

City of St. Helens
Consent Agenda for Approval
CITY COUNCIL MINUTES

Presented for approval on this 21st day of January, 2026 are the following
Council minutes:

2025

- Work Session, Executive Session, and Regular Session Minutes dated January 7, 2026

After Approval of Council Minutes:

- Scan as PDF Searchable
- Make one double-sided, hole-punched copy and send to Library Reference
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COUNCIL WORK SESSION

Wednesday, January 07, 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
Gloria Butsch, Finance Director
Crystal King, Communications Officer
Matthew Smith, Police Chief
Jacob Graichen, City Planner

Mouhamad Zaher, Public Works Director
Mike De Roia, Building Official
Shanna Duggan, Recreation Manager
Melanie Martinez, Municipal Court Clerk
Ashley Wigod, Contracted City Attorney
David Rabbino, Contracted City Attorney

OTHERS

Steve Topaz	Steve Toschi
Adam St. Pierre	Brad Hendrickson
Toni Doggett	Steve Donovan
Nancy Whitney	Brady Preheim
Tina Curry	

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

CLEARING CONFUSION AND SETTING THE FACTS STRAIGHT

1. Response to December 17, 2025 Visitor Comments

Mayor Massey presented responses to visitor comments from the December 17, 2025 meeting:

- I. Regarding City Council meeting minutes, it was clarified that according to the Department of Justice Attorney General's Public Records and Meetings Manual, meeting minutes need not be a verbatim transcript. Minutes must contain information and give a true reflection of matters discussed and participants' views. Citizens who believe minutes don't provide a true reflection can email Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder. It was also noted that YouTube closed captioning transcripts are useful for accessibility but not always accurate and aren't used to generate meeting minutes.
- II. Regarding the release of the unredacted Band report, Mayor Massey clarified that she is not personally withholding the release of either the referenced reports. The reports are currently associated with active litigation and subject to attorney-client privilege, attorney work product protections, and public record law exceptions. The City has a duty not to disclose the materials until the legal basis for withholding no longer exists.

- III. Regarding a comment about the tram gas capacity, it was verified with Public Works that the City's tram holds 12-14 gallons of gas depending on the baffles inside, not three gallons as previously stated.
- IV. Regarding tourism contributions, it was clarified that at the May 15, 2025, Budget Committee meeting, Budget Committee member Steve Toschi proposed modifying the \$100,000 tourism revenue line item to \$300,000. Finance Director Butsch had projected a tourism ending fund balance of \$106,000 and did not believe \$300,000 was realistic. Staff have continued to make conservative financial decisions anticipating \$100,000 in tourism revenue, not \$300,000.

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

- ◆ Nancy Whitney. Expressed concerns about fireworks activity on New Year's Eve, noting that illegal fireworks including M-80s were being used in her neighborhood, causing windows to vibrate. She reported calling the non-emergency number and receiving a callback two hours later from a police officer who apologized but explained only two officers were on duty that night. She questioned why more officers weren't scheduled for a known busy night. She also called Mayor Massey that night but received no answer and voicemail was not set up.
- ◆ Adam St. Pierre. Discussed the budget statements made at the previous meeting regarding the tourism budget, stating that he had video evidence contradicting claims made by Brady Preheim. He suggested that Preheim apologize to Mayor Massey and Finance Director Butsch for making false accusations.
- ◆ Brady Preheim. Contested the response about the tourism budget, asserting that while Steve Toschi and Jennifer Gilbert initially brought up the issue, it was actually Finance Director Butsch who made the change and increased the revenue projection. He criticized the administration for not getting the expected revenue from tourism which could have funded more police officers, stating that the City had missed \$600,000 in revenue over the past two years which could have funded six police officers. He also expressed concern about employee matters, particularly the administration not securing cost of living increases for City employees, which he claimed was impacting staff morale and retention.
- ◆ Steve Toschi. Offered counsel regarding the waterfront development, stating it should be the cornerstone of economic future for the City. He emphasized the need to build appropriate housing to be purchased by people with expendable income, recommending the rejection of apartment-type housing until after at least 200-owned housing units are built. He also advised against selling the City boat, suggesting it could be a valuable asset for tourism in the future.
- ◆ Steve Topaz. Inquired about the legal acceptability of YouTube transcription recordings and commented on the minutes' wording. He also asked about the City's expenditures on legal services, requesting information on costs for various legal matters including lawyer attendance at meetings, property deals, legal suits, DEQ fines, and union contract negotiations.

