulnerable children in the community. However, given the City's current financial constraints

and the impending budget cuts, they unanimously decided against providing monetary support at this time.

Councilor Sundeen mentioned the importance of revisiting the request after the completion of the budget process, suggesting that this might offer a more favorable financial landscape for considering such support. In the meantime, Council President Chilton proposed a creative approach to assist the Amani Center, recommending that they collaborate with Treadway for possible fundraising opportunities during large tourism events hosted by the City. This suggestion aimed to help the Center raise the necessary funds without directly impacting the City's budget. Mayor Massey expressed a desire to keep the Amani Center's request in consideration, suggesting it be placed in a "parking lot" for future evaluation post-budget discussions. The Council collectively emphasized the importance of supporting local organizations within their capacity, highlighting a commitment to maintaining dialogue with entities like the Amani Center to explore potential opportunities for assistance in the future.

COUNCIL MEMBER REPORTS

Councilor Sundeen reported...

- Offered condolences to former Public Works Director Dave Elder's family.
- Recognized City Recorder Kathy Payne and Deputy City Recorder Lisa Scholl for Municipal Clerk's Week.
- Police chief candidate interviews are scheduled for May 29.
- Reaffirmed the need for a new police station but expressed hesitancy about the Columbia Blvd. site.

Council President Chilton reported...

- Praised the St. Helens Girls Softball League for their contributions to the community.
- Welcomed new businesses to St. Helens:
 - Glazed and Confused
 - Northwest Plumbing Services
 - Sass at Home

Councilor Hubbard reported...

- Expressed support for the police station project and acknowledged the financial challenges involved in moving forward.

MAYOR MASSEY REPORTS

- Thanked City staff for their work.
- Attended lunch for "Take Your Child to Work Day." It was a great event.
- Commended Library Director Bishop for her dedication.
- Raised concerns about an abandoned RV on Port Avenue. City Planner Graichen confirmed it's on private property.
- She was also seriously injured at the Gable Road and Highway 30 intersection. It's unsafe and they need to do something if it's in the City's jurisdiction.
- Expressed excitement about the new flashing beacon crosswalk near WalMart.

OTHER BUSINESS

King shared feedback from Beth at the Amani Center, who appreciated the Council's discussion and informed them that they had paid their permit fee and were moving forward with their project.

ADJOURN – 7:55 p.m.

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

ATTEST:

Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder

Jennifer Massey, Mayor