

# **CITY OF ST. HELENS PLANNING DEPARTMENT ACTIVITY REPORT**



**To:** City Council  
**From:** Jacob A. Graichen, AICP, City Planner  
**cc:** Planning Commission

**Date:** 11.27.2023

This report does not indicate all *current planning* activities over the past report period. These are tasks, processing and administration of the Development Code which are a weekly if not daily responsibility. The Planning Commission agenda, available on the City's website, is a good indicator of *current planning* activities. The number of building permits issued is another good indicator as many require Development Code review prior to Building Official review.

**ASSOCIATE PLANNER/PROJECT MANAGER**—*In addition to routine tasks, the Associate Planner/Community Development Project Manager has been working on: See attached.*

## **PLANNING ADMINISTRATION—PREAPPLICATIONS MEETINGS**

Had a preliminary Q&A meeting for potential property line adjustment, land division, 2<sup>nd</sup> dwelling off Belton Road.

Conducted a pre-application meeting for a potential land division on S. 21<sup>st</sup> Street of the Crouse Way. Property has an existing house, and they are looking at carving off three new parcels.

## **PLANNING ADMINISTRATION—MISC.**

County Public Works reached out to me about road transfer process. I think they are gearing up to give us some of Gable Road west of US30. Thankfully, I thought ahead and attained previous ones from Lonny Welter, Columbia County Road Dept. Planner before he retired.

With some potential large manufacturing entities looking at both the Armstrong and St. Helens Industrial Business Park sites, some time spent on providing information and other support.

Updated public hearing scripts.

Conducted final inspection for buildings B and C of the Broadleaf Arbor (Gable Road apartments) development. D (community building), E, F, G, H and I (multi-family buildings) inspected previously. B and C are the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> of the eleven buildings. Only three more buildings left.

## **DEVELOPMENT CODE ENFORCEMENT**

A several months long effort by Associate Planner/Community Development Project Manager Jenny Dimsho about a shed too close to property line has been resolved. Person has to use a couple come along tools to do it, but they did it. Jenny also has the side benefit of knowing what a come along tool is now.

Received a complaint about a small shed too close to property line on Whitetail Avenue. Too small to require a permit, but still doesn't meet the minimum setback that applies. Classic issue of roof storm drainage onto neighbor's property. Compliance anticipated after making contact.

## **PLANNING COMMISSION (& *acting* HISTORIC LANDMARKS COMMISSION)**

November 14, 2023 meeting (outcome): The Commission held two public hearings. One was for a Conditional Use Permit for a new location for the Amani Center, which the Commission approved. The other for a zone and comprehensive plan map change of 475 N 12<sup>th</sup> Street from industrial to residential, which the Commission recommended the Council approve. The Council will see this one at a later date.

The Commission discussed vacancies and determined who the next interview committee would be. Due to a vacancy from a Commission being selected to be on the Council and another whose attendance in 2024 is anticipated to be low, they agreed we should continue formal solicitation of new members.

The Commission discussed the December joint meeting with the Council and felt the groups should meet. They discussed vacant storefronts/businesses as a potential proactive item and thought it would be a good item for the joint meeting.

December 12, 2023 meeting (upcoming):

*As the Historic Landmarks Commission*, they will consider alterations to the County Courthouse. This requires a public hearing.

Staff also intends to present the semi-annual report to the Council, to the Commission as well.

## **COUNCIL ACTIONS RELATED TO LAND USE**

Mayor signed the final decision for the Police Station land use permitting.

## **GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEMS (GIS)**

Quarterly data updates this month. Plus, updates related to recent zone change.

The County Assessor data has been famous for being inaccurate as to City of St. Helens zoning. Recently, County Assessor staff reached out to me about helping them improve this. There are about 560 accounts with zoning in the Assessor's data that does not align with the City's adopted zoning. Fortunately, about 200 are easier to identify being part of the Riverfront District or Houlton Business District zoning, since these are very specific areas and done not too long ago (<20 years). Unfortunately, the remaining 360 accounts may need to be looked at individually; some tedium expected over the next couple to several months.