DISCUSSION TOPICS**2. Employee Length of Service Recognition - Melanie Payne (20 years), Jennifer Johnson & Shanna Duggan (15 years)**

City Administrator Walsh presented service awards to:

- Melanie Payne for 20 years of service with the City, currently serving as Municipal Court Clerk
- Jennifer Johnson for 15 years of service (absent from the meeting)
- Shanna Duggan for 15 years of service, currently serving as Recreation Manager

Finance Director Butsch spoke about Jennifer Johnson's service and dedication to the City. City Administrator Walsh and Council President Chilton both praised Shanna Duggan for her work in building positive relationships in the community and her success in obtaining grants and developing partnerships.

3. Quarterly Reports from City Departments/Divisions - Building & Planning (Informational)

City Planner Graichen reported on recent phishing attempts targeting Planning Commission members, subdivision applicants, and the City. He noted that some individuals had been scammed, and that the Police Department was investigating. The scammers sent emails requesting payment for various City services.

Police Chief Smith confirmed the matter was under active investigation with persons of interest identified. He requested that any new information be reported directly to him.

Council members expressed appreciation for the comprehensive departmental reports.

4. Follow-up on Utility Rates Outreach and Final Rates Study - *Consultant Steve Donovan and Finance Director Gloria Butsch*

Steve Donovan and Finance Director Butsch presented a follow-up on the December 11 public meeting about utility rates, which was attended by 22 citizens including Mayor Massey and Councilor Sundein.

Key points from the presentation:

- The overall proposed utility bill increase is 5.4%, which translates to a monthly increase of \$7.72 for the average customer (from \$143 to approximately \$151)
- By the end of 2031, the projected monthly bill would be \$186
- When including the public safety fee, the total utility bill would increase from \$153.40 to \$161.12 on July 1
- Compared to neighboring communities, St. Helens' rates remain competitive, though all communities are experiencing cost increases

Butsch clarified that the resolution on the regular session agenda would adopt the rate study itself, not the actual rates. The new fees would be formally adopted in June along with the budget.

5. Update on Harbor Master Services for City Docks and Sand Island Docks - *Brad Hendrickson & Toni Doggett*

Brad Hendrickson and Toni Doggett provided an update on harbor master services. They reported that the harbor master program has been successful in preventing homeless boats and unauthorized stays at the City docks. Doggett explained that she maintains a consistent presence at the docks, enforcing the three-day limit rule.

They noted that yacht clubs are returning to St. Helens as a destination after a two-year absence due to previous problems. The harbor master's efforts have also helped reduce theft and vandalism along the waterfront.

They discussed challenges with abandoned vessels, including a boat currently sitting on the Sand Island docks that was abandoned by its owner. They explained the lengthy process required to remove such vessels.

City Administrator Walsh mentioned that Marine Deputy Wheeler had expressed appreciation for the relationship with the harbor master. Council President Chilton commented that the harbor master program and kiosk have been successful improvements to dock management.

6. Review Proposal and Purchase Agreement for Police Department Drone - *Police Chief Matt Smith*

This agenda item was removed prior to the meeting. However, a discussion arose regarding the current state of 24-hour police coverage. Chief Smith explained that while the department aims to maintain 24-hour coverage, they are currently facing challenges due to understaffing. Officers have been filling gaps by working substantial overtime for the past 18 months. The department is budgeted for \$300,000 in overtime but is projected to spend \$543,000 by the fiscal year's end if the current situation continues. Two new officers are expected to join soon, which could facilitate returning to 24-hour staffing without excessive overtime. Meanwhile, there is a need to explore interim solutions ensuring 24-hour coverage, such as potential coordination with the sheriff's office. Council members expressed appreciation for the officers' commitment and acknowledged the necessity of long-term sustainable staffing solutions.

7. Review Budget Calendar for FY2027 - *Finance Director Gloria Butsch*

Finance Director Butsch presented the budget calendar for the upcoming fiscal year. She noted that the schedule is aggressive, with the next four months focused on internal staff work to prepare the budget. She acknowledged the financial challenges facing the City and the need to find solutions.

8. Leak Adjustment Authority - *Finance Director Gloria Butsch*

Finance Director Butsch requested approval to change the leak adjustment policy to improve efficiency. The proposed change would allow staff to approve standard leak adjustments without bringing them to the Council, while non-standard adjustments, full adjustments, or customer appeals would still come to Council.

