

MINUTES

**Eugene City Council
Hult Center for the Performing Arts
1 Eugene Centre
Eugene, Oregon**

**January 8, 2020
5:30 p.m.**

Councilors Present: Emily Semple, Betty Taylor, Jennifer Yeh, Mike Clark, Claire Syrett, Chris Pryor, Greg Evans

Councilors Absent: Alan Zelenka

1. ENTERTAINMENT

Eugene Bhangra performed “Punjabi Mutiyaaran,”

2. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

City Council President Betty Taylor provided opening remarks.

3. VIDEO PRESENTATION

A video entitled “2019 City of Eugene Highlights” was shown.

4. COMMUNITY AWARD PRESENTATION

Mayor Vinis presented the 2020 Community Award to Huerto de la Familia.

5. BOLD STEPS AWARD

Mayor Vinis announced Yogi Tea as the 2020 Bold Steps Award winner, and recognized Feynman Group and Marley’s Monsters as finalists.

6. ENTERTAINMENT

Eugene Bhangra performed “Jawani.”

7. STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS

Mayor Vinis delivered her 2020 State of the City address:

Welcome to the 2020 State of the City address. As mayor of Eugene, I would like to begin by acknowledging that tonight’s ceremony is being held on Kalapuya llihi, the traditional indigenous homeland of the Kalapuya people.

The Kalapuya people were stewards of this land for thousands of years. When the white settlers arrived in this fertile valley in the 19th century, they forcibly removed the Kalapuya, as well as other tribes in Oregon. The displacement and loss of ancestral land was compounded by a loss of truth in history and of recognition of the role of Native Peoples in the origins and strength of our city today.

Tonight, I offer to the Indigenous First Nations people of our community, both past and present, acknowledgement of your resiliency and contributions to our community while also humbly acknowledging what was taken from you. Today, Kalapuya descendants are citizens of the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde Community of Oregon and the Confederated Tribes of the Siletz Indians of Oregon. They continue to make contributions in their communities here and

across the land we now refer to as Oregon. We express our respect to all displaced indigenous people who call Eugene home.

I want to express my gratitude to my Council colleagues. Each of them is hard working and brings their considerable talents, knowledge and insights to do the public's work week after week. I have learned from each of them and I value their public service. It is difficult work and often deeply controversial; the path forward is not always clear; finding agreement on complex issues is challenging. They work their way through a constant cascade of demands with grace, respect and dedication. On behalf of all Eugene residents, I thank you.

I also want to thank City staff who consistently prepare council for discussions and decisions with well-researched and expertly prepared materials. Staff are always ready to answer questions and respond to Council needs. At the top of this list is the City Manager. Once again, I express my appreciation for Jon Ruiz for his professionalism and dedication to our city; and my gratitude to Sarah Medary for stepping into her role as City Manager Pro-Tem.

Finally, I also want to recognize all of the citizens who serve on our appointed boards and commissions, many of whom spend many hours in challenging meetings, reviewing mountains of material to guide and advise council actions. We have a citizen government in the best sense, and our civic life and decisions reflect that shared commitment to providing the services and infrastructure that sustains us and reflects our values of safety, inclusiveness, stewardship, and social justice.

As I reviewed my blog from the past year, I was struck both by the enormity of the work we accomplished as well as the challenging pace at which things move. Many of our core concerns demand urgency. The public is impatient for solutions, and the pace of creating policy to respond to these challenges is sometimes interpreted as a lack of passion or commitment.

This could not be farther from the truth.

Let's take stock of the progress we've made in five major areas—which are among the most vital challenges of our time:

Climate change, homelessness, housing affordability, public safety and economic development.

On Climate: Council is in the final phase of approving the Climate Action Plan (CAP) 2.0, the roadmap guiding our decisions to meet the goals of our Climate Recovery Ordinance. Built with a wide range of collaborators, it reflects a powerful commitment to equity as we seek to help our community both mitigate and adapt to climate change.

The City cannot do this work alone. In 2019, members of the Eugene Climate Collaborative -- which includes representatives of school districts, higher education, business, public transit and utilities -- defined their individual plans that collectively take us part-way to meeting our climate goals. When Council approves the final version of the CAP 2.0 this year, we will commit to a dozen additional strategies to push us farther and faster. All of them are challenging -- they include decisions about our decarbonization from natural gas; our rate of adoption of electric vehicles, improved efficiency in heating and cooling buildings; and commitments by all of us to reduce consumption at the household level.

Reducing carbon emissions will make our community a better, fairer, safer place to live. And, it will require a strong and consistent public commitment to change our thinking, our habits and our assumptions. CAP 2.0 connects the dots. It's built on foundational agreements about how and where we grow. Envision Eugene and the Transportation System Plan steer us to greater

housing development along transit corridors, and investments in biking and walking options. Deliberations with Lane Transit about bus routes, frequency and ridership are essential first steps, and not easy. All of this work costs money. All of it takes time to implement and all of it depends on every individual's willingness to adapt. We will take time before final adoption of the CAP to engage the public in a meaningful way in this work and to ensure that the final plan is clear and measurable. This is the defining challenge of our time. Progress depends on courage from our leadership and from all of you.

This brings me to affordable housing. In April, Council approved the implementation of the Construction Excise Tax. For the first time, housing advocates and the building community worked together to create a local revenue stream for the new Housing Trust Fund. The City affirmed its commitment by contributing \$500,000 annually. This is legacy work. For the first time we will build local financial resources to support the construction of housing we need, supporting local developers who build housing specifically for the lower end of the market.

