

City of St. Helens
Consent Agenda for Approval

CITY COUNCIL MINUTES

Presented for approval on this 7th day of May, 2025 are the following Council minutes:

2025

- Work Session, Executive Session, Public Hearings, and Regular Session Minutes dated April 16, 2025

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, April 16, 2025

DRAFT MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT

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

MEMBERS ABSENT

Councilor Brandon Sundeen

STAFF PRESENT

John Walsh, City Administrator
Kathy Payne, City Recorder
Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder
Joe Hogue, Interim Police Chief
Suzanne Bishop, Library Director
Mouhamad Zaher, Public Works Director

Shanna Duggan, Parks & Recreation Manager
Crystal King, Communications Officer
Sharon Darroux, Engineering Manager
Evin Eustice, Police Sergeant
Ashley Wigod, Contracted City Attorney

OTHERS

Nancy Whitney	Jenni Gilbert
Steve Topaz	David Wasylenko
Beth Pulito	Brady Preheim
Chris Dahlgren	Steve Toschi
Matt Alexander	Adam St. Pierre

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

CLEARING CONFUSION AND SETTING THE FACTS STRAIGHT

1. Response to April 2 Visitor Comments

After review by legal counsel, there are no responses to visitor comments.

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

- ◆ Nancy Whitney, identifying herself as Brady Preheim's aunt. She expressed concerns about Mayor Massey's behavior towards her nephew, specifically accusing the mayor of expounding numerous lies about her nephew on Facebook and attempting to shut him down during public speaking engagements. Whitney also alleged that Mayor Massey had confronted Brady outside a meeting room, following him down the street, screaming, and attempting to threaten him, an incident that her nephew found laughable, though she did not. Additionally, Whitney addressed a particular accusation made by Mayor Massey on Facebook, where it was claimed that Brady was peeking in her windows, a claim that Whitney deemed personal, unacceptable, and potentially grounds for a second lawsuit. To support her statements, Whitney brought copies of her speech for anyone in the audience interested and informed attendees that further material would soon be published online at columbiacountydirectory.com.

- ◆ Steve Topaz. Expressed concerns about two items on the agenda. He challenged the claims made about the availability of industrial property and the waterfront in St. Helens. Topaz cited DEQ reports that contradicted the statements on these topics, specifically mentioning the lack of dredging of the channel and the unresolved removal of toxic waste as issues that prevent development of the waterfront. He noted that these complications had been ongoing for 25 years, with the State halting progress. Additionally, Topaz expressed dissatisfaction with how his comments from the previous meeting were recorded in the minutes, describing the record as an inaccurate representation. He emphasized that his statements about industrialization in St. Helens and the inadequacies in the meeting records were substantial, reflecting issues presented by other community members over time.
- ◆ Brady Preheim. Expressed his gratitude towards Chief Hogue for his efforts in transforming the atmosphere and attitude of the Police Department over the years. He emphasized the need for an immediate change in the hiring process for the Police Chief position. Preheim argued that none of the current Council members were qualified to make the selection due to their involvement in a lawsuit regarding the Chief's employment status and a whistleblower complaint. He suggested employing outside HR professionals to handle the hiring process to ensure neutrality and professionalism. Preheim also urged the Council to initiate investigations into Mayor Massey in the interest of accountability and transparency. He emphasized that no one should be more willing to have an investigation than Massey herself. Furthermore, he called for the release of the full, unredacted reports concerning the Mayor and associated individuals, including reports by former Police Chief Greenway and other officers, to provide clarity and truth to the ongoing situation.

Contracted City Attorney Ashley Wigod arrived at 3:11 p.m.

- ◆ Steve Toschi. Provided comments remotely, expressing concerns about alleged criminal activity involving Mayor Massey and former Chief Greenway. In October of 2024, then acting Chief Hogue reported what he believed was a crime being committed by then candidate Jennifer Massey conspiring with Chief Greenway for the police to hold a mini strike and to go off of 24-hour patrol, which was publicly announced in October. Toschi described the crime as a "corruption of process," and emphasized that there was substantial evidence supporting his claim. He called for an investigation and prosecution by the Department of Justice, stating that the punishment for that crime would be the loss of office for Massey. Additionally, Toschi addressed the Council, stating that he had made legal requests for information involving these allegations but had been stonewalled, urging that the City Council clearly demonstrate their desire for all information to be released to the public. He warned that without information being fulfilled by Friday per his public records request, he would be bringing legal action against the City to obtain it.
- ◆ Adam St. Pierre. Spoke remotely, defending Mayor Massey and questioning the accuracy of claims made by other speakers. He addressed allegations regarding Mayor Massey's interaction with Brady Preheim as well as comments about police staffing issues. According to St. Pierre, the interaction between Massey and Preheim was inaccurately portrayed on social media. He mentioned that the incident, which involved Massey telling Preheim to "get over his obsession with her," was misconstrued online. Regarding police staffing, St. Pierre suggested that the issues had been a known problem for years, citing ongoing concerns raised by the police union and past police chiefs about the possibility of losing 24-hour patrol coverage without additional staffing. He criticized the dissemination of information online, cautioning against letting conspiracy theories and misinformation overshadow the facts.