Mayor Massey suggested that quarterly reports on the total amount approved for leak adjustments would be helpful for oversight. Butsch agreed to include this information in her quarterly financial reports.

9. Discussion regarding City Tourism Program Assets (Tram and Boat) - *City Administrator John Walsh*

City Administrator Walsh led a discussion about the City's tourism program assets, specifically the tram and boat.

Regarding the boat, Walsh explained the ongoing challenges with obtaining a Certificate of Inspection (COI) from the Coast Guard. The City has corrected five of six deficiencies identified, but the remaining issue involves providing a certificate of original build which has proven difficult to obtain. The Coast Guard has suggested reducing passenger capacity from 25 to 12 through a Jones Waiver Act provision, but this would significantly reduce the boat's utility.

Council members discussed the current status of the boat, noting it cannot be used for its intended commercial purpose, requires significant insurance costs, and is deteriorating while stored outdoors. There was consensus that while the boat was purchased with a vision for tourism revenue, conditions have changed and maintaining the boat no longer appears viable.

Similar concerns were raised about the tram, which has undergone repairs including a new engine and transmission but has been difficult to operate effectively. Council President Chilton noted that in her conversations with Treadway, the tram has been more difficult to operate than it's worth, with weather issues making it less practical than enclosed alternatives like a trolley.

The Council discussed the possibility of declaring both assets as surplus property to explore selling them, while maintaining the option to reject offers if they are deemed too low.

10. City Administrator's Report

- Happy New Year!
- Completion of the riverwalk project.
- Finalization of the sale of 30-acres of the mill site property to Project Arcadia, with the City retaining areas along the Channel, Milton Creek, and softball fields.
- The sale's potential to offset a \$1.3 million deficit caused by the departure of Cascades through generating property tax and utility revenue.
- Advancements in the police station project with value engineering adjustments, current costs matching the total budget including contingency, and consideration of using one-time funds as an extra contingency.
- Imminent March deadline for Building Code changes which could affect the police station project if not met.
- Insights from a meeting with Romano Capital focused on building studies expected in two to three weeks.
 - Councilor Hubbard's confidence in Romano's development approach and financial model.
- Ongoing efforts to finalize the Sand Island Campground letter of intent aiming for operator compliance rather than city management
- Dissolution of the Columbia Economic Team (CET) and efforts to find new homes for economic development programs.
 - Mayor Massey asked if Main Street can take anything on.
 - Council President Chilton's suggestion for a future Council agenda discussion on preserving essential services related to CET programs.
- Water Day at the Capital, February 2.
- Senator Merkley town hall on January 16.
- Responded to the DEQ stormwater case.
- Budget season. Need to get away from one-time revenues. Need to rely on recurring revenues.
- Committed to Parks & Trails Commission to update the Parks Master Plan.
- Maul Foster hired Consor for analysis of the lagoon. Target of January 21 for a Council presentation.

ADJOURN – 4:45 p.m.**EXECUTIVE SESSION**

- Labor Negotiations, under ORS 192.660(2)(d)
- 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:

Kathy Payne, City RecorderJennifer Massey, Mayor

City of St. Helens
CITY COUNCIL

Executive Session Summary

January 7, 2026

Members Present: Jennifer Massey, Mayor
Jessica Chilton, Council President
Mark Gundersen, Councilor
Brandon Sundein, 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 4:53-5:29 p.m.)



At 4:53 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.

- **Consult with Legal Counsel & Potential/Pending Litigation, under ORS 192.660(2)(h)**
- **Real Property Transactions, under ORS 192.660(2)(e)**

5:29 p.m. David Rabbino left the meeting.

- **Deliberations with persons appointed to carry out Labor Negotiations, under ORS 192.660(2)(d)**
- **Real Property Transactions, under ORS 192.660(2)(e)**
- **Exempt Records/Confidential Attorney-Client Privileged Memo, under ORS 192.660(2)(f)**
 - Nothing was discussed under this provision.
- **Consult with Legal Counsel & Potential/Pending Litigation, under ORS 192.660(2)(h)**

The Executive Session was adjourned at 5:57 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, January 07, 2026

DRAFT MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT

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

MEMBERS ABSENT

Councilor Brandon Sundeen

STAFF PRESENT

John Walsh, City Administrator
Kathy Payne, City Recorder
Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder
Gloria Butsch, Finance Director
Sharon Darroux, Engineering Manager