Housing affordability is also tied to zoning and recent changes to state law. SB 1051 and HB 2001 reduce barriers to the construction of Accessory Dwelling Units and open residential neighborhoods to more multi-unit housing like duplexes. No other area that Council handles requires such a careful balancing act. Adjustments to our code in order to comply with the state statute have consumed council and staff time, perhaps disproportionately to the impacts of ADUs in addressing our housing shortage. At the same time, these discussions, and related conversations about the impacts of multi-unit housing on residential neighborhoods, expose the essential tension we face as a community. We all want to maintain the livability of our neighborhoods AND if we are committed to compact urban growth—if we truly intend to meet our climate goals, and if we intend to meet the need for increased housing for all income levels in walkable neighborhoods, close to transportation corridors—then we must be prepared to invest in change.

I use that word intentionally. All of this work is about investment. We will continue to invest public dollars to support infrastructure improvements and housing affordability. At the same time, we need to increase collaborative efforts between developers, city planners and neighbors whose lives will be impacted by increased housing density. The City can do a better job of encouraging collaboration to resolve these conflicts and we should.

Along the continuum of housing demand is the challenge of homelessness. After a full year's investment in the shelter feasibility and homeless services assessment, known as the TAC report, both City Council and County Board of Commissioners have adopted ten recommendations as the framework for the work ahead. The plan rolls out over five years, requiring investment, public commitment, and good will. In 2020:

- We will establish a low-barrier shelter;
- Implement mobile outreach teams;
- Develop a landlord engagement process; and -- significantly,
- Hire a Strategic Initiatives Manager who reports to both the city and county to assure we have well-coordinated leadership to move us forward.

The challenge of homelessness is closely tied to public safety. For decades Eugene has struggled with an inadequate public safety system. Again, a year of work brought Council to a decisive and courageous vote to approve a payroll tax to support expansion of our public safety services. Beginning in January of 2021, the payroll tax will raise \$23.6 million to support increased staffing of police officers, firefighters, 911 services, Municipal Court, and preventive services directed to at risk youth. You will see and experience the difference as these funds translate into more robust and responsive services.

Our aim is to create a system in which we provide services to everyone who wants or needs them. As we do that, the impact of homelessness on people's lives, on our school systems, on our parks and on our public safety will dramatically improve. At the same time, police officers, firefighters and prevention services will be able to do more than just respond to urgent calls for service.

But, we're not there yet. Transitional stopgaps are needed. We have heard clearly the frustration and anger of business owners and employees who justifiably want an end to the trespasses, burglaries, harassment and vandalism that has plagued them.

And, while all homeless are not criminals, nor are all criminals homeless, we do need more rest stops, car camping, and more Opportunity Villages and tiny homes to stabilize the unhoused. We need neighborhood watch and mobile street teams to check behavior on streets and sidewalks. We need investment -- public and private -- to support providers of services. Can we take a moment to acknowledge the nonprofit providers who save lives and stabilize families every day in our community?

And importantly, we need greater attention to mental health and addiction services. This work is coming in 2020. The County and City are working together to envision and develop a crisis center; and Council has already approved a resolution advocating for more investment in recovery services by the state.

With all of these challenges, there is also good news. Our economy is growing. Council is juggling decisions about major public investments in three related areas: the riverfront, the Park Blocks and Farmers Market and a new city hall. These investments, joined by the private development at Fifth Street, will result in a tripling of our downtown core. The Riverfront and the Downtown Urban Renewal Districts are meeting critical development needs. The Riverfront development will create 500 units of housing, of which 75 units are earmarked for low-income residents. Add to this market-rate and affordable units at 5th Street, and other market rate housing proposals for downtown, we will shortly have what we have always needed -- a bustling, populated busy town center, that will meet both our housing needs and our climate goals for compact development.

In addition, the designs for renovating the Park Blocks and building a year-round home for Farmers' Market will move toward bidding and approval in 2020. And we are finally poised to have the nuts and bolts conversations about the new City Hall that will share the Farmers' Market block and offer the possibility of a much-needed city gathering space, not just for Council but also for other public events.

All of these take money. In 2020, Council will face difficult choices about financing for both renewal districts. The wish list is longer than the available funds; and the conversation is likely to involve choices between delaying or reducing some elements.

As your mayor, it is my job to juggle the urgent needs of the moment with our community commitment to participatory democracy. Problems are complex, resources are limited, and big change does not come easily or overnight. Public testimony can be angry and impatient. Tensions rise when we don't see a common path. Too many voices are never heard at all.

So, in November, I announced my commitment to fostering a city of kindness in Eugene, affirming our shared commitment to resolving conflict in ways that build rather than erode our sense of community and belonging. All of us, including me, need to do a better job of reaching out to those who come from different backgrounds and have different life experiences.

Last year I made a commitment to reach out in two ways, and this year I will fulfill that commitment. First, a new Youth Advisory Board has been formed and will convene for the first time this winter. They will bring much needed insights of the upcoming generation into our public discussions.

Second, as the city prepares to host the IAAF World Athletic Championships, we do the good work we should do for our community anyway – to make investments that will stand as a legacy.

My commitment to the legacy of 2021 is that we shine a light on the communities within our community. Not to highlight them as different. But to recognize that the cultures within our city weave a tapestry that we should daily behold and value. Last year I committed to a goal of celebrating 20 cultures within our community by 2021. That work begins this year. We will seek in the coming months opportunities to invite and savor the colors, textures, tastes, sounds, beliefs and ideas of the diverse cultures in our city that make us whole.

That tapestry is woven in kindness. It begins with conversations. I hope our common legacy will be to listen to one another, to welcome the diverse communities within our community, to take pride in the abundance and beauty that is here, and to act collectively and individually to meet the challenges ahead with openness, compassion, intelligence and courage.

Thank you.

The meeting adjourned at 6:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Beth Forrest
City Recorder

Link to recording of State of the City [here](#).