DISCUSSION TOPICS**2. Request to Support New Amani Center Building - *Beth Pulito, Deputy Director***

Beth Pulito, Deputy Director of the Amani Center, presented information about their ambitious project to construct a new 8,000 square foot facility located at the corner of McNulty and Industrial Way. Pulito explained that the Amani Center, Columbia County's child abuse assessment center, provides crucial intervention for cases of child abuse and neglect, and is now expanding into prevention and mental health support. The current facility, a 3,000 square foot building, limits the Amani Center's capacity to assist children effectively. Pulito emphasized that the new facility would allow them to double their annual capacity from 250-300 children to nearly 600, while also providing two separate forensic interview spaces to facilitate sensitive and child-friendly environments.

The total project cost was estimated at \$5,200,000. In light of the financial demands, Pulito sought financial support from the City and proposed various forms of assistance such as fee relief, discretionary budget allocations, or help in identifying potential funding opportunities. She highlighted the pressing need for these services, noting that they had provided support to 248 children in the last year alone, with 84 coming from St. Helens.

Council members expressed their appreciation for the critical work done by the Amani Center. They were attentive to the urgency and significance of the project, engaging in discussions regarding potential ways to support the initiative. Councilor Hubbard, along with other council members, acknowledged the challenge of obtaining the requested funds but assured Pulito that they would explore every possible avenue to assist, including the exploration of grant opportunities and consideration during budget deliberations. They recognized that any contribution from St. Helens could set a precedent and encourage other municipalities to contribute similarly. Additionally, they discussed possibly incorporating the Amani Center into community events such as Spirit of Halloweentown, to aid in fundraising and raise awareness about their mission.

Council President Chilton mentioned the community grant program as an immediate but smaller funding opportunity to consider in the interim, while also discussing larger-scale sponsorship opportunities during community events. Pulito appreciated the feedback and expressed the importance of having City support to potentially lead the way for other funding bodies to follow their example in supporting such an essential facility for the community's children.

3. Presentation by Arcadia Paper Mills LLC - *City Administrator John Walsh*

Craig Allen from Arcadia Paper Mills provided an update on their progress towards reopening the paper mill. He reported that they had reached an agreement with DEQ on legal documents for a prospective purchaser agreement, which would provide indemnification against past environmental issues at the mill. This was identified as the number one concern for them in the process of reopening the mill, and the agreement was set for public comment on May 1. Allen emphasized that they had six full-time employees currently working to commission all of the assets at the mill, focusing on resolving damage that occurred over the last year and a half to two years since the shutdown.

He elaborated that orders were in place to replace equipment that Cascades had taken from the property upon their exit, with deliveries of the new equipment expected within the next two months. Additionally, Allen noted ongoing collaboration with PGE to conduct a cold shutdown of the substation and address any issues, ensuring the mill would be adequately powered. This issue had been a topic of discussion within the community, and they expected the resolutions to proceed smoothly.

When asked about a potential opening date, Allen did not provide a specific timeline but emphasized the company's eagerness to start up as quickly as possible once environmental hurdles were cleared. He expressed appreciation for the support they had received from the community and mentioned that they

were working with local vendors, machine shops, and suppliers. Allen concluded by highlighting Arcadia's commitment to being an industrial asset to both the community and the country, underscoring their aim to provide the best made product and the benefit to the community and the state.

In summary, the discussion underscored the positive progress being made by Arcadia Paper Mills, as well as the complexities involved in reopening the mill. Allen expressed optimism about the process and reiterated the company's readiness to contribute positively to the local economy.

4. Monthly Reports from Departments/Divisions (Informational)

Mayor Massey noted that everyone had read the monthly reports provided by various departments. She commended Communications Officer King for her work on updating information about closures, which was highly appreciated by the Council as it provided clear answers to inquiries they encountered.

A discussion ensued regarding the frequency of these department reports. Mayor Massey emphasized the importance of balancing the need for information with the workload it placed on staff. She actively sought feedback, asking the departments if the existing process was cumbersome and if there were ways to improve it while maintaining clarity and efficiency.

Council President Chilton highlighted feedback from a few staff members who felt the current monthly reporting schedule was demanding, particularly in providing new reports promptly after the previous submission. As a compromise, Chilton suggested considering a shift towards bi-monthly or quarterly reporting schedules. City Administrator Walsh also expressed openness to this adjustment, adding that it would lighten the load for staff and allow for more comprehensive reports reflecting larger time frames.

The discussion underscored the Council's attentiveness to staff concerns while ensuring that the necessary information flow from various departments continued. Mayor Massey and the Council collectively recognized the need for these reports to be not only useful but also sustainable for the departments producing them. They agreed that exploring a quarterly reporting cycle was a suitable agenda item for further discussion in the evening meeting.

5. Belton Sewer Step System Capacity Study, Project No. S-685, Presentation & Discussion - *Engineering Manager Sharon Darroux*

Engineering Manager Sharon Darroux presented comprehensive information about the Belton Sewer Step System Capacity Study to the Council. She outlined that this system, constructed in 1990, is a unique hybrid sewer system that currently serves 11 known properties, with several other properties having the potential for future connection. During her presentation, Darroux highlighted the existing challenges posed by this system, including maintenance complexities, jurisdictional confusion concerning ownership and responsibility for upkeep, and the critical absence of reliable data regarding the system's overall capacity.

