

## MINUTES

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

January 12, 2022  
12:00 p.m.

**Councilors Present:** Claire Syrett, Matt Keating, Jennifer Yeh, Emily Semple, Alan Zelenka, Randy Groves, Mike Clark

Councilors Absent: Greg Evans

Mayor Vinis opened the January 12, 2022, work session of the Eugene City Council in virtual format.

#### 1. WORK SESSION – Eugene Public Library Year 5 Levy Report

Library Service Director Will O’Hearn provided City Council with an informational update on the fifth year of the expanded “Library of the Future” services provided with levy funding. On November 3, 2015, the City of Eugene voters approved Measure 20-235 to fund expanded Eugene Public Library services for five years beginning July 2016. Accountability and transparency were built into the levy measure through an annual review by the citizen Library Advisory Board.

#### Council Discussion:

- Mayor Vinis – thanked staff for their presentation and leadership.
- Councilor Semple – thanked staff for their efforts; stated that approving the levy was a great investment and wise decision by the public; said she was impressed how the role of the library has seemingly shifted to that of a community center, providing much more than books and information, and becoming a fantastic source of outreach and access to vital resources for the community.
- Councilor Keating – echoed gratitude for the library and voters who passed the levy five years ago; asked if there is any data on those who have utilized library resources to secure permanent employment; stated that increased digital resources are critical during these times; asked about future growth of library spaces and what may be needed from Council to support that; asked staff to discuss the Imagination Library, a service which provides free books to children ages 0-5 that can be accessed by all Lane County residents.
- Councilor Groves – thanked staff for everything they do to provide for the community; stated that some may question the relevance of a brick and mortar library during the increased expansion of the digital age, but the library has demonstrated its worth and relevance through its community programs and outreach; stated that the phrase ‘promises made, promises kept’ should be used for all City project expenditures.
- Councilor Syrett – thanked staff for the presentation and their ongoing work; shared history on funding of the Eugene Public Library building; expressed excitement about the refined approach to maker resources and the size/impact of Wi-Fi hotspot distribution; advocated for continued funding of library programs and services.
- Councilor Zelenka – expressed appreciation that the library has been a bright spot during the pandemic; thanked staff for their responsiveness during challenging times.
- Councilor Yeh – echoed praise from Councilors and expressed appreciation to staff for thinking outside the box and their flexibility in providing services beyond the traditional bounds of a library; expressed appreciation for branch libraries and advocated for their continuing service and expansion.



- Councilor Semple – concurred with Councilor Yeh about the essential nature of branch libraries; stated that providing hearing loops and other forms of access to vulnerable residents is vital.
- Councilor Keating – shared suggestion from a neighborhood association meeting that a library materials drop-off box be installed in South Eugene to reduce user’s carbon footprint and provide them with greater access; stated broad support of expanding such drop-off locations.
- Councilor Zelenka – noted that the bilingual storywalk in the parks stood out as a great idea which combines ingenuity, equity and physical activity.
- Councilor Clark – echoed fellow Councilors’ support for the expanded library services and their contribution as a community benefit.
- Mayor Vinis – noted that the language used to frame this presentation would be extraordinarily helpful to use with issues faced by the City.

## 2. **WORK SESSION – Background on Upcoming Affordable Housing Related Council Action Items**

Housing Finance Analyst Ellen Meyi-Galloway provided Council with background information on several items related to affordable housing that have proposed actions slated for the January 24, 2022 meeting, allowing Council an opportunity to indicate if any additional information would be helpful for its consideration.

### Council Discussion:

- Councilor Zelenka – asked about the difference between a payable and forgivable loan; clarified on the timing of a loan’s forgivability; asked if there is any evidence of affordable housing being provided by the marketplace that is not subsidized.
- Councilor Semple – stated that this program is an excellent investment in affordable housing; stated that both proposals for low-income housing have merit and are desperately needed; stated the City should move forward with borrowing from Springfield to fund both projects.
- Councilor Clark – asked about the proposed affordable housing projects and the per unit development costs once completed; asked staff to talk about the specific areas of each project that these funds will subsidize; asked staff to detail any additional discounts and costs that will be absorbed by the City; asked for the approximate square footage per finished unit in the Coleman property.
- Councilor Syrett – asked if there were only two projects that submitted proposals; asked about the proposed location of the Coleman property; asked if it is known whether Springfield is willing to let the City borrow funds; asked if, under the terms of the loan forgiveness, the property manager would be obligated to address building rehabilitation/maintenance issues.
- Councilor Clark – asked staff to elaborate on Oak Leaf Village and the financial distress noted within their application for loan forgiveness, and if the factors go beyond high operating costs and rental income received being lower than what was originally forecasted.
- Councilor Groves – thanked staff for presentation; agreed with Councilor Zelenka that more affordable housing is needed; asked if benchmarking data could be provided alongside the cost report in order to compare it against similar projects as a way to ensure the benefit received from the City’s investment is maximized.
- Councilor Clark – reminded Council that this kind of land comes at a premium, and there is already very little available land for the market to create new housing; noted that certain 1/8 acre lots in Ward 5 sold for upwards of \$600,000; stated that without the expansion of the City’s Urban Growth Boundary, buyers subject to market rate will pay more because the amount of available, buildable land has been artificially constrained, thereby increasing cost.
- Mayor Vinis – said she believes that housing is fundamentally infrastructure and that providing access to it for residents is important; stated that it seems short-sighted to think affordable housing is expensive to build; noted that the City relies on nonprofit organizations to a great extent to build publicly funded housing, even if that feels wrong; stated that the use of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) dollars has very specific requirements and expectations; stated



that it is not a terrible thing to use public funds to create housing, as those funds are also used to create other infrastructure projects; stated that subsidized affordable housing belongs in the larger spectrum of the City's housing implementation pipeline.

- Councilor Zelenka – stated there are 40+ listings on Zillow for 1/8 acre lots in the \$60-\$100,000 range; asked staff if they could provide info on average cost per lot in Eugene.

Mayor Vinis adjourned the meeting at 1:11 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Brooke Freed', with a stylized, flowing script.

Brooke Freed  
City Recorder AIC

*(Recorded by Jay Ferris)*

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

