

CITY OF ST. HELENS PLANNING DEPARTMENT ACTIVITY REPORT



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

Date: April 23, 2024

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

Conducted a pre-application meeting for improvements/expansion of the CCMH campus along Gable Road.

Had a preliminary Q&A meeting for a solar array structure associated with the library building.

PLANNING ADMINISTRATION—MISC.

Provided some assistance for an application for a RARE AmeriCorps person for the City and County. This was mentioned in last month's report. If we get a person, start for 11-month period would be in the Fall. My role will be as an assistant supervisor as noted on the **attached** application cover letter.

Prepared legal description and map for Oregon Dept. of Revenue review, which is our typical first step after receiving an Annexation application. This is the final legal description/map prepared for the three annexations to process this year (thus far). This task was delayed for this particular annexation awaiting probate and ownership updates.

Provided information to the city's contract realtor to sell the Millard Road and Bluff properties. Updated some previous used exhibits for the bluff property.

SHHS temporary occupancy inspections, focused on staff parking and student drop-off/pick-up area started this month for Planning.

Prepared and presented (to Council) the department's semi-annual report.

Annual performance evaluation conducted for Associate Planner/Community Development Project Manager

DEVELOPMENT CODE ENFORCEMENT

Potential fence dispute for properties along Gray Cliffs Drive resolved so as not to become a dispute. The same property line and neighbors were involved in a dispute c. 2012 that resulted in a unique Lot Line Adjustment, so above average care taken now to keep it copesetic.

Last month I noted kids crossing a creek with a dirt bike. They did this, in part, by having foreign objects (a wheel and various boards) in/over the creek. With neighbor concern unabated, Public Works helped remove the stuff in the creek that shouldn't be there as a protected waterway. Thanks PWs!

O'Reilly Auto Parts has acknowledged the sign issue (see February report) and states they are working on getting it repaired. It is a shared sign with another property, which complicates matters.

PLANNING COMMISSION (& *acting* HISTORIC LANDMARKS COMMISSION)

April 9, 2024 meeting (outcome): The Commission approved a yard (setback) Variance for a property along N. Vernonia Road. They also reviewed and commented on the majority of the proposed 2024 Development Code Amendments. A Commissioner was determined as a representative on the Economic Opportunities Analysis Technical Advisory Committee.

The Commission discussed their proactive items, in particular noting a freelance committee is being formed for Vacant Storefronts. The Commission also added The Plaza as a listed proactive item. The main subject for the Plaza is its ground surface and its resilience or lack thereof given the multitude of Spirit of Halloweentown visitors. The Plaza is a designated landmark too, so changes would need to be reviewed by the Commission acting *as the Historic Landmarks Commission*.

May 14, 2024 meeting (upcoming): Four public hearings are scheduled. Three for annexations and a fourth for a Historic Resource Review for 260 S. 2nd Street with the Commission acting *as the Historic Landmarks Commission*.

We will, hopefully, finish review of the proposed 2024 Development Code Amendments and go over the department's semi-annual report as already presented to the City Council. We'll also discuss the annual Commission report to the Council, which is coming up soon.

From: [Jennifer Dimsho](#)
To: [Jacob Graichen](#)
Subject: April Planning Department Report
Date: Friday, April 19, 2024 12:58:35 PM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)

Here are my additions to the April Planning Department Report.

GRANTS

1. **Business Oregon – Infrastructure Finance Authority** – Low-interest loan for Streets & Utilities Project and Riverwalk improvements. Provided updates to loan officer.
2. **Riverwalk Project (OPRD Grants x2)** – Erosion & Sediment Control inspections by Lower Columbia Engineering agreement approved on 4/3 Council meeting. Council awarded bid on 3/20. Prepared contract for approval at Council meeting on 4/17. Scheduled pre-construction meeting for 4/24 with anticipated notice to proceed in May. Working with state grant coordinators on project timeline, budget, and forthcoming amendment. Coordinated with County on Hold Harmless agreement to use County's parking lot as the construction access into Columbia View Park.
3. **Community Development Block Grant (CDBG): Sanitary Sewer Improvement Project** – \$2.5 million grant award to fund design/engineering/permitting for 3 sanitary sewer basins identified as deficient in the adopted Wastewater Master Plan. Processed amendment of CDBG contract to move \$ from “permitting” into “environmental review” activities. Project kicked off in March.
4. **CLG Historic Preservation Grant Program** – SHPO Certified Local Government Program. Received our contract for 17k. State approved work plan. Executed contract with property owners. Project to be completed by July 31, 2024. Applicant stated that they did a walkthrough with contractor and received a new construction scheduled which states work to be completed by mid-May.
5. **DLCD Technical Assistance Program** – 60k will fund a new Economic Opportunities Analysis (EOA). Reviewed BLI data, provided feedback. Finalized TAC membership. Scheduling first meeting in July. Preparing for Joint PC/CC meeting in June.
6. **ODOT Community Paths Program: St. Helens Scappoose Trail Refinement Project** – 405k to study a trail route refinement project (30% design) from St. Helens to Scappoose. Award is \$363,407, with a match of around 42k split between Scappoose, the County, and us. Final grant contract provided to the City by ODOT. Met with Scappoose & Columbia County to work through draft Statement of Work (SoW). SoW can now be sent to DOJ for review. Working on IGAs for County & Scappoose to cover our required match. IGAs and ODOT grant contract to go before Council for approval in May.
7. **Travel Oregon Grant Program: Riverwalk Project** - 100k grant for Riverwalk Project. Received 50% of the grant as contract terms require. Will receive remainder when project is complete.

