

City of St. Helens

Consent Agenda for Approval

CITY COUNCIL MINUTES

Presented for approval on this 1st day of April, 2026 are the following Council minutes:

2026

- Work Session, Executive Session, and Regular Session Minutes dated March 18, 2026

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
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COUNCIL WORK SESSION

Wednesday, March 18, 2026

DRAFT MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT

Mayor Jennifer Massey
Council President Jessica Chilton
Councilor Mark Gundersen
Councilor Russell Hubbard – arrived at 3:11 p.m.
Councilor Brandon Sundeen

STAFF PRESENT

John Walsh, City Administrator	Suzanne Bishop, Library Director
Kathy Payne, City Recorder	Michele Karmartsang, Library Assistant
Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder	Crystal King, Communications Officer
Matthew Smith, Police Chief	Shanna Duggan, Recreation Manager
Mouhamad Zaher, Public Works Director	Ashley Wigod, Contracted City Attorney
Sharon Darroux, Engineering Manager	

OTHERS

Steve Topaz	Steve Donovan
Mark Bandov	Scobby
Lucas Bandov	Brady Preheim
Robyn Toschi	Danica Rose Barrick
Steve Toschi	Jennifer Stapleton

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

Contracted City Attorney Wigod addressed the Council regarding the declaration of conflicts of interest, explaining this would now be a standard agenda item before every Council meeting. She outlined the two types of conflicts under Oregon law: potential conflicts, which require disclosure but allow participation in discussion and voting, and actual conflicts, which require disclosure and prohibit discussion and voting unless specific exceptions apply. No Council members declared any conflicts of interest for the work session agenda items.

CLEARING CONFUSION AND SETTING THE FACTS STRAIGHT

1. Response to February 18 Visitor Comments

Mayor Massey noted that there were no responses to visitor comments from the February 18 meeting.

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

- ◆ Steve Toschi. Addressed the Council regarding budget concerns and Police Department management. He referenced the Greenway report materials, asserting that the Council had been misled by the police union regarding budget needs despite a 95% increase in the police budget. Toschi criticized police overtime records showing officers billing for more than 24 hours in a day and suggested significant cuts to the police budget, approximately \$2 million. He noted Mayor

Massey's conflict of interest regarding her husband's employment and called for better management of budget issues regardless of whether the levy passes.

- ◆ Mark and Lucas Bandov. Requested that golf carts be included in the side-by-side ordinance. Bandov explained he had been using his golf cart to pick up his son from school since November but was recently stopped by police. He described how the family enjoys using the golf cart for neighborhood activities and emphasized that golf carts are slower than side-by-sides. He noted that newer golf carts have safety features like lights, mirrors, and horns, and requested guidance on how to proceed with legalizing golf cart use in the city.
- ◆ Steve Topaz. Raised concerns about the lagoon project and Maul Foster's consulting work. He claimed that Maul Foster had presented information five years ago showing the project was financially unfeasible, yet the City continued spending money on it. Topaz questioned Maul Foster's involvement in future City projects and raised concerns about the lagoon's structural integrity due to seismic issues. He also requested information about the total legal costs the City has incurred, mentioning a recent figure of \$700,000 beyond insurance coverage.

Councilor Hubbard arrived at 3:11 p.m.

- ◆ Brady Preheim. Made multiple allegations and comments, including claims about retired City employees continuing to work under contracts, assertions about tourism revenue shortfalls, and accusations regarding conflicts of interest. He also made personal attacks and questioned the management of the Police Department compared to Scappoose's operations.

Mayor Massey responded to disagree with assertions that the Finance Director had lied, noting this violated City policy.

DISCUSSION TOPICS

2. Employee Length of Service Recognition - Michele Karmartsang 10 Years

Library Director Bishop presented a recognition for Michele Karmartsang's 10 years of service at the library. Bishop praised Karmartsang's growth from bringing existing knowledge to becoming an exemplary library assistant who excels in patron services, creates promotional materials, and demonstrates deep thinking about library services. She highlighted Karmartsang's professional demeanor, passion for the work, and her skill in developing French macaron making during COVID, which she shares with colleagues.

3. Quarterly Reports from City Departments/Divisions - Communications & Recreation (Informational)

Communications Report (Crystal King): Council discussed the migration to a new website platform and the informational webpage being built for the side-by-side ordinance, which takes effect March 20. Council President Chilton emphasized the budget cut impacts on communications services, including emergency PSA information, event coverage, cooling center operations, and various community programs.

