

MINUTES

Eugene City Council and Urban Renewal Agency Work Session Eugene, Oregon 97401

January 25, 2023
12:00 p.m.

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

Mayor Vinis opened the January 25, 2023, work session of the Eugene City Council and Urban Renewal Agency in a hybrid format at 101 W 10th Avenue, Eugene OR 97401.

- 1. EXECUTIVE SESSION Pursuant to ORS 192.660(2)(e) real property transactions**
- 2. WORK SESSION: Downtown Priorities and Projects and Downtown Urban Renewal District**
Agency Director, Sarah Medary, introduced Community Development Director, Will Dowdy, Downtown Team Manager, Eric Brown, and Development Programs Manager, Amanda D'Souza, who presented the Downtown Priorities and Downtown Urban Renewal District.

Councilor Discussion:

- Councilor Clark – asked about recent changes in law for use of urban renewal funds and potential impacts; noted that the district will be a good tool for improvements; believes that the district increases the value of properties which will improve tax income in the future.
- Councilor Groves – noted that the district could help make downtown secure and vital; noted that capital improvements like lighting and infrastructure can increase safety; is in support of the suggested motion.
- Councilor Leech – supports the suggested motion; noted concerns for equitable infrastructure improvement throughout the City; would like information to be provided to the public outlining why specific areas are getting upgrades or services over others.
- Councilor Evans – asked how 4J School District would be financially impacted if the district were to sunset; discussed under-utilized rooftops in downtown that could be used to develop urban agriculture spaces; asked about expanding the district to develop a convention center space at Graduate Hotel.
- Councilor Zelenka – is not in favor of the tax increment financing that renewal districts use; noted other funding options exist for improvements; supports exploring options for downtown projects; noted that the timing for this topic aligns well with other topics being considered; would support including 10th and Olive block in the opportunity area; thinks it is important to consider how moving City offices out of the downtown core will impact the area and to develop a plan to counteract any negative impacts.
- Councilor Keating – asked staff to clarify map coloring and outlines in the presentation; clarified timing around adjusting the boundaries of the district; noted

the potential of a new baseball facility at the fairgrounds and the benefits of connecting to downtown.

- Councilor Semple – asked if the Lane County fairgrounds would be a separate district; asked about a sunset date for the district if it is renewed; noted that other funding options have not been discussed; noted concern over pet waste in dense housing areas; noted that there are ten downtown districts; would like a clarity on what is considered under the term downtown; would like a work session to define the downtown boundaries more clearly; noted that the corner of Olive and Broadway experience the worst issues in the area.

MOTION AND VOTE: Councilor Zelenka, seconded by Councilor Keating, moved to extend the meeting by ten minutes. **VOTE: 8:0 PASSED**

- Mayor Vinis – noted the lack of housing density in downtown is an issue; asked if there is an assessment of commercial spaces in downtown that could be repurposed for housing; noted there is a critical problem in a specific geographic area that is vital to rebuilding a safe and vibrant downtown; is against expanding the district if it will dilute the focus for the identified area.
- Councilor Clark – would support housing as the primary use for extending the district; asked staff if boundaries can be changed both to the south and west; asked if the district can extend enough to encompass the fairgrounds.
- Councilor Zelenka – noted that the Multi Unit Property Tax Exemption program was recently revamped; housing, safety, and commerce would be his top priorities for downtown renewal projects; noted that expanding the boundaries could dilute the effectiveness of the proposed projects.
- Councilor Groves – would like information about expanding the district and the legal and financial implications of doing so; noted that the entire district should be considered when addressing critical issues.
- Councilor Semple – noted the Multi Unit Property Tax Exemption changes may have overcomplicated the process and deterred developers from applying; is opposed to expanding the district; noted the fairgrounds should not be included in the district.

MOTION AND VOTE: Councilor Groves, seconded by Councilor Keating, move to direct the Agency Director to draft a proposal to amend the Downtown Urban Renewal Plan to expand the District’s financial capacity and add language to allow urban renewal funds to be used for additional eligible projects, and further direct the Agency Director to schedule a work session to allow the Board to review and comment on that proposal.

Councilor Discussion:

- Councilor Yeh – asked to clarify if the motion directs to explore expansion of the district;
- Councilor Zelenka – noted that the motion is not approving the renewal, only to draft the proposal.

VOTE: 8:0 PASSED

Mayor Vinis adjourned the meeting at 1:44 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Katie LaSala". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Katie" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "LaSala".

Katie LaSala
City Recorder

(Recorded by Sara McKinney)
Webcast of meeting available [here](#).