

MINUTES

Eugene City Council and Lane County Board of Commissioners Virtual Work Session Eugene, Oregon 97401

July 28, 2020

5:30 p.m.

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

Councilors Absent: Mike Clark

Commissioners Present: Heather Buch, Pete Sorenson, Jay Bozievich, Pat Farr, Joe Berney

Mayor Vinis opened the July 28, 2020, work session of the Eugene City Council.

Lane County Board of Commissioners Chair Heather Buch opened the July 28, 2020, meeting of the Lane County Board of Commissioners.

1. **JOINT WORK SESSION: Homeless Systems Transformation**

Sarai Johnson, Joint Shelter and Housing Strategist for the City of Eugene and Lane County, gave a presentation to update progress on the implementation of the homeless systems transformation, including cross-jurisdictional coordination and expansion of shelter and housing opportunities in a COVID-19 environment.

Council Discussion:

- Councilor Pryor – stated he is struck by the increase in numbers; asked clarifying questions about sheltering options and capacity.
- Councilor Syrett – reminded the public that one of the City Council’s overarching goals is to reach functional zero in terms of people being without shelter in the community, meaning there will still be people experiencing homelessness, but supports will be poised to help; asked if any positive lessons were learned from the San Francisco Navigation Center; expressed hope for the County to increase access to mental health services, drug and alcohol addiction services and counseling, as all are needed as supports for this population to transition into permanent housing.
- Commissioner Bozievich – expressed frustration about the original TAC recommendations and the updated five-year projections, which seem to be heavily dependent on temporary emergency shelter; stated he does not believe that temporary emergency shelter helps people, and that a Housing First policy with intensive case management is what is needed; stated he is concerned about temporary versus permanent solutions.
- Councilor Zelenka – asked clarifying questions regarding the terminology used for the Homelessness Management Information System (HMIS).
- Councilor Semple – expressed concern that work is not happening fast enough; asked how the community is going to manage without the Egan Warming Centers during the pandemic; stated she is concerned for this winter.
- Commissioner Farr – asked Sarai to comment on the value of the multi-jurisdictional bodies regularly meeting to discuss the dynamic issue of homelessness; stated geographically dispersed sites need to be found to achieve results.

- Councilor Syrett – stated it could be that a slower approach of providing shelter with case management may build capacity for people to be successful in permanent supportive housing; asked how some of the temporary shelters can be turned into HUD-approved sites; asked for more context for the cost estimates provided for safe sleeping shelters; inquired into the estimated cost for navigation services.
- Councilor Pryor – stated he would like to focus on structural, long-term solutions, and also recognize the acute, immediate problem to be dealt with, and stated the issue is how to come up with sufficient resources to do both; stated that based on the figures presented, it will take \$18-20 million to do both and advocated for finding a way to fund the \$20 million for as long as needed.
- Commissioner Berney – stated the transformation has already occurred and has vastly disintegrated the social safety net; asked if the current numbers also count the homeless statistics of every school district in Lane County; asked if the \$18 million projection is for operations only for approximately 1,000 beds; asked if the interpretation of the data is consistent with the interpretation by people with lived experience.
- Councilor Taylor – stated emergency shelter is needed and it needs to be downtown; asked if single-room occupancy (SRO) was considered; stated SRO and shelter combined are two of the most important options.
- Councilor Zelenka – asked for the rationale in developing the prioritization of the options presented; stated the next task will be to determine the funding source and suggested a levy to voters.
- Commissioner Buch – agreed the Homeless By Name list is more accurate than HMIS, and said she feels there is now have a more accurate idea of the size of the issue; appreciated the quick-build design but does not want to see both agencies throwing millions of dollars into this every year if it does not return some kind of future investment capital in drawing down the numbers; stated quick-builds or other designs that turn into permanent features to address homelessness year after year is an important step to take; stated she would like to see more in-depth financial analysis; for future reports, asked staff to provide a list of items and how much they cost in more detail, and agency commitments to each item.
- Mayor Vinis – stated two challenges are sites and capacity of providers; asked staff to speak to how capacity of the providers is being addressed and the plan to move forward.
- Commissioner Bozievich – asked clarifying questions about how the Homeless By Name list counts individuals; stated he is concerned the database is being changed from what was presented in the TAC report; stated funds are in competition with many other programs that have had funding cut or eliminated.
- Commissioner Farr – stated permanent supportive housing is very expensive to provide, and honesty is needed in determining why housing is so expensive in Lane County and Eugene, and why the local homeless population is increasing.
- Commissioner Berney – stated he would like to encourage both bodies to find ways to move forward; suggested private foundations may like to invest, and both agencies can be on the lookout for other opportunities to generate funds.

Mayor Vinis adjourned the Eugene City Council meeting at 7:04 p.m.

Commissioner Buch adjourned the Board of County Commissioners meeting.

Respectfully submitted,



Julie Adams
Deputy City Recorder

(Recorded by Jessica Gebb)

Link to the webcast of this City Council meeting [here](#).