

MINUTES

Eugene City Council Virtual Work Session Eugene, Oregon 97401

September 28, 2020
5:30 p.m.

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

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

1. **WORK SESSION: Initiation of Land Use Code Amendments for Commercial Setback Requirements**

Principal Planner Terri Harding and Associate Planner Chad Cramer gave a PowerPoint presentation on the code amendment proposal related to commercial setbacks.

Council Discussion:

- Councilor Pryor – spoke about the need to incorporate Americans with Disability Act considerations into any proposed changes.
- Councilor Zelenka – noted that his work session request was now four years old and the issue is still not being addressed; suggested changing the setback default to protect against another Capstone-like development; encouraged adopting a supplemental proposal until new standards can be implemented.
- Council Syrett – expressed concern that the issue wasn't fully addressed; asked whether the proposed changes would apply to the Riverfront development and if elements from the overlay zone could be transferable to downtown development; asked for clarification of differences between residential setbacks and commercial setbacks; said commercial-only development should be approached differently.
- Councilor Clark – asked about the level of public engagement in developing the proposals and voiced concern that analysis of potential issues was occurring before stakeholders are engaged; encouraged looking at practical aspects of standards as well as aesthetic goals.
- Councilor Evans – asked how a development like Applebee's on West 11th Avenue was allowed to occur and supported changes to current standards.
- Councilor Zelenka – reiterated that the default settings are backwards, and they should err on the side of required setbacks with defined exceptions.
- Councilor Clark – said significant shifts are occurring with the demand for commercial space and asked about the impacts of code changes.
- Councilor Taylor – agreed that current setback provisions are a problem and need to be addressed.
- Councilor Pryor – said the City's setback standards caused unforeseen problems; encouraged thought and deliberation of possible impacts is needed before simply switching the default.
- Councilor Zelenka – said he would propose a motion to begin a process to change the default policy that allows for no commercial setbacks, but instead sets a policy that would require commercial setbacks with a planter strip and allow a process to obtain a waiver, for a no commercial setbacks and building up to the sidewalk, in certain specific circumstances.
- Councilor Yeh – asked for clarification for the proposed motion would do.
- Councilor Syrett – said she was interested in considering other types of setback features and hearing staff's recommendations related to particular streets.

- Councilor Clark – asked why the downtown was chosen as the pilot area; encouraged consideration of unintended consequences of a citywide change to the default standards; expressed concern about the scope of the proposed change and supported getting input from stakeholders by the end of the year.
- Councilor Semple – asked about the process for expanding the standards to the whole city if the initial focus is on the downtown and River Road area; acknowledged that a cookie-cutter approach is not desirable but consideration of individual situations is time-consuming.
- Councilor Zelenka – said he was not proposing a blanket policy, simply starting the code amendment process with opportunity to consider potential consequences; supported completing the process in six months, including defining additional design elements and gathering stakeholder input.
- Councilor Pryor – encouraged consideration of what it will cost to satisfy the desire to make the right changes quickly.
- Councilor Clark – asked about the impacts of council direction on Planning staff resources.

MOTION and VOTE: Councilor Zelenka, seconded by Councilor Syrett, moved to initiate a code amendment to change the default allowing for no commercial setbacks, to require commercial setbacks with planter strips, other amenities and design elements to be completed within six months if possible, The code amendment should allow for adjustments or outright exceptions of no commercial setbacks in building up to the sidewalk in certain specific circumstances to be enumerated in the code, and staff will check before the end of the year reporting on feedback and potential exceptions for circumstances. **PASSED 8:0**

Mayor Vinis announced the second agenda item to discuss the City Manager Evaluation Process would be rescheduled due to time.

The meeting adjourned at 6:56 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Deputy Julie Adams
City Recorder

(Recorded by Beth Forrest)

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