

MINUTES

**Eugene City Council
Hult Center for the Performing Arts
1 Eugene Center
Eugene, Oregon 97401**

**January 4, 2023
5:30 p.m.**

Councilors Present: Emily Semple, Matt Keating, Alan Zelenka, Jennifer Yeh, Mike Clark, Greg Evans, Lyndsie Leech, Randy Groves

1. ENTERTAINMENT

Llorona performed *Paso Doble*.

2. LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Mayor Vinis read a statement acknowledging that the ceremony was being held on Kalapuya llihi, the traditional indigenous homeland of the Kalapuya people.

3. ADMINISTRATION OF OATHS OF OFFICE

City Recorder Katie LaSala administered the oaths of office to:

- Alan Zelenka, Ward 3
- Jennifer Yeh, Ward 4
- Mike Clark, Ward 5
- Greg Evans, Ward 6
- Lyndsie Leech, Ward 7

4. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

City Council President Greg Evans provided opening remarks.

5. COUNCIL REMARKS

A video presentation was shown titled 2023 State of the City Eugene City Council Remarks.

6. 2023 BOLD STEPS AWARD

Mayor Vinis announced Forrest Paint and Threadbare Printhouse as the 2022 Bold Steps Award winners, and recognized Yellow Emperor, OCCU, We Refill It, and Kesh Color Lab as finalists.

7. COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARDS

Mayor Vinis presented the 2022 Community Awards to Laurel Hill Center, Kris Galago, and Beyond Toxics.

8. VIDEO PRESENTATION

A video of the 2022 City of Eugene Highlights was shown.

9. STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS

Mayor Vinis delivered her 2023 State of the City Address:

Welcome back! It is great to see you all in the Hult Center once again for this State of the City event. In so many ways this building embodies our resiliency, hope, and love of this community.

There's a famous quote from Gandhi, "Be the change that you wish to see in the world." I've been thinking about that phrase a lot lately. Coming together in this community space is a moment to rekindle our shared vision of the city we wish to be in the world.

We want to be a city where everyone has a place to live; a city with plentiful parks and open spaces that are safe and accessible to everyone; a place children can thrive; a city that is easy and safe to navigate by car, bus, bike or on foot; a city that offers ample family wage jobs and healthy businesses that meet our needs; a city that is rich with activities and amenities to expand our horizons; and a city whose landscape, buildings, and actions reduce our impact on global warming.

We've just shared a video highlighting the many accomplishments of the year. I want to take this moment to appreciate all of the people who bring their hearts, minds and energy to enable the City of Eugene – our government and leadership – to succeed. I am speaking of city employees who continue to carry heavier and more diverse responsibilities than ever before, of the unsung volunteer heroes who serve on our boards and commissions, my fellow elected officials, and our many community partners. And of course, I want to thank those who live and work in Eugene - who are not part of governing the city but make up the City itself and ultimately give it its strength, diversity, and true character. All of the working people who show up every day to make sure we have groceries, that our children are educated and parented, that housing, businesses and roads get built and repaired, stores open and products are made, services are offered and buses run on time. Thank you once again for all you contribute every day in Eugene and for the continuing privilege of serving as your mayor.

Tonight, I will talk with you a bit about the accomplishments of the last year and our goals for the year ahead. But I also want to highlight how those step-by-step accomplishments, that steady and sometimes slow progress, brings us closer to that big picture - to becoming the city that we want and need to be.

In 2022 the city conducted a Community Survey of households across the community. The results were not surprising. They reflect your continuing concerns about our city and the issues it faces: homelessness, housing, public safety and climate change still top the list of things you want the City's leadership to address.

These problems have been decades in the making. They reflect the impact of generations of neglect of housing and public health needs, and a long-term dependence on fossil fuels. This work is generational. We are the generation holding the bag. It is our job—the challenge of our era – to persevere in realizing our vision and not to pass the burden of these challenges on to our children and grandchildren.

