

MINUTES

Eugene City Council Virtual Work Session Eugene, Oregon 97401

February 16, 2022
12:00 p.m.

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

Mayor Vinis opened the February 16, 2022, work session of the Eugene City Council in virtual format.

1. WORK SESSION – Public Art Update

Public Art Manager Kate Ali presented Council with an overview of the Public Art Program, along with a synopsis of several recent projects.

Council Discussion:

- Mayor Vinis – thanked staff for the inspiring presentation; expressed hope that people traveling through the city will be surprised and intrigued by art installations; expressed appreciation for the efforts to keep vibrant art in public spaces.
- Councilor Keating – thanked staff for the presentation; found it pleasant and inspiring to see the multitude of projects across the city; asked about the open call for artists and how that list is compiled, if it is made public and how community members can contribute to the public art program outside of the website; asked if artists are local to the city, region and/or state.
- Councilor Groves – expressed appreciation for finding new public art and what it adds to the vibrance of the community; expressed concerns around vandalism and defacing of public art; asked if anti-graffiti coats can be applied to public installations; asked what can be done to restore and protect public art; asked to consider the overpass support columns in Washington-Jefferson as possible future site for public art and other non-conventional canvases; expressed concern about fire hydrants being covered with artwork and the unintentional effect of making them more difficult for first responders to locate.
- Councilor Syrett – thanked staff for the presentation; asked to confirm that artists working with City programs are commissioned and paid for their work; noted that having a blank wall painted with a mural is quite effective at reducing graffiti; encouraged business having issues with chronic tagging to look into the urban canvas program; suggested adding a link with program information in the economic development section of the City’s website; noted the Whiteaker Community Council has received grant money from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to create public art which addresses vaccine hesitancy; noted Washington-Jefferson Park has multiple murals on the overpass infrastructure.
- Councilor Zelenka – stated a complete city involves many things and the role of Council and local government extends beyond providing basic services to increasing overall quality of life for its residents, which includes public art.
- Councilor Yeh – thanked staff for the presentation; noted many larger statues are seemingly more culturally mainstream, whereas murals have a higher diversity of representation; asked about the consideration surrounding the selection of various art pieces.
- Councilor Semple – stated her support for highway columns being painted; expressed a desire to see more free walls in the city; noted the downtown window exhibits have been quite successful; stated the 20x21 murals have turned out to be a great use of public funding; asked if art can be moved on occasion in order to increase visibility.

- Councilor Keating – stated he abhors offensive graffiti, yet street art extends beyond the offensive, with many celebrated artists around the globe for whom it is their primary medium; asked if there has been any outreach to local street artists when seeking new public art.
- Councilor Clark – thanked staff for presentation; asked who will decide on the goals and themes for Riverfront Park public art, noting its central location in the community and need for broad community appeal; asked if those responsible for vandalizing the pioneer mother and father statues on the University of Oregon campus were ever caught; asked if the City has access to these statues to reinstall elsewhere.
- Councilor Evans – noted there are marginalized street artists across the city, and it would be beneficial to reach out and consider their art in the existing scheme; discussed the defacing of public art and working with communities on prevention.
- Councilor Zelenka – asked staff to clarify the nature of free walls and their open use for community artists.
- Councilor Semple – discussed illegal tagging and its ongoing impact on public infrastructure; shared her hope that free walls can mitigate some of those occurrences.
- Mayor Vinis – applauded the work of the public art program and staff efforts.

2. WORK SESSION – Peterson Pacific Corp. Enterprise Zone Extension Request

Business Development Analyst Amanda D’Souza provided information on Peterson Pacific Corp. (Peterson), who submitted an Enterprise Zone Authorization Application seeking a tax exemption on a proposed investment of \$8,225,000 for building renovations, machinery, and equipment to accommodate the relocation of a Washington state manufacturing facility to the existing Eugene location. Peterson requested a two-year extension of the standard three-year exemption (for a total of five years). Council was asked to consider approval of Peterson’s two-year extension request consistent with the conditions included in the resolution in Attachment A of the AIS.

Council Discussion:

- Councilor Clark – thanked staff for the clear and succinct presentation; asked about clawbacks if criteria are not met; stated facilitating the creation of manufacturing jobs is a win for the City; noted this could provide young people not attending college more career opportunities.
- Councilor Zelenka – expressed appreciation for the clawback option; clarified that this will be a new investment with additional jobs added; noted the creation of jobs will be of significant public benefit; asked why the lot in question is not in the city and about the Planning Department’s process for annexation of commercial properties.
- Councilor Syrett – thanked staff for the presentation; clarified the investment and exemption amounts; asked for clarification on the chances of this property being annexed into the city limits at the end of the exemption period; noted the additional jobs created will be a significant increase in employment opportunities; stated the partnership with Lane Community College is also an excellent increase in skill-building capacity for the city; suggested adding a provision related to employing the previously incarcerated as an additional public benefit criterion.
- Councilor Groves – stated the creation of living wage jobs is a public benefit; asked for further input on annexation from Executive Director of Planning and Development Denny Braud.
- Councilor Semple – thanked Councilor Syrett for suggesting the addition to public benefit criteria focusing on recidivism.
- Councilor Keating – stated he welcomes job creation for the community, especially when it provides a living wage; stated his reservations about providing exemptions to corporations that should be paying their fair share in taxes; noted that Peterson Corp. has a broad corporate footprint; noted the company website has very outdated information on its COVID response and planning.
- Councilor Zelenka – asked staff to clarify what triggers annexation for commercial properties.

- Councilor Semple – referred to a prior conversation on the benefits and qualifications for an extension of the exemption, and that a Council decision should be based on them meeting criteria and not personal interests; stated that one’s position on COVID should not be a factor.
- Councilor Yeh – concurred with Councilor Semple and agreed the program criteria has been met; expressed support for the addition to future public benefit criteria around working with previously incarcerated residents.
- Councilor Clark – expressed support for adding criteria around the previously incarcerated; stated the benefits paid through job creation and learning opportunities will be above and beyond the tax exemption amounts granted to Peterson Corp.; stated the time may be right for another conversation on incentivizing voluntary annexation, which he believes could do a lot of good for the City in the long term.
- Councilor Evans – echoed Councilor Syrett’s proposed inclusion of support for the previously incarcerated into public benefit criteria; stated a larger conversation is needed on how to reinvest in and reintegrate these individuals.
- Councilor Syrett – appreciated the endorsement of the concept of supporting the previously incarcerated as public benefit criteria; noted it may be possible as an administrative change made by staff; asked staff to follow up on the pathway for adding new public benefit criteria or stating the current criteria more explicitly.
- Councilor Evans – stated the need to be explicit in the language around a benefit for hiring and retaining the previously incarcerated.
- Mayor Vinis – added the possibility of including climate and environmental impact considerations to the public benefit criteria.
- Councilor Keating – stated his support for recidivism efforts, use of locally sourced materials and climate considerations into future public benefit criteria; asked about the percentage of Peterson Corp. workforce who are represented by a labor union.

MOTION AND VOTE: Councilor Syrett, seconded by Councilor Keating, moved to adopt the Resolution Approving a Two-Year Extension Request for a Property Tax Exemption to Peterson Pacific Corp. for its Operations in the West Eugene Enterprise Zone as outlined in Attachment A. **PASSED 8:0**

Mayor Vinis adjourned the meeting at 1:31 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Brooke Freed
City Recorder AIC

(Recorded by Jay Ferris)

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