

CITY OF ST. HELENS PLANNING DEPARTMENT ACTIVITY REPORT



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

Date: 01.24.2023

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 improvements to the old (original) courthouse. County will likely receive money from the state (judicial funds) for state court related improvements. We'll probably know more around May. Could be \$2 – 4 million.

Conducted a pre-application meeting for a potential mixed-use development (apartments + some commercial space) on the corner of N. 6th Street/Columbia Boulevard. The Planning Commission approved a six-lot subdivision for the same property in 2020, but the owner/developer did not pursue that.

PLANNING ADMINISTRATION—MISC.

Prepared legal descriptions for the two annexation applications received in 2022. I started working on one of them in May 2022, but these are more involved (sometimes this is a quick and easy exercise, but not this time), and more time than usual was needed to prepare these. Thank you for the holiday season to get ahead on stuff like this. This is a necessary early step for annexations due to how we need to notify the State Department of Revenue and the County. Anticipating public hearings for these sometime in first half of this year.

Worked with the Assessor on an address issue on the 500 block of S. 8th Street that city utility billing staff discovered. Teamwork!

Some city staff met with our new DLCD representative-Laura Kelly-this month. Since I started in 2007, this would be our third DLCD rep.

DEVELOPMENT CODE ENFORCEMENT

Despite communication suggesting otherwise (see last entry in the November 2022 report), the ACSP / Orgrotech folks at 1400 Kaster did not move a shed placed within a public utility easement by the Jan 1st deadline. Though, it's probably too late (the marijuana production licenses are probably already sold), I asked OLCC to rescind all Land Use Compatibility Statements associated with the Site Design Review that approved the proposed sheds.

At the very end of December, staff sent an enforcement letter to a property owner along Old Portland Road and S. 11th Street for unpermitted buildings unquestionably visible from Old Portland Road. Both planning and building staff have had productive conversations with the owner, and I don't anticipate this being a case that drags on or results in great disappointment from the owner.

A recently approved grade/fill permit moved beyond its approved boundary and onto the city's Columbia Botanical Gardens Park property. Property owner remedied the situation, though some impact is still evident, but just on the perimeter of the park.



Above: SE corner of the Botanical Gardens property on Jan. 13, 2023.



Below: Same area on January 24, 2023. You can see how fill material has been pulled back off of the city park property.

PLANNING COMMISSION (& acting HISTORIC LANDMARKS COMMISSION)

January 11, 2023 meeting (outcome): *As the Historic Landmarks Commission*, the Commission reviewed and provided recommendations for the proposed buildings (stage and covered area) associated with the Columbia View Park expansion and improvements. They also discussed the upcoming Certified Local Government Historic Preservation Grant Program.

After extensive discussion and multiple motions, the Commission determined that Steve Toschi be Chair and Dan Cary be Vice Chair.

The Commission formerly acknowledge Steve Toschi, Charles Castner, and Ginny Carlson for Planning Commission representation on the HB3115 (et. al.) task force.

The Commission decided to add architectural standards to its list of proactive items. Some other proposed items were discussed briefly, with the discussion tabled to February given the length the meeting (6pm to 10:30pm).

February 16, 2023 meeting (upcoming): Several agenda items are in store for February, though no formal public hearings. Items include but may not be limited to: practical councilor liaison attendance discussion, discussion about future vision discussions, continuation of the proposed proactive discussions from last month, and recommendations for the city's "bluff property" just east of the Middle School grounds.

As the Historic Landmarks Commission, they will consider proposed changes to the Dockside restaurant that was recently purchased by Crooked Creek Brewery.

COUNCIL ACTIONS RELATED TO LAND USE

At their January 18, 2023 meeting, the Council approved a motion to initiate vacation of right-of-way that more-or-less in the middle of the bluff. Staff also presented proposed right-of-way dedication.

Note! This has been on the to-do list for years. When I started working on this in December it was the first time in several years where I was able to be proactive about the next task, rather than reacting to something.

Jacob Graichen

From: Jennifer Dimsho
Sent: Monday, January 23, 2023 9:48 AM
To: Jacob Graichen
Subject: January Planning Department Report

Here are my additions to the January Planning Department Report.

