

## MINUTES

### Eugene City Council Virtual Work Session Eugene, Oregon 97401

September 23, 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 23, 2020, work session of the Eugene City Council.

#### 1. **WORK SESSION: Fire Response Update**

Eugene Fire Chief Chris Heppel gave a PowerPoint presentation on the local response to the Holiday Farms fire.

##### Council Discussion:

- Councilor Zelenka – thanked staff for their continued efforts to address the short- and long-term impacts of the fire; asked about mitigation plans for potential environmental hazards to the watershed from contaminated runoff; asked for an update from EWEB about local water quality; encouraged cooperation with the County and expediting the permit process for re-construction.
- Councilor Clark – thanked staff for their efforts; asked whether this experience would have any effect on long-term urban planning related to expansion of the urban growth boundary into wooded areas; asked questions about early communication challenges with fire crews and their families; asked if additional budget allocations for technology needs should be considered.
- Councilor Syrett – thanked everyone for their great work; expressed appreciation for the concern shown by firefighters for the fish and wildlife in the Leaburg Lake area; asked about resources needed for local preparedness.
- Councilor Semple – said she was proud of staff and relieved that the worst seemed to be over; shared her personal connection to the area affected by the fire; encouraged continued work on education related to preparedness; acknowledged that the event was devastating but could have been much worse.
- Councilor Taylor – stated that this event was more evidence that the council should consider banning fireworks.
- Councilor Evans – asked what the council could do to ensure that appropriate resources are available.
- Councilor Syrett – shared her connections to the area and agreed that council should consider a ban on fireworks.
- Mayor Vinis – asked questions about how information related to evacuation areas is communicated.
- Councilor Zelenka – encouraged everyone to sign up for emergency alerts and to share their stories of cooperation and hope.

#### 2. **WORK SESSION: Eugene-Springfield Fire Merger Update**

Fire Chief Heppel gave a PowerPoint presentation on the status of the fire merger.

Council Discussion:

- Councilor Clark – encouraged moving forward with the other aspects of consolidation, including the completion of the governance process; opposed the idea of creating a fire district; asked how the City Council could help with consolidation efforts; suggested the creation of a subcommittee of Eugene and Springfield city councilors.
- Councilor Semple – suggested directing additional funds from the Community Safety Initiative to Fire services.
- Councilor Yeh – noted that the fire merger is a source of local pride and a great example of intergovernmental cooperation; encouraged continued work to chip away at gaps in the system; supported the creation of a subcommittee.
- Councilor Pryor – stated that the right people were involved in the consolidation process which ensured a good outcome; suggested convening the Eugene and Springfield city councils in a joint meeting to identify the direction staff should pursue and to hear recommendations after the proposed subcommittee completed its work.
- Councilor Syrett – encouraged moving forward with the next phases of consolidation; expressed skepticism about the efficacy of creating a special district; asked questions about governance of special districts.
- Councilor Zelenka – said the goal of enhanced service for the Eugene and Springfield areas was achieved and now efforts should be on improving efficiency in fire service administration; asked whether one jurisdiction was subsidizing more of the program than the other.
- Councilor Evans – noted that the department was facing a capacity issue which will increase as the community grows.
- Councilor Taylor – suggested getting input from the firefighters as a first step; asked about the distribution of costs and who is responsible for appointing the Fire Chief.
- Councilor Clark – suggested starting with smaller groups first when soliciting input on how to proceed, noting the very different perspectives and situations between the two city councils and populations.

The meeting adjourned at 1:36 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Julie Adams  
Deputy City Recorder

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