Updated the official zoning and comprehensive plan maps. Last update was December 26, 2019.

**ST. HELENS INDUSTRIAL BUSINESS PARK PROPERTY**

Technical assistance efforts ramping up given potential occupants/PGE parcel for substation.

**From:** [Jennifer Dimsho](#)  
**To:** [Jacob Graichen](#)  
**Subject:** November Planning Department Report  
**Date:** Monday, November 27, 2023 11:05:13 AM  
**Attachments:** [image001.png](#)

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Here are my additions to the November Planning Department Report.

## GRANTS

1. **Safe Routes to School - Columbia Blvd. Sidewalk & County Culvert Project** – Construction with TFT began July 17, starting at the culvert near Gable Road. Road is open with sidewalk complete. Street trees and landscaping nearly complete. Project is near closeout!
2. **Business Oregon – Infrastructure Finance Authority** – Low-interest loan for Streets & Utilities Project and Riverwalk improvements. 1<sup>st</sup> Reimbursement request processed (which included over 30 invoices). Working with finance and URA revenue projection consultant to support amendment request for additional funding for undergrounding work.
3. **Riverwalk Project (OPRD Grants x2)** – Project bidding closed on 9/19. All bids came back around \$5 million, which is higher than we had budgeted and estimated. Working on value engineering efforts to reduce project costs rebid the project and to ensure full utilization of grant funding. Working on new scope to omit playground, picnic shelter, and stage, as well as reduce general project costs.
4. **Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)** – \$2.5 million grant award to fund design/engineering/permitting for the City's Sanitary Sewer Improvement Project. This project covers 3 sanitary sewer basins which were identified as deficient and priorities for improvement in the adopted Wastewater Master Plan. 3 submitted qualifications. Interviews held for 2 shortlisted contractors with Consor selected by the committee.
5. **CLG Historic Preservation Grant Program** – SHPO Certified Local Government Program. Received our contract for 17k. State approved work plan. Waiting for final comments before executing contract with property owner.
6. **DLCD Technical Assistance Program** – Submitted request for 60k for a new Economic Opportunities Analysis (EOA), including a Resolution from City Council and a letter of support from Columbia Economic Team. Grant was due 9/29. Awards are expected soon.
7. **SHPO Veterans Memorial Grant Program** - 33k award for an expansion at McCormick Park Veterans Memorial. Project includes 7 branch of service monuments and corresponding flags. Project is almost complete. All but granite slabs have been installed, with an expected installation the week of 12/5.
8. **ODOT Community Paths Program** - Received 300k to study a trail route refinement project (30% design) from St. Helens to Scappoose. Contracts are expected in October. Award is \$300k, with a match of around 42k split between Scappoose, the County, and us. ODOT anticipates grant contracts in November/December. Received draft Statement of Work from ODOT. Compiled 2nd round of comments on the statement of work.
9. **Travel Oregon Grant Program** – **Received 100k grant to fund ADA components of the Riverwalk Project!** Thanks to Columbia Economic Team and our RDMO (within CET).
10. **ODOT TGM Program** – Assisting Engineering Dept with Transportation Systems Plan.

Statement of Work submitted to ODOT for final review and consultant solicitation. ODOT is notoriously slow with contracting, so it could be ~6-9 months before we see movement on this project.

## **PROJECTS & MISC**

11. **Riverfront Streets/Utilities Project** – Attending weekly check-ins. Pump station just missing generator. Bluff trail construction is moving along. Rough grade and electrical of traffic circle near Cowlitz/Strand underway. Water line under construction. Landscaping and irrigation near south water quality swale underway. Undergrounding at 1<sup>st</sup> Street and St. Helens Street design ongoing.
12. **St. Helens Industrial Business Park (SHIBP) Planning** – 30% design for Phase I infrastructure & permitting/grading work for Phase II with Mackenzie. Project is on hold with potential user/sale of property.

### **Jenny Dimsho, AICP | Community Development Project Manager**

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