Recreation Report (Shanna Duggan): Mayor Massey praised the Recreation Program's impact on youth and families, particularly the after-school programs that provide essential childcare for working parents. Council President Chilton commended the grant writing efforts and work to make the program financially sustainable while serving St. Helens families.

4. Annual Report from City Forester - *Brent Keller of Mason, Bruce & Girard*

City Forester Brent Keller presented the annual forestry report, celebrating 20 years of managing the Milton Creek Watershed property. He reported on the Section 20 timber sale to Interfor, which has generated about \$600,000 so far with completion expected by July. The sale achieved strong pricing at over \$600 per thousand board feet.

Keller discussed reforestation activities, including completing planting of the Pinkney Road sale area and treating 195 acres for invasive Scotch broom. For 2026, plans include finishing the Section 20 sale, conducting precommercial thinning of 24-year-old stands, and continuing invasive species treatments.

Regarding the timber market, Keller noted prices have recovered to levels similar to the previous year due to supply scarcity rather than strong lumber demand. He attributed this to reduced Canadian imports, fire-damaged timber, and increased regulatory restrictions.

Council discussed sustainability, with Keller confirming they are cutting approximately 50 acres per year, which aligns with the 45-year rotation sustainability goal. He presented data showing about 240 acres of timber over 40 years old currently available, with about 700 acres moving into merchantable category over the next 5-10 years.

When asked about recommendations for additional harvesting, Keller indicated he would slightly lean toward waiting, though he noted he could be swayed either direction. He explained there are roughly 100 acres available for cutting if the City chose to proceed.

5. Presentation on Water, Wastewater, and Stormwater System Development Charges (SDCs) - *Consultant Steve Donovan*

Consultant Steve Donovan presented substantial increases to System Development Charges, proposing to raise total SDCs for a new single-family home from \$18,800 to \$30,544. The increases are driven by significantly higher capital improvement plan costs: water system costs increased from \$57 million to \$103.8 million, wastewater from \$62 million to \$76 million, and stormwater from \$45 million to \$52 million.

Donovan explained that the preponderance of infrastructure costs are for replacement of aging systems, which cannot be funded through SDCs. Only growth-related capacity improvements can be funded through SDCs: \$24 million for water, \$19 million for wastewater, and \$13 million for stormwater projects.

He emphasized the policy challenge of affordable housing, noting that reducing SDCs requires rate payers and taxpayers to subsidize new growth. The timeline includes notifications starting March 19, methodology posting by April 18, and final adoption consideration on June 17.

Council members expressed concern about the impact on development, with Councilor Hubbard stating it would kill projects and noting he would not proceed with his own development plans. City Administrator Walsh mentioned ongoing efforts to secure federal and state funding to reduce infrastructure costs.

6. Service Reduction Impacts Discussion - *City Administrator John Walsh*

Mayor Massey declared an actual conflict of interest due to her husband's employment as a police officer with the City. As permitted by Senate Bill 983 and in accordance with ORS 244.120, she is permitted to engage in discussions and votes on the budget.

City Administrator Walsh presented the challenging budget situation facing the General Fund, which supports \$12.3 million in services with only \$2.3 million from property taxes. The City has already reduced staff from 85 employees in 2022 to 73 currently, representing a 20% reduction.

Walsh announced he had notified staff on March 3 about potential furloughs reducing work hours from 40 to 32 hours per week, representing a 20% pay cut. Both bargaining units have requested to negotiate over this issue. If furloughs are insufficient, layoffs would be the next step.

Further reductions could impact library hours, consolidate City services, require appointment-only access to City Hall, reduce support to boards and commissions, and cause delays in permitting. Walsh emphasized this is fundamentally a revenue problem, noting the City once thrived on industrial revenue that provided significant tax base.

Council discussed scheduling a State of the City meeting for April 11 to provide public education about City services and budget challenges. The format would include both presentation/Q&A and informal table discussions with department heads. Council also discussed concerns about public records fee waivers and legal costs.

Mayor Massey raised concerns about public records processes, fee waivers, and whether records receiving waivers should be posted publicly since taxpayers subsidize the cost. She also questioned the total cost of legal fees and suggested exploring in-house legal counsel. Additionally, she raised concerns about business license fee increases that went from \$10 per year to \$20 per month, significantly impacting small businesses.

7. Discussion regarding Roles and Responsibilities of Council Members

Council discussed Planning Commission attendance, with the Commission indicating they no longer need two Council members present at meetings. Councilor Gundersen and Councilor Hubbard agreed to alternate attendance, with Gundersen temporarily unable to attend due to a search and rescue academy commitment.