Darroux detailed that the step system, characterized by its pressurized 2-inch pipeline, had several notable drawbacks. The system requires the use of septic tanks where solids are deposited, while the effluent is pumped into the pipeline, leading to multiple maintenance points and higher long-term costs for both the City and private owners. With only eight of the eleven pumps identified, there's a significant information gap, complicating decisions about future development.

She emphasized that the proposed study aims to address this lack of information by providing an in-depth analysis of the system's current capacity, condition, and feasibility for expansion. This would facilitate informed decision-making when considering future connections and enhance the overall management of the step system.

Given the specialized expertise required for this initiative, Darroux explained the rationale for engaging a consultant to carry out the study. The consultants are expected to use advanced software for hydraulic

monitoring and conduct detailed surveys and field evaluations, including coordinating with property owners to access various sites.

Council members engaged with Darroux, asking questions about the potential for further development in the vicinity served by the system and the ordering of this project against other pressing City concerns. Darroux assured the Council that this study would not detract from other projects, as it was designed to proactively equip the City with the necessary data and insights into the system's capabilities. She noted that while other cities avoided step systems due to their complexities, St. Helens had a unique situation that needed to be thoroughly understood to prevent future developers from facing unforeseen restrictions or connections. Darroux wrapped up her presentation by reaffirming the need for a specialized assessment, emphasizing the importance of obtaining a detailed and reliable framework to guide future expansions and ensure the current system remains efficient and operable over the long term.

6. Request from Comcast for Letter of Support for Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Grant Program to Address Broadband Challenges in St. Helens School District - *City Administrator John Walsh*

City Administrator John Walsh explained that Comcast was requesting a letter of support for their application for BEAD funding. He noted that this funding was part of a larger initiative to improve internet access in underserved areas. Walsh mentioned that the City might receive similar requests from other providers and suggested the Council could authorize support for multiple applications.

Council members expressed support for improving broadband access in the area. They discussed the differences between private and public network models, with Walsh explaining that the County was proposing an open access network while Comcast would keep theirs private.

7. Timber Insurance Proposal of \$3 Million Coverage Limit - *City Administrator John Walsh*

David Wasylenko from Hagan Hamilton presented information about a potential timber insurance policy for the City. He reported that while a formal proposal was not yet available, preliminary indications suggested a premium range of \$75,000 to \$90,000 per year for \$3 million in coverage with a \$200,000 deductible. Wasylenko noted that the estimation was an indication, based on the current information, and expected the actual cost to be towards the lower end of the given range. However, he acknowledged the possibility of deviations in the final numbers.

Council members expressed interest in understanding the specifics of the policy and asked questions regarding potential restrictions on land use, salvage and replanting coverage, and fire break requirements. They inquired about any possible limitations that would affect access or usage of the land and whether the insurance policy would cover costs associated with salvaging timber and replanting after an incident. Additionally, the Council wanted to know if there were any required fire breaks that the insurance would necessitate around the insured property to mitigate risk.

Wasylenko acknowledged the absence of detailed specifics at the time and agreed to follow up with more comprehensive information once the formal proposal was available. He committed to return with answers concerning the policy's terms, including coverage details on salvage and replanting, access restrictions, and required preventive measures such as fire breaks.

The Council also engaged in discussion about the value of the City's timber resources, recognizing the long-term nature of forestry investments. Walsh noted that the \$3 million coverage was not intended for a catastrophic fire that would destroy all 2,400 acres but rather for partial losses. He highlighted the challenges associated with forestry, emphasizing the long maturation period, which can span 30 to 40 years, before timber yields a financial return. This long-term consideration was a key factor in evaluating

the cost-effectiveness and practicality of the insurance proposal. The Council weighed the proposed premiums against the potential risk and impact of fire damage.

8. Report from City Administrator John Walsh

- The Riverwalk project was making significant progress towards completion, with the installation of new railings and landscaping, enhancing the area's aesthetic appeal and usability.
- Preparations for 13 Nights on the River were underway, with alternative locations being considered to adapt to the ongoing construction disruptions, ensuring the event's success.
- The streets and utility project continued to advance steadily, with crews working diligently on the intersection at S. First Street and St. Helens Street, addressing infrastructure needs and improving traffic flow.
- A company expressed strong interest in developing within the riverfront area, demonstrating the potential for economic growth and community revitalization.
- The Boards and Commissions appreciation event was set for the upcoming Monday, aiming to recognize the valuable contributions of various volunteers and leaders within the community.
- Discussions were being held regarding the City's participation in the Kiwanis parade scheduled for June 21, focusing on showcasing the City's representation and community spirit.
- Budget preparations with Finance Director Butsch were advancing efficiently, laying groundwork for detailed discussions at the upcoming May 1 budget meeting, ensuring fiscal responsibility and planning.
- Continued meetings with PGE regarding the substation project were taking place, working through the fine details of agreements and aiming for successful collaboration on this essential infrastructure project.
- The sandcastle festival was projected to make a comeback, with organizers diligently working on logistics to ensure the event's smooth execution and enjoyment for attendees.
- Participated in the Growing Rural Oregon Mixer event, which was notably attended by local entrepreneurs, fostering networking and the exchange of innovative ideas within the community.
- Productive discussions with the Senior Center Board led to a mutual agreement to renew their lease under the current terms, reinforcing the continuation of valued senior services.