8. **ODOT TGM Program: Transportation Systems Plan** – ODOT says it could be ~4 months before we see movement on this project.

PROJECTS & MISC

9. **Riverfront Streets/Utilities Project** – Attending weekly check-ins. Pump station generator to be installed soon. Tualatin staircase/bluff trailhead and Wapama Way intersection under construction. Traffic circle and elevated picnic platform under construction. North and south water quality swales underway. Joint utility trenching nearly complete. Undergrounding contract for 1st & St. Helens intersection work has begun.
10. **Urban Renewal Agency** – Prepared for upcoming FY 24-25 budget process with Gloria/John. Prepared a Resolution/IGA to recapture funds utilized by the City in creation/implementation of the URA Plan since 2017.
11. **Library Scanning** – Assisted Reference Librarian with scanning of large documents using the large plotter which is shared by Engineering & Planning.
12. **Library Solar Array Project** – Assisting library with grant-funded solar planning project. Planning grant is nearly complete, while an additional Oregon Dept of Energy construction grant is in process by contractor.

Jenny Dimsho, AICP | Community Development Project Manager

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March 25, 2024

Dear RARE AmeriCorps,

The City of St. Helens and Columbia County are pleased to submit a joint application for a RARE AmeriCorps Member for assistance in implementing our Willamette Mercury Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) programs in compliance with DEQ. A TMDL is a regulatory mechanism under the Clean Water Act that serves as a plan for restoring impaired or polluted waters.

The RARE AmeriCorps Member will receive vital training which will serve them for years to come when they are placed with the City of St. Helens and Columbia County. This includes learning practical principles and methods of program management, data gathering, analysis, research, and implementation. They will learn interpersonal and communication skills needed to tactfully and effectively work with the general public, and they will gain an opportunity for hands-on work experience while working side-by-side with mentors who are scientists, engineers, and planners for both organizations.

The City and the County are no strangers to collaboration. Our most recent collaboration was on the Safe Routes to School Grant sidewalk project, which constructed new sidewalk on the east side of Columbia Blvd between Gable Rd and Sykes Rd, added a rapid flashing beacon at the McBride Elementary School, constructed new storm drains and culvert, planted over 22 trees and 25 shrubs in the project corridor, and a new bike lane. These improvements were made with a particular focus on creating safe pedestrian and bicycle travel for school-aged children.

The City and the County plans to share in the responsibility of training and supervising the assigned RARE AmeriCorps Member. The intern will work on a weekly rotating schedule with one week with the County, and the following week with the City. The County's supervisor will be Suzie Dahl, Director of Land Development Services, with assisting supervisor Erin O'Connell, Environmental Services Specialist. The City's supervisor and overall program manager will be Sharon Darroux, Engineering Manager. Assisting with the onboarding and supervising of the intern will be City Planner, Jacob Graichen, who has mentored over three RARE AmeriCorps Members and three AmeriCorps Vista interns at the City of St. Helens for the MainStreet program.

We know that setting the next generation up for success is one of the missions of our organizations and we hope you can see how the RARE AmeriCorps program fits into that goal. This financial support will allow us to effectively address construction runoff and stormwater pollution in our communities while educating the public about the far-reaching consequences of keeping pollutants out of our waterbodies.

Thank you for taking the time to read our joint application and we ask that you consider us for this program. We look forward to speaking with you more about how the RARE AmeriCorps program can partner with us and help educate and empower the community on the importance of keeping our waters clean. If you have any immediate questions or need further information, feel free to reach out to us 503-366-8243.

Sincerely,


Sharon Darroux, Engineering Manager
City of St. Helens

Sincerely,


Suzie Dahl, Director
Columbia County Land Development Services