Where are we this year in addressing those on-going public priorities of homelessness, housing, public safety and climate change? And how are those incremental steps taking us to that broader vision on which we all agree?

The Impacts of Homelessness. This is the top concern on everyone's list.

In 2022 parts of our city witnessed great progress. We defused an ongoing and unruly situation in West Eugene through commercial street parking regulation and consistent monitoring. People living at the temporary sites in Washington Jefferson Park and at 13th and Chambers were largely able to relocate to the new Safe Sleep sites.

The City now offers almost 700 shelter beds – including nine rest stops and four safe sleep sites. Each of these sites is unique; but they share a quiet, purposeful culture of safety and hope. And they work. For example, a man with a vision disability stayed with his partner at a Safe Sleep site for several months. During that time, he sorted out his finances and got the healthcare he needed. He and his partner sustained jobs and moved on to their own apartment. A mother, struggling with addiction, got into a treatment program, found and kept a job, and was able to visit her children once again thanks to having a place to sleep and people who supported her. These stories of success sustain us in our work.

Safe sleep sites and rest stops are successful models that we need to continue to support. I know that the scale of suffering and impact of homelessness on our community are profound. I also know that we cannot not solve homelessness for everyone. But we can solve it for some of the people we serve. It is incremental work at the most personal level. Now more than ever, this is a call to everyone to join constructively in responding to this crisis. We need to keep our successful programs in play and—importantly—to advocate for more support from the state and federal governments so we can continue to increase the number of people we help.

Advocacy for such support is my daily, weekly, monthly mission in my work with other mayors in Oregon, and across the country. As a leader in the Oregon Mayors Association, I will be a constant advocate for state support during the 2023 legislative session.

We continue to rely on and build on our partnership with the County, and the nonprofit providers who deliver the assistance to people in need. We are not alone in this challenge, but Eugene and our partners are innovative leaders in implementing solutions. Our city is a recognized leader at the state and federal level, and our work is a model for others.

That brings me to Housing: We remain concerned about displacement of renters from their homes when housing costs are high and too many people are under threat of homelessness.

We know – anecdotally and statistically – that renters are suffering in this market. We also understand that property owners face risks to their property if they have irresponsible tenants, or tenants who are unable to pay their rent. Our goal is not to

penalize property owners. Our goal is to help stabilize people in their housing in this very heated market.

We enter the new year mid-way through this deliberation. There is concern that increased regulatory requirements of landlords will reduce the number of rentals in our community – that regulation will create an insurmountable barrier. I take that seriously. At the same time, there is immediate and dire need for relief and protection for renters who are powerless in the face of economic forces. We must find a balance.

All councilors understand that the long-term solution to housing cost and availability is to build more housing. One of Council's first actions in 2022 was adoption of the Housing Implementation Pipeline - or HIP. The HIP outlines our goals to create more housing of all types, including more affordable homes as well as addressing the needs of renters. The HIP also outlines the toolbox of funding and incentives to promote housing development – both state and federal sources as well as local policies enacted by council.

Middle Housing dominated the first half of 2022 at council meetings and public forums. I have advocated for Middle Housing since taking office in 2017. I am proud of the council for voting unanimously on a package of zoning code changes that not only comply with State requirements but include incentives to encourage more affordable units to be built. It took incremental, thoughtful work by councilors, staff and members of the public to get to that vote, and it depended on extraordinary levels of public engagement. The City team won a state award for their multifaceted and deliberative outreach and information gathering.

This is a significant step and it is key to enabling us to meet the desperate need for housing in our community and also meet our climate goals.

The construction of middle housing within a short walk to major corridors aligns with Council's decision to study five major corridors for enhanced transit and improved biking and walking. This policy, coordinated with Lane Transit District, is intentionally incremental – each corridor is unique; in each step along the way, the city will engage the affected neighborhood as well as the whole community.