8. Report from City Administrator John Walsh

- Side-by-side/ATV ordinance effective March 20, with Communications Officer King managing website updates and signage coordination.
- General Fund education flyer scheduled to be distributed to all residents next week.
- Progress reports on the reservoir project, police station construction, Romano project, and PGE substation talks.
- Fish Eagle Osprey boat lacks a Certificate of Documentation (COD) for commercial operation, thus restricting it to carry only up to 12 passengers instead of the original 25. After extended discussions, the Council decided to halt licensing efforts for the boat, declare it surplus, and simultaneously pursue both an RFP and a sale, prioritizing the latter.
- Hosting an Oregon Parks and Recreation Department board meeting the following day, including a lunch and a tour of the waterfront in the downtown area.

ADJOURN – 5:11 p.m.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

- ORS 192.660(2)(d) To conduct deliberations with persons appointed to carry out labor negotiations
- ORS 192.660(2)(e) To conduct deliberations with persons designated by the governing body to negotiate real property transactions
- ORS 192.660(2)(f) To consider information or records that are exempt by law from public inspection
- ORS 192.660(2)(h) To consult with legal counsel concerning the legal rights and duties of a public body with regard to current litigation or litigation likely to be filed
- ORS 192.660(2)(i) To consider employment related performance of Chief Officer

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

ATTEST:

Kathy Payne, City Recorder

Jennifer Massey, Mayor

City of St. Helens CITY COUNCIL

Executive Session Summary

March 18, 2026

Members Present:

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

Staff Present:

John Walsh, City Administrator (left the meeting from 5:22-6:35pm)
Kathy Payne, City Recorder

Others:

Ashley Wigod, City Attorney with Jordan Ramis PC
Danica Barrick, LCOG/Local Government Personnel Services (present 5:17-6:25pm)
Jennifer Stapleton, Consultant for LCOG/Local Government Personnel Services (present 5:17-6:25pm)



At 5:17 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.

- ORS 192.660(2)(i) To **review and evaluate the employment-related performance of the chief executive officer of any public body, a public officer, employee or staff member who does not request an open hearing**
- ORS 192.660(2)(e) To conduct deliberations with persons designated by the governing body to negotiate **real property transactions**
- ORS 192.660(2)(d) To conduct deliberations with persons appointed to carry out **labor negotiations**
- ORS 192.660(2)(h) To **consult with legal counsel** concerning the legal rights and duties of a public body with regard to current litigation or litigation likely to be filed
- ORS 192.660(2)(f) To consider information or **records that are exempt** by law from public inspection:
 - Nothing was discussed under this provision.

The Executive Session was adjourned at 6:58 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, March 18, 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
Ashley Wigod, Contracted City Attorney

OTHERS

Brady Preheim
Steve Toschi
Holcomb Waller
Adam St. Pierre
KOHI

CALL REGULAR SESSION TO ORDER – 7:03 p.m.

Contracted City Attorney Wigod explained the conflict-of-interest disclosure requirements for Council members before opening the visitor comment period. No conflicts of interest were declared by any Council members.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

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

- ◆ Steve Toschi. Addressed the Council regarding System Development Charges (SDCs), recommending that the City not raise them and instead make them payable after houses are sold to encourage new housing development. He expressed concerns about the Planning Commission being excluded from decisions and criticized the lack of transparency regarding the waterfront development project. Toschi stated he wanted to see at least 50 homes in the \$650,000 to \$750,000 price range developed on the waterfront to attract families with higher incomes who would invest in the City. He questioned the extension of the Romano Properties contract and expressed distrust in the City due to inconsistencies between public statements and information obtained through public records requests. He mentioned spending thousands of dollars on public records requests, including recent findings about police overtime expenditures.
- ◆ Holcomb Waller, owner of the Klondike restaurant, offered encouragement to the Council during their financial challenges, emphasizing that business owners and property owners are stakeholders rooting for the City's success. He suggested that if the Council proposes fee

increases to citizens, they should also present a comprehensive economic development plan. Waller recommended focusing on the "four stable legs of economy" including tax basis, fees, business economic development, and tourism. He specifically highlighted tourism opportunities, mentioning transient lodging taxes and increasing bookings through hotels and Airbnb accommodations during shoulder seasons.

