

ST. HELENS PUBLIC LIBRARY SPECIAL BOARD MEETING

Monday, January 28, 2026 at 7:15 PM

Virtually over Zoom

APPROVED MINUTES

Members Present

Chair Fatima Salas
Vice Chair Aaron Martin
Member Rob Dunn
Member Jay Echternach
Member Ellen Jacobson
Member Kelsey Knutson
Member Jana Mann
Member Lynne Pettit
Member Erin Wheeldon

Members Absent

Council Liason in Attendance

Mayor Jennifer Massey

Visitors

None

Staff Present

City Administrator John Walsh
Library Director Suzanne Bishop
Library Board Secretary Dan Dieter

CALL TO ORDER

Meeting was called to order at 7:15 pm by Chair Salas.

NEW BUSINESS

1. FY 2026 REPORT: Library Director Bishop introduced City Administrator John Walsh for the discussion of the 2026/2027 budget. Administrator Walsh described how the general fund city departments, including the library. The city is currently on a trajectory that will exhaust the reserve fund and leave a negative balance of about \$150,000, if changes aren't made by the end of the fiscal year (June 30). Looking at solutions on the revenue side, we've extensively explored our options. On the expense side we don't know if it's going to be furlough days like you see all around us with the county and the school districts, layoffs, or some other cost-saving measures. We came into this year with a particularly low reserve. The Council usually sets a target of around 20% and over the last two years we have dropped to 15% and then 6%. We wanted to sustain services by adding some timber sales income instead of economic development activities, selling property and putting it into the general fund. We are at a point now where we are looking at putting a fee or property tax on the May ballot to fund the general fund and return the reserves to 10% to 20%. Mayor Massey stated that the issue is being looked at holistically, as there are services in every single department that are equally important. We're really going to have to come together for a campaign to educate citizens on the importance of the services that are being provided. Departments are running pretty lean in general. There is hope as the new Cascade tissue group comes back online it will add recurring revenue as a utility user. Member Dunn asked if this would be a utility fee, for water, power or what? Mayor Massey stated that it would not be a utility fee, it would be a general service fee that would be collected on the utility bill. It wouldn't be presented as something that is above and beyond, it just enough to get to the

right reserve and sustain city services. Mayor Massey and Member Echternach discussed a plan to develop city property into a sports complex. Director Bishop asked if the Mayor could describe the budget process. Mayor Massey described the budget committee and the budget process, and the possibility of adding a general service fee that would have a sunset date. Member Martin asked since we have big budget issues to deal with, is the library board going to be asked to gather information to provide to City Council about how those potential cuts will affect the library so we can inform the council who can inform the city or the voters how this would affect them? Director Bishop stated that the library isn't the only department that will look at potential cuts and that the management team has been working with Administrator Walsh about the budget process and the impact on all city departments. A memo from the Library Director to Administrator Walsh was shared on the screen and was in the packet. The library is a small department with a small budget but the types of folks that we serve and the types of services that we provide at the library have a profound impact on the community. The FY 2027 budget process starts in April. Member Jacobson asked if there is any impact on the current vacancy right now. Director Bishop stated that the vacancy will not be filled as a contribution to helping reduce the budget for this year.

OTHER BUSINESS

No other business.

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Salas adjourned the meeting at 7:52 pm.

Respectfully submitted by,

Dan Dieter
Library Board Secretary