The consideration of EmX and other transit corridor improvements are components of our gradual and thoughtful progression toward the Eugene of the future – a city that enables more people to live close to transit and to reduce our dependence on gas-powered cars. We all have a voice and role to play to build that resilient city of our near future.

Public Safety is number three on the list of top concerns of our community.

We are experiencing more gun violence; more guns in the hands of people with mental health issues; and more violence and threatening behavior associated with drug dealing and drug use. Much of the worst of this behavior last year occurred in West Eugene and in our downtown.

While some of this drug use and violence happened within our homeless community, it is critical not to conflate homelessness and public safety. Our city programs are designed to provide shelter and services to those who want and need it; and to enable our police department to target their work toward criminal activity. In downtown in particular, there's a lot of terrible behavior that falls short of criminal but, nevertheless, is frightening and unacceptable.

In 2022, the city followed three tracks:

First, the police department continues to hire more officers and to direct the Special Crimes Unit to address the worst violent and drug related activity – and they continue to succeed in finding and arresting this higher level of criminal.

Second, the City has a constellation of alternative response teams – non-uniformed and unarmed. The most well-known, of course, is our contract with CAHOOTS to respond to mental health emergencies, but we have added other teams to meet needs across this city. We know we need more eyes on the street to hold people accountable for their behavior, and to be more responsive to our community's needs. In 2023, Council will hear recommendations for better targeting and coordinating of our alternative responses to uniformed officers.

Third, as you well remember, questions about police actions and accountability, and fairness and safety for people of color dominated the headlines in 2020. The public unrest led Council to appoint the Ad Hoc Committee on Police Policies, which presented its recommendations for reforms in 2021.

In 2022 and into 2023, Council is reviewing those recommendations related to our Civilian Oversight system of the Eugene Police Department. This system is a model that other cities seek to replicate. At the same time, it has been in place since 2008, and the Ad Hoc Committee's recommendations present an opportunity to consider possible adjustments.

I share this as a reminder that issues that dominated the headlines in 2020 resulted in specific policy decisions and directions by Council that city staff are now executing. We take the community's concerns seriously about the use of force, oversight and bias in policing. This illustrates again how change happens in our city through deliberative, incremental work.

Climate Change: Council's response to climate change was front and center in 2022 and will continue to be a priority this year.

As you may recall, the Climate Action Plan 2.0 identified Transportation and Buildings as two of three key contributors to greenhouse gas emissions. The Council has already adopted a range of transportation and land use policies to reduce the use of fossil fuels in transportation.

In 2022, our focus turned to the impact of buildings on climate. The work was framed by five motions put forward by our former colleague, Claire Syrett. Those motions

pointed in two directions: first, to guide or regulate the energy source for new construction; and second, to improve the resiliency and sustainability of existing buildings.

We are doing this work in stages, the first of which would prohibit the use of fossil fuels in new low-rise residential construction initiated after June 2023. This will come to a vote soon. In my mind this is straight-forward. Housing policy is climate policy. What and where we build is key in our response to climate change. This policy also aligns with our housing priorities to increase the supply of smaller, more compact housing which is more energy efficient.

Regarding existing buildings, Council has reviewed an extensive report about the costs and benefits of retrofitting residential, commercial and industrial buildings over time as technology and costs make those changes feasible.

We have received a lot of public comment about this work: Some strongly urge council to act quickly and decisively to reduce our consumption of fossil fuels. Others fear that the council's action will literally turn off the gas.