OTHERS

Alexis Krupa	Tammy Maygra	Alana Gilston
Peter Olsen	Brady Preheim	Adam St. Pierre
Joe	Patrick Birkle	Steve Toschi
Patrick C.	Nick Flory	Nicole Battista
Jeremy Evans		

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

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

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

- ◆ Tammy Maygra. Expressed concerns about transparency, specifically regarding redacted public records including the Jim Band report. She quoted previous statements made by Mayor Massey during her campaign about the importance of unredacted public records and accused her of hypocrisy for not releasing unredacted records now that she holds office.
- ◆ Brady Preheim. Challenged statements made about the water taxi during the work session. He disputed the claim that a comparable boat could be purchased for \$25,000, noting that the boat has two new motors worth \$50,000 and required an additional \$6,000 for synchronization. Preheim also addressed the Jim Band report, criticizing the claims of attorney-client privilege used to withhold it and asserting that the attorney stated the report belonged to Jim Band, not the City. He criticized the tourism contractor for providing incorrect information about the train's fuel tank capacity and pointed out that the City had not discussed the "alien" asset, which he claimed was more expensive than the boat and train combined.

- ◆ Patrick Birkle. Thanked the Council for providing responses to public comments during work sessions. He questioned the assertion that \$300,000 could fund six police officers, suggesting it would likely only cover three when accounting for salaries, benefits, and training. Regarding tourism, he acknowledged previous accountability issues with the former contractor but noted improved accountability with the current contractor. He expressed concern about housing affordability related to potential waterfront development, emphasizing that housing should address the needs of citizens across income levels. Additionally, he advocated for retaining the boat for emergency management purposes.
- ◆ Adam St. Pierre. Played a recording of Finance Director Gloria Butsch explaining budget limitations and the process of creating a balanced budget. The recording demonstrated an exchange where a Budget Committee member had suggested reallocating tourism funds and Butsch explained the constraints.
- ◆ Steve Toschi. Expressed support for high-end housing development on the waterfront, arguing that the City has already built sufficient lower-income housing which he claimed was causing problems in schools and for police. He was concerned about the Police Department doubling their overtime budget without discussion and suggested implementing an existing agreement for officers to be on call from home to reduce overtime costs. He also noted the importance of maintaining Sand Island's operations.

RESOLUTIONS

1. Resolution No. 2064: A Resolution Appointing the Budget Officer for Fiscal Year 2026-27

Mayor Massey read Resolution No. 2064 by title. **Motion:** Motion made by Council President Chilton and seconded by Councilor Gundersen to adopt Resolution No. 2064. **Vote:** Yea: Mayor Massey, Council President Chilton, Councilor Gundersen, Councilor Hubbard

2. PUBLIC COMMENT - INCREASING UTILITY RATES

Resolution No. 2065: Resolution to Establish Water, Sewer, and Storm Drainage Utility Rates and Charges

Removed from agenda.

APPROVE AND/OR AUTHORIZE FOR SIGNATURE

3. Agreement with Axon Enterprise, Inc. for the Purchase of an Axon Air/Skydio X10 Basic Patrol Drone Program and Authorize the City Administrator to Execute the Agreement

Removed from agenda.

CONSENT AGENDA FOR ACCEPTANCE

4. Parks and Trails Commission Minutes dated October 13 and November 10, 2025 5. Planning Commission Minutes dated August 12, September 9, and October 14, 2025

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

CONSENT AGENDA FOR APPROVAL

6. City Council Minutes dated December 17, 2025 7. Budget Calendar for FY2027 8. Adoption of St. Helens Reservoir Siting Study and Authorization for Staff to Proceed with Negotiations to Acquire the Recommended Site

9. Authorization for Leak Adjustment Decisions to be Made Under the Administrative Rules and Deferred to City Council Only Under Extenuating Circumstances or by Customer Appeal
10. OLCC Licenses
11. Accounts Payable Bill Lists

Motion: Motion made by Council President Chilton and seconded by Councilor Gundersen to approve '6' through '11' above. **Vote:** Yea: Mayor Massey, Council President Chilton, Councilor Gundersen, Councilor Hubbard

WORK SESSION ACTION ITEMS

Water Taxi

Motion: Motion made by Council President Chilton and seconded by Councilor Hubbard to deem the water taxi surplus property.

