

MINUTES

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

October 14, 2020
12:00 p.m.

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

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

Mayor Vinis opened the October 14, 2020, work session of the Eugene City Council.

Lane County Board of Commissioners Chair Heather Buch opened the October 14, 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.

Council Discussion:

- Councilor Syrett – asked staff to speak to landlord engagement funding and where funding can be identified for rapid rehousing and coordinated entry; stated she would like an update about the Highway 99 parcel before an update on River Avenue, or both updates together.
- Councilor Clark - expressed appreciation for the opportunity for both bodies to meet and stated they should meet as frequently as time allows; asked clarifying questions regarding figures given in the presentation; stated he thinks staff has done a great job implementing plans made to this point, but the situation has altered over time and he doesn't think the plan is sufficient to meet the need; stated this is a lot of money to put towards a plan that will only address 35-40 percent of the need; stated he is hesitant but happy that both bodies are working on this together, and hopes the plan will be reanalyzed.
- Commissioner Berney – asked staff if federal agency-used definitions of homelessness are now being used in this work; inquired into the landlord incentives and asked if staff is working with the HomeShare program in that regard; asked staff if it is familiar with a new tent that is half the cost and more weather- and wind-resistant than conestoga tents; stated Springfield is preparing to change the building code to allow travel trailers, motorhomes and tiny homes to park on all house, church, commercial and industrial lots within Springfield and its urban growth boundary; asked if of the 240 beds secured, whether all or part of those are due to adding Ms. Johnson's position or other positions to create a system, or if they were in the works anyway; suggested foundation grants can be explored for further funding.
- Councilor Pryor – stated he is gratified with the progress made and public support will be a key concept moving forward; stated he is grateful the five-year plan is still being adhered to; stated in regard to the regional housing needs analysis, the State is also interested in looking at local homelessness needs, and could conceivably impose timelines to demonstrate a good faith effort through public support to be addressing the problem; stated local governments will need to put forward cash, incentives or whatever is needed to help partners build the housing; encouraged recognition of the fact that there will be pressure to deal with some very significant

populations, which will be expensive; stated Portland passed a \$300 million bond measure to do this kind of work, and the City and Lane County need to look into similar opportunities and options; stated he cannot stress how serious this is and action is needed now.

- Councilor Zelenka – stated many of the things being talked about are symptoms of a bigger problems including affordable housing, drug and substance abuse and lack of programs and services, and lack of mental health resources and programs; stated he thinks efforts are addressing the symptom and not the problem, but it is a place to start; stated this should not be a static plan and the groups should be open to new ideas, noting the hallmark of local programs so far has been innovation; said there is a need to be creative and look locally for funding, possibly a bond measure to fund both climate change and homelessness, the two things the community is demanding funding for.
- Commissioner Sorenson – asked clarifying questions regarding the \$13 million gap in funding and asked staff for recommendations in bridging that gap; asked what percentage of the homeless population in Lane County live in Eugene and if the \$13 million is just for Eugene; asked for the percentages of the homeless population in Lane County by city; stated he feels a bond should be considered and the government should leverage construction in order to get on top of this.
- Councilor Semple – asked clarifying questions about non-congregate bed capacity for this winter; stated she is having a hard time accepting that 500 beds will be provided when it has been historically such a struggle to increase beds; agreed this emergency has become large enough that the public is starting to support the effort.
- Councilor Yeh – stated that adjustments to the plan will have to be made and reconsidering alternative shelter is an area where this is appropriate; stated in a partnership it is necessary to have good communication or problems start to arise; stated staff should feel comfortable letting both bodies know when they need to meet and she feels it is helpful when both bodies meet together.
- Commissioner Farr – thanked Mayor Vinis for her ongoing work with the Poverty and Homelessness Board and also with the Shelter Stakeholder Committee; asked staff to speak about the pallet housing project in the works in Cottage Grove; asked staff if it has heard about an ordinance likely to be passed by the City of Springfield in the near future allowing RV parking in driveways in a far less restrictive fashion than the City of Eugene currently allows; stated he feels the Joint Elected Officials meetings are essential but not the most effective way to get work done, and in this format the City Council gets about 80 percent more time “at the mic” than the Board of Commissioners, which is not equitable; stated that smaller meetings of specific task forces do a better job of identifying issues that can be talked about in-depth at meetings like this.
- Mayor Vinis – asked clarifying questions about figures presented around meeting the need; asked staff to speak to the status of super-siting; stated the providers have shared in the last couple of months their desire to have more of a network of navigation centers rather than one navigation center embedded with the homeless shelter, and this network idea may be faster and less expensive to stand up, especially given the use of the River Avenue building as a permanent shelter is going to be delayed for an unforeseeable amount of time.
- Councilor Clark – stated there are a couple of fronts when considering additional plans, including how to get to a larger percentage of the homeless population to curb public camping and how to prevent people from becoming homeless due to the economic effects of COVID; the City of Eugene has \$15 million in its facility reserve that should be used on a navigation center sufficient in size to address the issue and has the capacity to deliver several hundred emergency beds; stated this issue will not be adequately addressed until the City is able to compel campers to be in sheltered realities rather than camping along the river; stated in regard to the issue of keeping people from becoming homeless, he has an idea for a bond that would allow people to borrow money locally to stay in housing, whether it be a mortgage or rental situation, and pay

back the money over time; stated this may be a way to stabilize what could become a larger amount of homeless people.

- Commissioner Bozievich – asked for a copy of the presentation to be sent out to both bodies; stated he wanted to correct that most of the funding for permanent supportive housing and all the projects on the timeline staff presented are coming from Homes For Good’s tax credit financing or a property donation from Lane County for the location; stated Homes For Good is the biggest player in permanent supportive housing in this county and it is not getting a lot of mention; stated he thinks permanent supportive housing is where efforts should be concentrated because it is a long-term change in people instead of a temporary enablement; stated affordable housing must be included in all policies.
- Councilor Zelenka – thanked Lane County for partnering with the City of Eugene; asked what outreach and level of participation is occurring in Springfield, Cottage Grove, Oakridge and Florence; stated he thinks in the smaller communities the issue is more lack of funding than willingness to participate; stated he is thinking of putting together a work session poll to discuss funding a joint climate change/homelessness bond process.
- Councilor Syrett – stated staff has provided an update of the TAC Report goals and neither body has formally adopted the goals; suggested to the City Manager a work session could be scheduled for the updated goals to be considered and hopefully adopted.
- Commissioner Berney – stated he is not in favor of the current meeting format; stated the City of Springfield’s contributions and solutions should be recognized; suggested there is a national organization of funders dedicated to ending homelessness and believes this area has the capacity to be one of their major sites; asked that any future discussion of a bond be more strategic and to consider a willingness to perhaps structure a bond as incentive to get some of the national foundation dollars here and start moving aggressively in that manner.
- Commissioner Buch – stated this is really a county-wide conversation and it is important to include Springfield and smaller cities in this work; stated she wonders if the two bodies are thinking big enough, that every idea needs to be put on the table and to continue thinking outside the box; stated the conversation needs to continue on a bigger level to make a real dent and not just tread water; stated she would like to meet to discuss a different meeting format where it is a little easier to tackle the issues.
- Mayor Vinis – agreed with Chair Buch and apologized that there are commissioners that feel they needed more time and this meeting format did not allow it.

Mayor Vinis adjourned the Eugene City Council meeting at 1:35 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](#).