GRANTS

1. **Safe Routes to School - Columbia Blvd. Sidewalk Project** – Culvert project (County) will be a separate project than the sidewalks project. Construction in Spring/Summer 2023. Amendment approved to push completion deadline from November 2022 to February 2024. Project cost estimates came in x3 what we budgeted for the project. Bid openings were on 12/15 and there were TEN contractors who bid and the lowest bid was over 400k less than the project estimate, which means that with some additional County contributions, we can move forward with construction for this project! Amazing outcome for this project which we thought was going to be scrapped due to cost escalations. Received our 2nd reimbursement request which covers 100% design/engineering.
2. **Business Oregon – Infrastructure Finance Authority** – Loan Contract documents finalized for streets/utilities construction and Riverwalk project not covered by OPRD grants. Will submit first reimbursement once design work is complete for Riverwalk project.
3. **Riverwalk Project (OPRD Grants x2)** – 90% design received. 90% cost estimates received on 1/23. PC recommended approval of stage/pavilion with conditions on 1/10. 90% comment review TAC meeting is on 1/25. Working with Wauna Credit Union contact to confirm signage and then will issue sign permit. Coordinated meeting with Building Official to discuss all permits required and their review time frames. Coordinated internal meeting with the Engineering Dept. to discuss project and construction management roles & responsibilities between departments and contractors. Councilor Sundeen expressed interest in renovating the warrior rock lighthouse replica using in-house facilities staff. Assisting with him with this process of implementation/coordination with NOAA, County, City, Riverwalk, etc.
4. **Oregon Community Paths Program** – Prepared grant application narrative, timeline, and scope of work. Application was due Jan 31, 2023. Project will fund an off-street trail refinement project (30% design) from St. Helens to Scappoose. Grant ask is around 300k and a 10% cash match is required. Worked with Scappoose and the County to get letters of support and cash commitments to split the cash commitment between the 3 communities.
5. **Community Development Block Grants (CDBG)** – Began reviewing preliminary method of distribution for future Spring 2023 application which would fund engineering/design for our at-capacity sewer infrastructure. Worked on scheduling a required pre-app meeting with the CDBG coordinator.
6. **Certified Local Government Historic Preservation Grant Program** – Submitted our application for 15k to fund the pass-through grant program, as discussed during the Jan PC meeting. Awards will come in April.
7. **DLCD Technical Assistance Program** – Grant cycle will likely open in August and closes in October. Coordinated meet'n'greet with our new DLCD region rep and did a tour of St. Helens. Regional Rep thinks our 2008/2009 Economic Opportunities Analysis update will be a great candidate for funding. Scheduled a meeting with Scappoose Planning Director Laurie Oliver Feb to discuss the EOA update Scappoose just completed with economic consulting firm EcoNW. Working on refining our EOA update scope by learning about other communities' processes and updates.
8. **Veterans Memorial Grant Program** - VFW is working on a flag/monument expansion at the McCormick Park veterans memorial. SHPO offers veterans memorial grants and I spoke with the coordinator to determine that this would be eligible for funding. Grant is due March 31. Coordinated a meeting with LCE, the VFW, and Councilor Sundeen to determine scope/budget/timeline for a grant application to the program.

PROJECTS & MISC

9. **Riverfront Streets/Utilities Project** – Construction contract granted to Moore Excavation. Attending weekly check-ins to stay in tune with project schedule and any construction delays/issues. Met with NW Natural to discuss gas line extension onto property.
10. **1st/Strand Undergrounding Utilities** – RFP closed on 11/1. Only 1 proposal received. Selection Committee recommended a new solicitation process for an electrical engineer to complete design work so that we can bid the design work out, instead of an RFP process. Engineering Dept working with electrical engineer directly to scope the project.
11. **St. Helens Industrial Business Park (SHIBP) Public Infrastructure Design** – 30% design for Phase I infrastructure & permitting/grading work for Phase II with Mackenzie. Pre-application meeting held on 10/13 to discuss applications needed for PGE parcellation and new sub-station. Mackenzie revised footprint to accommodate feedback from Cascades regarding use of the existing mill buildings. PGE said no further reduction in size is possible for the sub-station, so we are moving forward with design as presented.
12. **Utility Billing/Bennett Building cornice** – Pacific stainless prepared a mockup of the new cornice to be installed. Waiting for full fabrication. In-house installation will occur after fabricated.
13. **US Census Boundary & Annexation Survey** – Surveys went out to confirm 2021 submissions and to prepare us for 2022 submissions. Looks like we will have 3 annexations to report which were processed in 2022 (Due March 1).
14. **Safety Committee** – Serving as a member replacing Mike beginning in January. Conducted my first quarterly safety inspections of UB/Court & City Hall buildings.

Jenny Dimsho, AICP

Associate Planner / Community Development Project Manager

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