Council members actively engaged in questions and discussions, contributing inputs on several topics, particularly focusing on aspects of parade participation and the planning of various community events, reflecting their commitment to fostering community engagement and participation.

ADJOURN – 4:17 p.m.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

- Real Property Transactions, under ORS 192.660(2)(e)
- Exempt Records/Confidential Attorney-Client Privileged Memo, under ORS 192.660(2)(f)
- Consult with Counsel/Potential Litigation, under ORS 192.660(2)(h)

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

April 16, 2025

Members Present: Jennifer Massey, Mayor
Jessica Chilton, Council President
Mark Gundersen, Councilor
Brandon Sundeen, Councilor (arrived at 5:22 p.m.)
Russell Hubbard, Councilor

Staff Present: John Walsh, City Administrator
Kathy Payne, City Recorder

Others: Ashley Wigod, City Attorney with Jordan Ramis PC
David Rabbino, City Attorney with Jordan Ramis PC (joining at 4:59pm)



At 4:31 p.m., Mayor Massey opened the Executive Session pursuant to the ORS numbers listed below and then gave roll call. Other than Labor Negotiator Consultations, 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.

Mayor Massey stated for the record, "I want to disclose a potential conflict of interest. My husband is a City of St. Helens Police Officer. I am not biased. And I'm confident that I can act objectively in the City's best interest."

- **Consult with Legal Counsel & Potential/Pending Litigation, under ORS 192.660(2)(h)**
 - Update on the status of the complaint filed by Joseph Hogue
- **Exempt Records/Confidential Attorney-Client Privileged Memo, under ORS 192.660(2)(f)**
 - Review of Privileged and Confidential Memorandum dated April 15, 2025, from City Attorney Ashley Wigod

David Rabbino joined at 4:59 p.m.

- **Consult with Legal Counsel & Potential/Pending Litigation, under ORS 192.660(2)(h)**
 - Update on litigation with St. Helens Assets

Councilor Sundeen arrived at 5:22 p.m.

David Rabbino left at 5:23 p.m.

- **Exempt Records/Confidential Attorney-Client Privileged Memo, under ORS 192.660(2)(f) continued...**
 - Review of Privileged and Confidential Memorandum dated April 15, 2025, from City Attorney Ashley Wigod
- **Real Property Transactions, under ORS 192.660(2)(e)**
 - Nothing was discussed under this provision

The Executive Session was adjourned at 5:26 p.m.



ATTEST:

Kathy Payne, City Recorder

Jennifer Massey, Mayor

An audio recording of this meeting is archived at City Hall.



COUNCIL PUBLIC HEARING

Wednesday, April 16, 2025

DRAFT MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT

Mayor Jennifer Massey
Councilor Mark Gundersen
Councilor Russell Hubbard
Councilor Brandon Sundeen

MEMBERS ABSENT

Council President Jessica Chilton

STAFF PRESENT

John Walsh, City Administrator
Kathy Payne, City Recorder
Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder
Jacob Graichen, City Planner

OTHERS

KOIN
Brady Preheim
Kevin McCarter
Kathy McCarter

OPEN PUBLIC HEARING – 5:30 p.m.

TOPIC

1. Appeal of Planning Commission Denial of Variances at 35732 Hankey Road (McCarter)

City Planner Jacob Graichen initiated the public hearing by explaining that it was a quasi-judicial land use hearing involving three appeals (AP 1-25 through AP 3-25) against the Planning Commission's denial of three variances. These variances were requested for a reduced setback, reduced lot size and area, and reduced lot width in area for the property identified as tax lot 4N1W5AB100. The applicants and owners were Kevin and Katherine McCarter. Graichen outlined the procedural formalities, emphasizing the need for certain required statements, and inquired if any Council members wished to declare potential or actual conflicts of interest, bias, or ex-parte communications. Mayor Massey clarified that asking questions of staff did not constitute ex-parte communication.

Graichen then encouraged attention to the provided slides, which aimed to better explain the context of the property and the proposed variances. He described the property's location on Hankey Road, noting that it included a 100-year-old house and a 10-year-old attached shop. The applicants intended to split the lot to separate the shop from the house, necessitating variances for lot size, lot width, and setbacks.

Graichen further elaborated on the proximity of the property to higher-density zoning districts, which were as close as 1,800 feet and as far as roughly 2,000 feet away. In discussing the topography, the slope directly across from the subject property and the limited development potential due to this terrain.

An important part of his explanation included potential concerns regarding the removal of a covered breezeway previously connecting the house and shop, and issues with placing stairs and a retaining wall across the proposed property line.

Additionally, Graichen reviewed the variance criteria that the Council needed to consider. He underscored the necessity of thinking about future property owners and the potential precedents that could be established by the council's decision. Specifically, he prompted the Council to contemplate whether special circumstances of the property justified the variances and highlighted the complexities involved in reconciling the variances with the City's planning standards.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Applicant

- ◆ Kathy McCarter. She argued that the variance would not be detrimental to other properties and would align with a State law passed in 2019 that allows for higher density in cities over 10,000 people. McCarter emphasized that the proposed variance would make homeownership more affordable, enhancing economic outcomes for the community. She noted that the current configuration of the property, featuring a 6-bedroom, 3.5-bathroom home, was not economically feasible in today's real estate market. This large home size, she argued, did not align with the needs of contemporary homeowners, including herself, who felt burdened by the oversized dwelling. The proposed variance, she contended, would create additional tax revenue for the City by dividing one tax lot into two.