I will say just a few things about my perspective on this work. It is essential and urgent. We are seeking to anticipate, create, and respond to a systemic change in our energy system. We are not requiring behavioral or lifestyle change by the individual consumer. We are not "taking away" natural gas. We want to support future consumer choices that are part of the solution to climate change, rather than choices that deepen the problem. Today's choices, the status quo, got us to this point and continue to literally fuel global warming. As a City we must encourage new choices, gradually enough to build consensus and support, but also urgently enough to make a difference. That thinking also applies to our business community. We are looking at the types of buildings and the heating and cooling systems they require. We are seeking to understand the difference between an office building and a grocery store in their energy consumption and the potential for lower fossil fuel use and emissions in construction and appliances. We aim to do this work deliberately - not reactively - in a way that furthers our climate goals and supports rather than disrupts existing and future businesses. The choice is not to do nothing or do everything all at once. It is to take incremental actions to make Eugene a city that is sustainable on this warming planet.

Moving forward

As I look to our plans and prospects in the coming year, I welcome the opportunity to reboot our sense of common purpose. All of our ongoing issues share common themes: they are fundamentally about equity - our need to create a community culture in which people have access to housing and opportunity, feel protected and safe, and benefit from both a built and natural landscape that is more resilient in the face of global warming.

In all of these endeavors we have consistently relied on our business community. We count on developers, builders and trades to construct the housing, fix the roads and

install the infrastructure we need. We have turned to businesses to pay for the services we need: a Construction Excise Tax to support housing, a Community Safety Payroll tax to support our public safety system; Rental Housing fees to support our housing navigator and other housing protections. We have looked to our business community to provide property for safe sleep sites, and funding to support the service providers.

In all of our strategic plans – Transportation, the Housing Implementation Pipeline, and the Climate Action Plan – we count on the business community to help carry the load.

And yet, we don't have a comprehensive plan in place to support and grow the businesses that we depend on. We don't have a current economic development plan for our city.

It is time.

In 2022, I convened monthly meetings of a Mayor's Business Advisory Council that informed my thinking about the range of issues before council. This year I will take the next step based on insights from that advisory council and concerns raised by the public. This year I will convene a Mayor's Blue Ribbon Business Council on Economic Development. The committee will have a six-month timeline to outline strategic priorities for a healthy local economy. A committee of this sort was last convened in 2004 by Mayor Torrey. Quite a few things have changed since then, but the need is the same.

We need a healthy business community for its own inherent value—our businesses fill ongoing needs and innovate new approaches, they provide our essential goods and services, they employ the majority of Eugeneans, and they provide opportunities for entrepreneurs large and small to make their way in the world and support their families. We also need a healthy business community to support our community commons - the parts of our City that benefit and serve us all.

We need the business community to partner with the City in designing that roadmap for success - to make Eugene a model for a growing, thriving, business friendly, customer friendly, worker friendly, and climate friendly business community. Doing this work together moves us closer to being the change, to becoming that City we want to be.

As I said before, this is generational work. This year marks the third year of the Mayor's Youth Advisory Council. This dynamic group of high school students has matured as an organization and their priorities reflect their perspective as teenagers growing up in this community. As they learn to contribute to our policy discussions, we need to listen and learn from them. Their perspective is not the same as today's adult leaders – and yet we are building the city they will lead in the future. They are the change – and they need to be our partners. You will hear more from them in 2023.

Every year I have been in office, I have closed my State of the City address anticipating the World Athletics Championships Oregon 22. That stellar event has now come and gone. It brought the world to Eugene and put our city in front of the largest global TV audience ever to watch this biennial track and field championship.

Our city team created a glorious free festival at the new Riverfront Park that for 10 days reminded us of the joy and exhilaration of coming together to share music, dance, food and athletics in a public space. We fulfilled the call of “being the change we wish to see in the world” where we celebrated all of the communities within our community.

In the day to day life of a city, change happens slowly. The State of the City is our annual moment to look back to review the positive steps we have taken. It is also a time to see those individual steps as incremental progress toward our vision of the city that we want to be. It’s my hope that reflecting together once again inspires and strengthens us to continue this good work. I’m ready and eager to take the next steps with you. Join me.

10. ENTERTAINMENT

Llorona performed *Place Among the Stars*.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Katie LaSala
City Recorder

(Recorded by Cherish Bradshaw)

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