

MEMORANDUM TO CITY COUNCIL

Date: June 4, 2025

To: Mayor and City Councilors

From: John Walsh, City Administrator

Re: Chief of Police Recruitment Process



Purpose: On May 29, 2025, the City held interviews for the internal Chief of Police recruitment process. The interviews and evaluation process have concluded, resulting in a recommendation to appoint Sgt. Matthew Smith as the City of St. Helens next Police Chief.

Background: On March 19, 2025, the City voted and approved the use of an internal recruitment process to select the City's next Police Chief. Three internal candidates applied.

On April 2, 2025, City Council directed staff to create an evaluation panel for the recruitment made up of two Police Chiefs from outside of the community, Sheriff Brian Pixley, a St. Helens Police Association union representative, and one City Councilor. City Council further directed staff to work with the Oregon Association Chiefs of Police (OACP) to help identify the two chiefs available to participate and to develop and implement the recruitment process.

The final composition of the evaluation committee had five voting members including City of Canby's Chief of Police, the City of Wilsonville's Chief of Police, Columbia County Sheriff Pixley, St. Helens Police Association union representative Jamin Coy, and Councilor Russ Hubbard. As the City Administrator, I attended the interviews and participated as a non-voting member. The evaluations by the evaluation committee included a review of written supplemental questions submitted by each candidate and a 60-minute interview with each candidate. The interviews were moderated by City Attorney Ashley Wigod.

The interviews revealed that we have three strong candidates that contribute greatly to the City of St. Helens Police Department. After an evaluation of written materials and verbal interviews, the evaluation panel concluded that Sgt. Matthew Smith was the highest scoring candidate and was the best candidate to serve as the City's next Chief of Police.

Next Steps: The City's new Governing Policy provides that the City Administrator hires Department Heads, subject to approval by City Council. The purpose of this agenda item is to present for Council approval a recommendation that the City appoint Sgt. Smith as the next City of St. Helens Police Chief, contingent upon the successful completion of a comprehensive background investigation and a medical and psychological examination as allowed under the law. Background investigations can take up to three weeks.

Options:

1. Vote to approve Sgt. Smith as the City of St. Helens next Police Chief.
2. Decline to appoint Sgt. Smith as the Police Chief and use an external process to find another candidate.