McCarter proceeded to address each of the variance criteria in detail. She highlighted the special circumstances surrounding the property, noting its location on a collector road, which limited the ability to add additional properties or driveways due to the topography. The hilly terrain and the fact that Hankey Road could only be built on their side due to a cliff on the other, further emphasized these constraints. McCarter argued that the hardship was not self-imposed, underscoring that they could not have foreseen the State's legal shift towards allowing higher densities when they initially built the shop. She mentioned unforeseen changes in the law and stated that if they had anticipated these changes, they would have positioned the garage differently to facilitate a future lot split.

Clarifying technical details, McCarter assured the Council that utilities for the two structures were already separated, including distinct electrical and water meters. They were prepared to resolve issues related to the sewer line by installing a new sewer line out to the street. Addressing the previous removal of the breezeway connecting the house to the shop, she explained that it was taken down during a roof replacement but could be reinstalled if needed.

Council members expressed concern about fire code issues related to the proximity of the buildings, but McCarter clarified that building inspectors had deemed compliance achievable through minor modifications. Additionally, Mayor Massey and Councilor Hubbard explored whether the approval of all three variances was necessary for the partition to proceed. Graichen confirmed that approval of each variance was indeed required to move forward with the lot partition.

Regarding setting precedents, Mayor Massey voiced concerns that the decision might impact future cases, a topic Graichen addressed by advising the Council to focus on unique aspects, such as the property's topography and its position across from undevelopable land. This approach would help avoid establishing a broad precedent. The Council also discussed the general purpose of setbacks, which are designed to provide air, light, and space—factors that are especially relevant in lower-density zoning districts.

There was no additional public testimony

CLOSE PUBLIC HEARING – 6:12 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder.

ATTEST:

Kathy Payne, City Recorder

Jennifer Massey, Mayor



COUNCIL PUBLIC HEARING

Wednesday, April 16, 2025

DRAFT MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT

Mayor Jennifer Massey
Councilor Mark Gundersen
Councilor Russell Hubbard
Councilor Brandon Sundeen

MEMBERS ABSENT

Council President Jessica Chilton

STAFF PRESENT

John Walsh, City Administrator
Kathy Payne, City Recorder
Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder
Jacob Graichen, City Planner
Jenny Dimsho, Associate Planner
Sharon Darroux, Engineering Manager

OTHERS

KOIN
Brady Preheim
Kevin McCarter
Kathy McCarter
Beth Goodman

OPEN PUBLIC HEARING – 6:13 p.m.

TOPIC

1. Economic Opportunities Analysis

Associate Planner Jenny Dimsho introduced the topic, explaining that this was a Legislative Land Use hearing to amend the Comprehensive Plan to include the Economic Opportunities Analysis, related economic goals and policies, and to include the St. Helens Wastewater Master Plan, Water Master Plan, and Stormwater Master Plan. Dimsho asked if any members of the Council wish to declare an actual or potential conflict of interest or bias in this matter. There were no objections from the audience for the Council to make a fair decision.

Beth Goodman from EcoNorthwest presented the Economic Opportunities Analysis (EOA). She explained that the EOA would replace the previous one from 2009 and would be part of the Comprehensive Plan. The EOA provides a new fact base for zoning changes, comprehensive plan changes, and economic development strategies.

Goodman outlined the EOA process, which included a buildable lands inventory, employment growth projections, and economic development recommendations. She noted that St. Helens has about 302

acres of unconstrained buildable land, with most of it within City limits and zoned for heavy industrial use.

The employment growth forecast projected an addition of about 1,400 new employees between 2025 and 2045, based on a regional employment growth rate of 0.85% per year. Goodman explained that this growth rate was considered ambitious but allowable as a safe harbor.

The analysis concluded that St. Helens had sufficient industrial land to meet the 20-year growth expectation, with about 200 acres of surplus industrial land. However, there was only a 4-acre surplus of commercial land, suggesting a need to carefully manage commercial land use and potentially consider rezoning some industrial land for commercial use.

Goodman then presented policy recommendations, including:

1. Encouraging growth of a healthy, stable, and diversified economic base
2. Ensuring sufficient land and infrastructure capacity
3. Attracting and retaining existing businesses
4. Fostering vibrant commercial zones
5. Enhancing tourism as an economic driver

Specific actions recommended included hiring a Community Development Specialist, developing a business growth and attraction strategy, conducting a zoning audit, and working with partners to develop a comprehensive tourism strategy.

Dimsho added that in addition to adopting the EOA, there was a recommendation to adopt the utility master plans (wastewater, water, and stormwater) by ordinance into the Comprehensive Plan. These plans were created in 2019 and 2020 and had previously been adopted by resolution. Adopting them by ordinance would provide more leverage and tools for staff, as recommended by the Department of Land Conservation and Development.

PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comments.

CLOSE PUBLIC HEARING – 6:38 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder.

