

CITY OF ST. HELENS PLANNING DEPARTMENT ACTIVITY REPORT



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

Date: 10.23.2023

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 redevelopment of the old “Gracie’s Annex” building along The Strand and a vacant lot behind it along S. 1st Street.

Had a post decision Q&A meeting with a potential developer for the Comstock Subdivision, which was approved last year.

Had a Q&A meeting with the original owner of the Ridgecrest Subdivision, Phase 3 for some remaining lots to be developed, which have been in discussion since I started working for St. Helens in 2007. Issue is timing of construction, an abutting sensitive land, and when the sensitive lands laws took effect. No other lots in town have this circumstance that I am aware of. We also discussed some Phase 3 Homeowners Association issues; there is a lot of common space for this subdivision, and I don’t think there is an established or functional Homeowners Association yet. Messy situation that goes back years.

PLANNING ADMINISTRATION—MISC.

Conducted final inspection for building I of the Broadleaf Arbor (Gable Road apartments) development. D (community building), E, F, G and H (multi-family buildings) inspected previously. H is the 6th of ten buildings.

Burger King final inspection conducted this month. Several items to resolve still. We confirmed with CRPUD that the street trees along US30 were ok because there is less clearance than normal with the trees planted on a slope behind the sidewalk.

Much work this month on the Police Station land use permitting, given appeal of the Planning Commission’s denial. More work still as the council’s final decision needs to be drafted and signed. Then notice goes out with the potential of an appeal to the Oregon Land Use Board of Appeals (LUBA),

A Lot Line Adjustment (LLA) in and adjacent to the Elk Ridge Subdivision off Hankey Road has been completed. This is related to some old landfill areas and DEQ requirements. This LLA is report worthy as it was an important step the owners undertook to get a No Further Action

(NFA) from Oregon DEQ. The NFA from DEQ is an important step to market the remaining approximately 37 acres for future phases of the subdivision. Those phases will be higher up the hill and have some of the best long-distance views in town, including being able to see downtown Portland on clear days. Some infrastructure challenges will add cost though.

DEVELOPMENT CODE ENFORCEMENT

Another month, another shed complaint. This one is too small to require a permit but too close to the property line with the roof slanted towards the adjacent property. Proximity and rain runoff is the most common reason for a neighbor's shed concern. This one is on Whitetail Avenue.

PLANNING COMMISSION (& *acting* HISTORIC LANDMARKS COMMISSION)

October 10, 2023 meeting (outcome): This meeting was cancelled. Staff confirmed the Commission and Councilor liaison was ok with this prior to official cancellation.

November 14, 2023 meeting (upcoming): The Commission has two public hearings scheduled. One is for a zoning and comprehensive plan map change at 475 N 12th from industrial to residential. The other is for a Conditional Use Permit for a new location and construction of a new building for the Amani Center. The Amani Center is currently located along Columbia Boulevard in the Houlton area, and they are looking for a more suitable location and building.

The Commission has some position vacancy matters to discuss too.

COUNCIL ACTIONS RELATED TO LAND USE

The Council heard the appeal for the Police Station matter that the Planning Commission denied. They reserved the Commission's decision by approving it with conditions and with the interpretation that for a "critical facility," the word "facility" means "building." A police station is a critical facility in floodplain regulation world, which adds extra regulation considerations. Clarification of "facility" means "building" eliminates some ambiguity.

From: [Jennifer Dimsho](#)
To: [Jacob Graichen](#)
Subject: October Planning Department Report
Date: Friday, October 20, 2023 11:23:19 AM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)

Here are my additions to the October 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. All but the trees have been installed. Project is near completion.
2. **Business Oregon – Infrastructure Finance Authority** – Low-interest loan for Streets & Utilities Project and Columbia View Park improvements that are not covered by grants and Parks SDCs. 1st 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.
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. It is likely we will not be able to construct the playground and the picnic shelter at this time.
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. Grant Administration contract approved at 10/18 CC RS. CDBG 1st Draw requirements complete. Design RFQ closes on 11/2. Selection will occur week of 11/6.
5. **CLG Historic Preservation Grant Program** – SHPO Certified Local Government Program. Received our contract for 17k. Commission scored 4 applicants and selected top-scoring applicant at 135 S. 3rd Street. Prepared package of project material for the state to begin review process which could take up to 75 days. State had additional follow up questions about meeting the standards for rehabilitation, applicant is working on answers /clarifications.
6. **DLCD Technical Assistance Program** – Submitted request for 60k to cover the cost of 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.
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. The project includes matching funds of \$28,130 through in-kind labor and donations. Electrician and mason have provided quotes. Project costs (mason) are higher than expected, but we're working on a solution. Public Works poured pedestals. Mason is installing veneer. Granite slabs are being etched.
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 first round of comments on the statement of work.
9. **SHPO Oregon Heritage Grant Program** - Grant program opened to cover the design and cost of materials for the Warrior Rock Lighthouse replica and signage. Request was for 20k. Construction could be completed in-house as a match requirement by Public Works staff. Received a letter of support from the County Commissioners and the Columbia County Museum Association. Submitted budget, timeline, grant narrative before deadline on 10/12.
 10. **Travel Oregon Grant Program** - Submitted a 100k grant request to fund ADA components of the Riverwalk Project (Grant was due 9/15). Included a letter of support from our Regional Destination Management Organization (RDMO) which is CET, narrative responses, project budget, grant timeline, and permitting and planning attachments.
 11. **CCCC Grant Program** – Columbia County Cultural Coalition Grant Due Nov 18. Max request is 2k. City will submit for the same project as the SHPO OR Heritage grant above.
 12. **ODOT TGM Program** – Reviewed and provided comments on the Draft Statement of Work (SoW) for our new Transportation Systems Plan (TSP) project paid for by the successful ODOTTGM grant. ODOT’s SoW will be used to solicit the consultant who will do the work. Attended initial kickoff meeting on 10/4.

PROJECTS & MISC

13. **Riverfront Streets/Utilities Project** – Attending weekly check-ins. Pump station nearly complete. Bluff trail construction is moving along. Stormwater improvements south of Columbia View park complete. Rough grade of traffic circle near Cowlitz/Strand underway. Water line under construction. Undergrounding at 1st Street and St. Helens Street design ongoing.
14. **St. Helens Industrial Business Park (SHIBP) Public Infrastructure Design** – 30% design for Phase I infrastructure & permitting/grading work for Phase II with Mackenzie. Mackenzie provided preliminary PT for PGE parcel. City will facilitate partition process, PGE will prepare other land use applications. Project is on hold with potential user/sale of property.
15. **Oregon Population Forecast Program Survey** - Worked with Jacob to prepare narrative/qualitative responses to this survey which are due in November. PSU divides the state into 4 regions and each region receives a forecast every 4 years with a 50-year horizon. The previous report was from 2020-2070. The next report will be for 2024.
16. **Professional Development** - Attended two conferences in October. Mainstreet Conference in Independence & Oregon American Planning Association (OAPA) in Eugene.

Jenny Dimsho, AICP | Community Development Project Manager

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