- ◆ Brady Preheim. Invited the Council to appear on his radio show on April 17 to discuss their water tax bill. He criticized City Administrator Walsh's performance as tourism director, stating that former tourism director Tina had successfully licensed and operated the City's boat while Walsh had failed in this role. Preheim requested responses to several issues including what he characterized as lies about tourism revenue, disciplinary actions regarding police officers who allegedly deleted body camera footage, and matters related to former Chief Greenway. He referenced the Band report that he claimed did not exonerate City officials.
- ◆ Adam St. Pierre. Responded to Preheim's earlier comments, suggesting that Preheim's statements create stigma around the community. He accused Preheim of making misstatements during public comments, including incorrect attribution of comments about text messages through the Police Department and failure to properly read documentation regarding physical fitness test issues. St. Pierre noted that according to his understanding, the two officers involved in the fitness test issue were no longer with the department, and one was allegedly a friend of Preheim's. He expressed sympathy for the Council's difficult position.

Mayor Massey addressed some of the public comments, particularly clarifying that regarding the body camera footage issue, documentation showed the footage was not deleted but rather was not properly tagged. She emphasized the importance of comprehensive analysis rather than selective interpretation of information.

RESOLUTIONS

1. **Resolution No. 2068:** A Resolution Determining that Unsafe Structures Exist Upon Property Located at 59974 Bonney Lane and Directing that Notice to Abate the Nuisance be Posted on Said Premises

Mayor Massey read Resolution No. 2068 by title. **Motion:** Motion made by Councilor Sundeen and seconded by Councilor Gundersen to adopt Resolution No. 2068. **Vote:** Yea: Mayor Massey, Council President Chilton, Councilor Gundersen, Councilor Hubbard, Councilor Sundeen

APPROVE AND/OR AUTHORIZE FOR SIGNATURE

2. First Amendment to Exclusive Negotiating Agreement with Romano Properties for Proposed Development on Riverfront Property

Motion: Motion made by Council President Chilton and seconded by Councilor Hubbard to approve '2' above. **Vote:** Yea: Mayor Massey, Council President Chilton, Councilor Gundersen, Councilor Hubbard, Councilor Sundeen

CONSENT AGENDA FOR ACCEPTANCE

3. Library Board Minutes dates February 9, 2026

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

CONSENT AGENDA FOR APPROVAL

4. City Council Minutes dated January 21, February 4, February 11, February 18, and February 25, 2026
5. OLCC Licenses
6. Accounts Payable Bill Lists

Motion: Motion made by Councilor Sundeen and seconded by Council President Chilton to approve '4' through '6' above. **Vote:** Yea: Mayor Massey, Council President Chilton, Councilor Gundersen, Councilor Hubbard, Councilor Sundeen

WORK SESSION ACTION ITEMS**Eagle Osprey Boat**

Motion: Motion made by Council President Chilton and seconded by Councilor Sundeen to bring a resolution to the April 1 Council Regular Session declaring the Eagle Osprey boat as surplus. **Vote:** Yea: Mayor Massey, Council President Chilton, Councilor Gundersen, Councilor Hubbard, Councilor Sundeen

Motion: Motion made by Councilor Sundeen and seconded by Council President Chilton to direct City Administrator Walsh to draft a Request for Proposal for lease and operation of the Eagle Osprey. **Vote:** Yea: Mayor Massey, Council President Chilton, Councilor Gundersen, Councilor Hubbard, Councilor Sundeen

COUNCIL MEMBER REPORTS

Councilor Sundeen reported...

- Nothing to report.

Council President Chilton reported...

- Congratulated the St. Helens girls basketball team on their accomplishment of reaching the state championship, praising their performance as something that brought the community together to celebrate what St. Helens excels at. She expressed pride in the team and gratitude for what they provided to the community.

Councilor Hubbard reported...

- Nothing to report.

Councilor Gundersen reported...

- Nothing to report.

MAYOR MASSEY REPORTS

- Echoed Council President Chilton's congratulations to the St. Helens Lady Lions basketball team. She gave special recognition for their sportsmanship award. She emphasized that competing at a high level while showing good sportsmanship provides valuable lessons for the community.
- Thanked Deputy City Recorder Scholl and City Recorder Payne for their hard work.
- Acknowledged the efforts of all City staff, especially during challenging financial times. The Council is working diligently to address the budget situation. She noted the commitment to fighting for both citizens and staff, despite the years it took to reach the current situation.

PROACTIVE ITEMS**OTHER BUSINESS****ADJOURN – 7:24 p.m.**

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

ATTEST:

Kathy Payne, City Recorder

Jennifer Massey, Mayor