ATTEST:

Kathy Payne, City Recorder

Jennifer Massey, Mayor



COUNCIL REGULAR SESSION

Wednesday, April 16, 2025

DRAFT MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT

Mayor Jennifer Massey
Councilor Mark Gundersen
Councilor Russell Hubbard
Councilor Brandon Sundeen

MEMBERS ABSENT

Council President Jessica Chilton

STAFF PRESENT

John Walsh, City Administrator
Kathy Payne, City Recorder
Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder
Jacob Graichen, City Planner
Jenny Dimsho, Associate Planner
Sharon Darroux, Engineering Manager
Suzanne Bishop, Library Director
Joe Hogue, Interim Police Chief

OTHERS

KOIN	Kevin McCarter	Amani Center
Beth Goodman	Kathy McCarter	Jim Coleman
Mitzi	Jenni Gilbert	Melody Sexton
Brady Preheim	Judy Thompson	Adam St. Pierre
Reed Hjort		

CALL REGULAR SESSION TO ORDER – 7:00 p.m.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

PROCLAMATIONS

1. National Library Week: April 6-12, 2025

Mayor Massey read the proclamation into the record. The proclamation highlighted the importance of the St. Helens Public Library in sparking creativity, fueling imagination, and inspiring lifelong learning. It emphasized the library's role as a community hub, providing free and equitable access to resources, and partnering with various organizations to strengthen the community. Mayor Massey encouraged all residents to visit the library and explore its resources during National Library Week.

2. Child Abuse Prevention Month: April 2025

Mayor Massey read the proclamation into the record. The proclamation highlighted the significant number of child abuse reports in Columbia County and the number of children receiving intervention services. It emphasized that child abuse prevention is a community responsibility and urged citizens to work together to reduce child abuse and neglect in the coming years.

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

- ◆ Brady Preheim. Expressed multiple concerns regarding the memorandum of understanding with Treadway Events & Entertainment, which pertains to the management of the newly named St. Helens Community Day, previously known as Citizens Day. Preheim argued that the management cost of \$8,500 was excessive, especially considering the City's current budget crisis. He emphasized that the event was originally intended to be organized by the Council as a way to give back to the citizens, and spending this amount purely on management did not align with that purpose. Last year's event was estimated to have cost approximately \$35,000, considering staff time, and he questioned the prudence of adding another \$8,500 to that for management alone. He suggested this was not a justifiable expense, particularly in a year when the City is facing significant budgetary challenges. Preheim expressed dissatisfaction with the financial transparency surrounding the contract with Treadway. He noted that there had been promises of greater clarity and financial benefit when transitioning from E2C to Treadway. However, according to Preheim, the City had not received any monetary contributions that were anticipated, despite the contract suggesting that financial contributions were to be a part of the arrangement. Preheim continued by comparing this new arrangement unfavorably to the City's previous contract with E2C, which he claimed had delivered \$120,000 to the City's General Fund. In contrast, he asserted that Treadway had provided nothing financially tangible in return, despite earning \$193,000 over four months and charging high fees for services like a photo booth. He ended his comment by calling for accountability and transparency regarding how funds have been managed and questioning the role of financial oversight in this new partnership.
- ◆ Adam St. Pierre. Commented on a recent complaint and potential investigation that had been brought up earlier in the meeting. He expressed support for Mayor Massey and noted that previous accusations from certain individuals lacked factual basis. St. Pierre emphasized the difference between accusations and fully verified allegations, stating that making a distinction is crucial. He highlighted that while there have been accusations and allegations, there had not yet been substantial facts or evidence provided to back those claims. St. Pierre also mentioned that despite the presence of allegations, there is solid evidence and facts disputing them, which he believed the Council might be aware of due to the involvement of lawyers over the past months. He concluded by urging those present to consider the source of these accusations, hinting at a pattern of behavior from the same group of individuals.
- ◆ Reed Hjort. Spoke as a private citizen, addressing the significance of the Child Abuse Prevention Month proclamation. He emphasized the critical importance of reporting and addressing child abuse whenever it is observed, highlighting the community's role in protecting children. Hjort shared his personal experiences as both a parent and a foster parent to convey the profound impact that abuse can have on victims throughout their lives. He noted that childhood trauma often leaves lasting scars and underscored that it is the responsibility of individuals within the community to take action when they suspect abuse. His remarks served as a poignant reminder of the collective duty to ensure the safety and well-being of children in the community.

DELIBERATIONS

3. Appeal of Planning Commission Denial of Variances at 35732 Hankey Road (McCarter)

The Council extensively discussed the appeal of the Planning Commission's denial of variances at 35732 Hankey Road. Various Council members shared their perspectives, underscoring the complexities in deciding the matter. Several Councilors noted concerns about the proximity of the existing buildings on the property, arguing that it might affect the property's market appeal. There was also acknowledgment that the applicant had developed the property according to his needs many years ago, and some Council

members felt that the existing configuration supported their purposes then and should continue to do so without requiring a variance.

Councilor Hubbard mentioned that the configuration seems counterproductive as the lack of a garage on the main house might affect its marketability, although that decision is ultimately for the landowners or buyers to make. Councilor Gundersen reflected on the Planning Commission's role and was inclined to support their judgment; similar views were expressed by other Councilors who noted that the Commission possesses detailed local knowledge and oversight.