Mayor Massey suggested exploring the option of developing an RFP to find an entity that might operate the boat, potentially through a sale where the City would hold the note. Council President Chilton expressed support for this approach, noting that while she saw vision for the boat, the City was not currently in a position to manage it. City Attorney Wigod explained that City Administrator Walsh could develop a public process allowing people to submit proposals for operating the boat, purchasing it with City financing, or leasing it.

Councilor Hubbard expressed concern about potentially missing the window for selling the boat, but the majority of the Council preferred exploring other options first.

Vote: Nay: Mayor Massey, Council President Chilton, Councilor Gundersen, Councilor Hubbard

Motion: Motion by Council President Chilton and seconded by Councilor Hubbard to authorize the City Administrator to work on an RFP for the water taxi. **Vote:** Yea: Mayor Massey, Council President Chilton, Councilor Gundersen, Councilor Hubbard

Tram

Council President Chilton noted that the tram was not being used and was causing issues for the tourism contractor.

Motion: Motion made by Council President Chilton and seconded by Councilor Hubbard to deem the tram surplus property. **Vote:** Yea: Mayor Massey, Council President Chilton, Councilor Gundersen, Councilor Hubbard

Mayor Massey requested information about the "alien" asset mentioned during public comment, including its purchase price and any associated software. Council President Chilton agreed to inquire about this asset with the appropriate parties.

INTERVIEW CANDIDATES FOR BUDGET COMMITTEE

12. Budget Committee Interviews Schedule & Candidates
 - 7:30 p.m. Nicole Battista
 - 7:40 p.m. Jeremy Evans
 - 7:50 p.m. Nick Flory
 - 8:00 p.m. Alana Gilston
 - 8:10 p.m. Brady Preheim

Each candidate was asked the same five questions regarding their availability to attend meetings, reasons for wanting to join the Committee, what they would add to the Committee, their views on challenges and opportunities facing St. Helens, and if they had anything else to add.

Nicole Battista described her Business Major background and experience with budgeting for Scout organizations. She expressed concern about police staffing and interest in youth programs.

Jeremy Evans highlighted his background as an actuary for insurance companies, explaining his role in ensuring proper financial reserves. He emphasized his critical eye, respect for financial processes, and attention to risk. He identified economic development challenges and staffing issues as major concerns for the City.

Nick Flory shared his experience on the Parks and Trails Commission and his commitment to St. Helens as his home. He expressed support for law enforcement and public safety, and identified the budget and creating economic growth as key challenges.

Alana Gilston emphasized her lifetime residency in the community and desire to bring a younger perspective to the Committee. She identified Spirit of Halloweentown as an opportunity for revenue growth and expressed interest in learning more about the City's budget process.

Brady Preheim noted his previous service on the Budget Committee and extensive knowledge of City operations. He expressed concerns about budget integrity and the waterfront development, questioning Romano Capital's development experience.

After deliberation, the Council appreciated all candidates but particularly valued Evans' financial expertise and risk assessment background.

Motion: Motion made by Council President Chilton and seconded by Councilor Hubbard to appoint Jeremy Evans to the Budget Committee. **Vote:** Yea: Mayor Massey, Council President Chilton, Councilor Gundersen, Councilor Hubbard

COUNCIL MEMBER REPORTS

Council President Chilton reported...

- Acknowledged upcoming budget cycle challenges.
- Congratulated long-serving City staff members Jennifer Johnson, Melanie Payne, and Shanna Duggan.
- Celebrated the reopening of the paper mill, emphasizing its importance in bringing industry, jobs, and tax revenue back to St. Helens.

Councilor Hubbard reported...

- Expressed satisfaction with Project Arcadia's fruition after extensive negotiations. Highlighted the return of hands-on work to the community.

Councilor Gundersen reported...

- Echoed the significance of the mill reopening. Emphasized the Council's commitment to the project and its positive impact on citizens and workers.

MAYOR MASSEY REPORTS

- Thanked City staff, particularly City Recorder Payne and Deputy City Recorder Scholl, for meeting preparations.
- Acknowledged challenges facing understaffed departments.
- Expressed appreciation for Finance Director Butsch during the budget season.
- Addressed a citizen comment about her phone not working, promising to follow up.
- Shared excitement about Project Arcadia and noted the mill's upcoming hundredth anniversary, highlighting its importance to St. Helens' identity.
- The side-by-side draft ordinance will be on the next agenda.

PROACTIVE ITEMS

OTHER BUSINESS

ADJOURN

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

ATTEST:

Kathy Payne, City Recorder

Jennifer Massey, Mayor