

MINUTES

Eugene City Council Virtual Work Session Eugene, Oregon 97401

September 9, 2020
12:00 p.m.

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

Mayor Vinis opened the September 9, 2020, work session of the Eugene City Council.

1. **UPDATE: Holiday Farm Fire Update**

Fire Chief Chris Heppel provided an update on the progress of fighting the Holiday Farm fire and recovery efforts.

Council Discussion:

- Councilor Clark – thanked Chief Heppel, staff and firefighters; asked Chief Heppel if he anticipates a FEMA declaration and if a declaration would make additional resources available; inquired into the best computer app to track fires in Oregon.
- Councilor Syrett – thanked Chief Heppel and firefighters; asked clarifying questions about evacuation notices; inquired about the fires at Fern Ridge.
- Councilor Zelenka – thanked all who are working to save the community; asked Chief Heppel if his department has adequate resources and if there is anything Council can do to help the fire-fighting effort; encouraged constituents to help house evacuees or assist in any way possible; asked how people receive emergency alerts and encouraged everyone to sign up.

2. **ACTION: Motion on Ad Hoc Committee on Police Policy**

Councilor Yeh explained this motion is to appoint an individual that was missing from the original Ad Hoc Committee on Police Policy list.

MOTION AND VOTE: Councilor Yeh, seconded by Councilor Semple, moved that notwithstanding Council September 1 deadline for groups to appoint ad hoc committee representatives, Sandra Shortridge is the second representative of the Indigenous Peoples group appointed to the Ad Hoc Committee on Police Policy. **PASSED 8:0.**

3. **WORK SESSION: Northwest Natural Gas Franchise Agreement Update**

Intergovernmental Relations Manager Ethan Nelson and Assistant City Attorney Hwa Go provided an update on the negotiations of potential renewal terms with representatives of Northwest Natural Gas (NWNG).

Council Discussion:

- Councilor Zelenka – complimented staff; stated this is a complicated negotiation and the first of its kind in the country with no model to follow; asked staff to talk about progress and how the process is going; stated NWNG will be regulated by Governor Brown's executive order through the Department of Environmental Quality to reduce its emissions; stated he hopes that a process of developing a mutually agreed-to contract will be a faster, easier and better way to achieve the goals of the Climate Recovery Ordinance; stated the alternative path of regulation will be long, arduous and expensive, but Council is ready to follow the regulatory path if needed.

- Councilor Clark – thanked staff for the report; asked if any part of the negotiation process is public other than staff reports to Council; expressed concern for the challenge the general public and rate payers will have in understanding the rate increases they will experience if they were not able to be apprised of and understand how it happened; asked clarifying questions regarding the increased cost of natural gas after full implementation.
- Councilor Syrett – thanked staff; agreed this is an historic effort to link a franchise agreement to a related agreement reducing carbon emissions; stated she is proud of the effort in trying to come to this agreement and is pleased that establishment of ground rules has been productive; stated it is important to acknowledge the success in understanding the language used and what it means; asked clarifying questions relating to current and future franchise fees.
- Councilor Yeh – thanked staff for remaining positive and continuing negotiations; agreed that working together with NWNG as partners is the preferred route; agreed this is more complicated than just increasing a City fee.
- Councilor Taylor – stated there should be public involvement throughout the process; asked if through these negotiations the discussion is about reducing the carbon or charging a fee for it.
- Councilor Zelenka – stated to put things in context, the wildfires are directly related to climate change and so the cost of doing nothing is already evident, and the increases in cost seem modest compared to what the area is experiencing now; stated that many reductions will come from energy efficiency in the existing stock, and practicing energy efficiency will help people reduce their bills by taking action to mitigate increases.
- Councilor Clark – stated there is nothing voluntary about mandatory rate increases to the general public; expressed a desire to see a commercial impact analysis, especially for local restaurants already hit by COVID-19, included with the residential analysis.
- Mayor Vinis – stated she appreciates the negotiations have taken a much more positive turn.

Councilor Evans left the meeting at 12:55 pm.

The meeting adjourned at 1:02 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Julie Adams
Deputy City Recorder

(Recorded by Jessica Gebb)

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