Mayor Massey highlighted the importance of affording the appellant due considerations, especially the unique nature of the lot in question where no development is possible on the opposite side of Hankey Road, suggesting it might not set a broad precedent if the variance were allowed. She expressed a desire for greater examination of how infrastructure improvements, such as utilities separation, might impact the case if the variances were granted.

Ultimately, the Council found the situation ambiguous but decided in a collaborative manner to remand the case back to the Planning Commission for reconsideration. This remand is contingent upon the acceptance of tolling the clock for the 120-day decision rule, thereby permitting additional examination of arguments regarding the lack of development opportunities across from the property, which might lessen perceived density issues. This path is seen as providing a balanced opportunity for the applicant to address concerns initially raised while ensuring all possible aspects are reviewed in depth before any conclusive decision is reached.

Based on the Council's decision, City Planner Graichen suggested the following motion: Remand the decision back to the Planning Commission, based on the new information being the consideration of the lack of development opportunity on the opposite side of Hankey Road from the subject property. It would be contingent upon the applicant agreeing to extend the 120-day rule accordingly.

Motion: Motion made by Councilor Sundeen and seconded by Councilor Hubbard to remand the decision back to the Planning Commission, based on the new information being the consideration of the lack of development opportunity on the opposite side of Hankey Road from the subject property. It would be contingent upon the applicant agreeing to extend the 120-day rule accordingly. **Vote:** Yea: Mayor Massey, Councilor Gundersen, Councilor Hubbard, Councilor Sundeen

4. Economic Opportunities Analysis

Motion: Motion made by Councilor Sundeen and seconded by Councilor Gundersen to approve the Comprehensive Plan Amendment to include the St. Helens Economic Opportunities Analysis and related economic goals and policies revisions and amend the Comprehensive Plan to include the St. Helens Wastewater Master Plan, St. Helens Water Master Plan, and St. Helens Stormwater Master Plan, as recommended by the Planning Commission and staff. **Vote:** Yea: Mayor Massey, Councilor Gundersen, Councilor Hubbard, Councilor Sundeen

APPROVE AND/OR AUTHORIZE FOR SIGNATURE

5. Amendment No. 4 to Agreement with Mackenzie Engineering Inc. for Public Safety Facility Services

Motion: Motion made by Councilor Sundeen and seconded by Councilor Gundersen to approve '5' above. **Vote:** Yea: Mayor Massey, Councilor Gundersen, Councilor Hubbard, Councilor Sundeen

6. Extend Agreement with Aaron Martin for Pro Tem Judicial Services to April 30, 2026

Motion: Motion made by Councilor Sundeen and seconded by Councilor Gundersen to approve '6' above. Discussion clarifying the purpose and duration of the agreement.

Vote: Yea: Mayor Massey, Councilor Gundersen, Councilor Hubbard, Councilor Sundeen

7. Award the Belton Sewer Step System Capacity Study, Project No. S-685, to Grayling Engineers

Motion: Motion made by Councilor Gundersen and seconded by Councilor Sundeen to approve '7' above.

The Council had an in-depth discussion about the significance of the study for understanding the system's capacity and condition. It was highlighted that the study would not only assess system capacity but would also examine the structural integrity of approximately 1,760 linear feet of PVC piping. This is essential since the City owns the pumps, valves, lines, and all other appurtenances connected to the step system, even if they are located on private property. Although ownership of these components lies with the City, the maintenance responsibility currently rests with the property owners, which presents a gray area that may not be legally favorable for the City.

Councilor Hubbard suggested that it is crucial for the study to clarify ownership and maintenance logistics, thereby providing the tools necessary for staff to make informed decisions about system connections. Meanwhile, Councilor Massey questioned the potential liability for the City under this arrangement and recommended legal clarification.

It was noted that Grayling Engineers is prepared to conduct the capacity study, which has seen a four-week delay. Concerns were shared about the potential scarcity of resources if further delayed. The study is regarded as a proactive move towards understanding the system's condition rather than reacting to eventual issues, an opinion strongly emphasized by Councilor Massey.

Councilor Hubbard proposed that the study should also identify who maintains the pumps within private properties, considering the City's ownership of the components. This clarification would inform liability discussions and ensure precise allocation of maintenance responsibilities. Ultimately, the Council decided to proceed, recognizing the importance of resolving these ownership and liability nuances through the study.

Vote: Yea: Mayor Massey, Councilor Gundersen, Councilor Hubbard, Councilor Sundeen

8. Letter of Support for Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Grant Program to Address Broadband Challenges in St. Helens School District

Motion: Motion made by Councilor Sundeen and seconded by Councilor Gundersen to approve '8' above.

Vote: Yea: Mayor Massey, Councilor Gundersen, Councilor Hubbard, Councilor Sundeen

CONSENT AGENDA FOR ACCEPTANCE

9. Planning Commission Minutes dated March 11, 2025

Motion: Motion made by Councilor Gundersen and seconded by Councilor Sundeen to approve '9' above.

Vote: Yea: Mayor Massey, Councilor Gundersen, Councilor Hubbard, Councilor Sundeen

CONSENT AGENDA FOR APPROVAL

10. City Council Minutes dated March 12 and April 2, 2025
11. Memorandum of Understanding with Treadway Events & Entertainment, LLC for St. Helens Community Day (formerly "Citizens Day")
12. OLCC Licenses
13. Accounts Payable Bill Lists

Motion: Motion made by Councilor Gundersen and seconded by Councilor Sundeen to approve '10' through '13' above. **Vote:** Yea: Mayor Massey, Councilor Gundersen, Councilor Hubbard, Councilor Sundeen

WORK SESSION ACTION ITEMS**Amani Center Request**

Council engaged in a thorough discussion about the Amani Center's presentation during the Work Session. Council members contemplated the Amani Center's vital role within the community and the necessity for the Center to provide a more comprehensive budget and fee structure before the Council considers any specific monetary requests. This approach was proposed to ensure that any financial decisions align with both the City's budget constraints and its support for community initiatives. Staff were directed to request a detailed proposal from the Amani Center outlining their budget and fee structure to facilitate further consideration by the Council.

Staff Reports

Council agreed on shifting the schedule for staff reports from a monthly to a quarterly basis. The decision was driven by a desire to alleviate the reporting burden on staff while ensuring that Council remains well-informed. When relevant developments or urgent issues arise, staff retain the flexibility to present more frequently, ensuring that critical information is still communicated effectively.

Boards/Commissions Reports

Council recognized the success of their joint meetings with the Planning Commission. As a result, they decided to adopt a similar twice-yearly joint meeting format with each board and commission. This new structure aims to provide a richer and more comprehensive opportunity for engagement, allowing Council members and board or commission members to delve deeper into discussions and celebrate achievements. During the Council's discussions, there were mentions of the members of the Parks and Trails Commission expressing a desire for more frequent meetings given their limited interaction with the Council. Councilor Sundeen suggested that the Parks and Trails Commission, in particular, might benefit from this new format as they seek to engage more robustly with Council and the community.

The consensus among Council members was that these changes would enhance communication and collaboration while providing a structured format for comprehensive updates and interactions.

COUNCIL MEMBER REPORTS

Councilor Sundeen reported...

- Acknowledged the dedication and efforts of various staff members and groups.
- Acknowledged Interim Police Chief Hogue's contributions:
 - Highlighting the successful implementation of a new assessment center for identifying promising new applicants, which has effectively enhanced the hiring process.
 - Commended the Department's continued focus on wellness, both physical and mental health, under Chief Hogue's leadership.
- Highlighted the Parks and Trails Commission meeting:
 - New assessment tool trial aimed at streamlining park evaluations.
 - Each Parks & Trails Commission member will regularly visit different parks.
 - They will note usage, restroom conditions, and other factors to assist park maintenance efforts.
 - Expressed gratitude for the volunteer work parties at Nob Hill Nature Park and the Japanese Gardens area at McCormick Park. Volunteered over 50 hours of labor.
 - Thanked the Kiwanis Daybreakers Club for over 20 years of maintaining Walnut Tree Park.
- Appreciated Associate Planner Jenny Dimsho's tour of Columbia View Park, showcasing recent improvements.
- Provided a history lesson about the McCormick family and their significant contributions to St. Helens:

- The McCormick brothers, Charles and Hamlin, revitalized the local economy after a devastating fire in 1904 by rebuilding the lumber mill and establishing various enterprises:
 - Shipyard
 - Broom handle factory
 - Paper mill
- Hamlin McCormick lived on Nob Hill with his wife, Nellie. They also established a country estate at McCormick Park.
 - McCormick Park once hosted a Japanese-style garden, which the Parks & Trails Commission is keen on restoring.
 - Emphasized the importance of community participation in revitalizing the Japanese Gardens area and expressed hope for greater volunteer turnout for future restoration efforts.
- Boards and Commission appreciation reception on Monday. Mayor Massey noted that she is unable to attend.

Councilor Gundersen reported...

- Nothing to report

Councilor Hubbard reporting...

- Nothing to report

MAYOR MASSEY REPORTS

- Expressed gratitude towards City Recorder Payne and Deputy City Recorder Scholl for their organization and always having everything ready for meetings.
- Thanked the Police Department, Public Works, and all the City staff for their continued hard work.
- Brought attention to the recent water test results that have been posted on the City's website, reassuring residents of water quality and transparency in communication.
- Special appreciation was given to Communications Officer King for her diligent efforts in ensuring effective communication about the ongoing construction projects, highlighting the importance of keeping the public well-informed.
- Attended the Oregon Tourism Governor's Tourism event, where she engaged with tourism officials and gathered insights on advancements and collaborations in the tourism sector.
- Participated in a recent Library Board meeting, gaining updates and offering support for library initiatives amid funding and grant challenges.
- Provided an update on the development of the proposed police station, noting the project's progress and expected contributions to community safety. A public forum will be held on May 7.
- Touched on potential waterfront development opportunities, indicating positive momentum and anticipations of future developments enhancing the City's appeal.
- Emphasized the importance of citizens verifying information through credible sources, encouraging reliance on the City's official communications for accurate and up-to-date news.

OTHER BUSINESS

Mayor Massey expressed interest in revisiting the topic of Council liaisons and potentially adjusting the allocation of Council members' time to focus on action items. She also requested a presentation on the finances related to the contract with Treadway Events & Entertainment, emphasizing the need for transparency in tourism-related expenditures.

ADJOURN – 8:04 p.m.

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

ATTEST:

Kathy Payne, City Recorder

Jennifer Massey, Mayor