

## MINUTES

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

February 23, 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 23, 2022, work session of the Eugene City Council in virtual format.

#### 1. WORK SESSION – Unhoused Response Update

Assistant City Manager Kristie Hammitt, Homeless Systems Policy Manager Peter Chavannes and Public Works Director Matt Rodrigues provided an update on Unhoused Response actions related to the establishment of Safe Sleep sites to address the growing number of unhoused community members and related community-wide impacts. Staff also provided an update on temporary urban camps and vehicle camping response. Staff reviewed the financial aspects including the one-time funding, on-going funding and the funding expiration dates.

#### Council Discussion:

- Mayor Vinis – thanked staff for the review of their efforts; stated it is a good foundation for determining next steps.
- Councilor Groves – thanked staff for the reminder of their accomplishments and overview of ongoing work; asked staff to state specifically the goals of safe sleep sites and to clarify if it stops with getting people off the streets or goes beyond that; stated he is very supportive of the concepts in practice at Everyone Village and is continually impressed by their efforts to do more than just warehousing people; asked how efforts compare to those at the 310 and 410 Garfield sites; asked if there are documented outcomes and metrics used for assessment; noted the signage placed in West Eugene by parking enforcement has been effective and asked if there are plans to expand its use into others areas experiencing a disproportionate number of issues, such as wards 1 and 7; emphasized the need for an ongoing response to illegal street parking and managing of community expectations; expressed appreciation for neighbors, businesses and workers dealing with these issues who tend to lead with an element of compassion, but understands they still have realistic expectations for follow-up on behavioral challenges.
- Councilor Syrett – thanked staff for the exhaustive update of the incredible work being done; said she is pleased about the opening of the 410 Garfield site and is very supportive of safe sleep sites in general; stated she does not hope such sites will be needed forever, but for now they continue to provide safe, stable shelter; stated her concerns around those who preemptively left Washington Jefferson Park having already moved to adjacent strips of land and are not expected to relocate to safe sleep sites; stated staff have acknowledged limitations for responding to calls for service; expressed hope that the Navigation Center will assist those in shelters find stable housing; asked in what City department neighborhood service officers will be located.
- Councilor Clark – stated his continued belief that a great majority of homelessness is driven by drug abuse; asked about Oregon Ballot Measure 110 and progress to-date on the receipt of addiction recovery resources; asked if the Intergovernmental Relations Committee has any work in progress to hold the state to its responsibility in this matter; asked about the wellness continuum for the unhoused and if there is a scoring process for those traveling along it; asked

if it is known what percentage of the unhoused population chooses to not engage with services; asked if there is a requirement for those in emergency shelters to participate in the wellness continuum; asked if those staying at low-barrier emergency shelters are required to not be using drugs; stated there are some who will not seek shelter resources in the first place due to their desire to continue drug use.

- Councilor Zelenka – thanked staff for the good work; noted the accomplishment of increasing the number of available safe sleep sites and suite of services; asked staff to clarify what is meant by “request for service”; asked to review funding and cost information and if the \$2.4 million of ongoing funding is assumed; stated this information underscores the importance of a work session to discuss dedicated funding for homelessness services and climate change; asked staff to elaborate on the issues at Chase Commons site.
- Councilor Semple – thanked staff for the numerous of hours of work; expressed appreciation for the depth and breadth of this update; stated this issue is at the top of everyone’s mind in the city; stated it is a nearly insurmountable task, yet a lot of people are being helped by these costly efforts; stated this problem is so enormous and people should realize it is affecting everything else the City does, including other services; expressed support for rest stop sites as an affordable way of helping people; stated shower trucks and laundry services are needed and useful; stated concerns about one-time funding and where it will come from on a recurring basis; noted that a lot of money has come from the Community Safety Initiative, and not just in the form of police coverage; stated her concern about people disbursing back into the community and the need for more shelters spread throughout the city.
- Councilor Yeh – thanked staff for the report and said it is astounding how much work is happening between staff and service providers; stated she is also anxious about \$8.2 million of one-time funds, as they are not something the community will be able to provide; asked for an approximate timeframe of when the one-time funding will be depleted; stated that dealing with addiction is a serious concern and requires good solutions to stabilize those experiencing it alongside homelessness.
- Councilor Evans – thanked staff for the comprehensive presentation; asked about coordination efforts with governmental partners and what the long-term outlook is for providing support and services with help from the state and federal level; stated he was hoping for a more proactive response at the federal level on long-term funding for emergency shelters and affordable housing, including maintenance; noted the history of putting people in housing projects that had no ongoing funds for maintenance, which ultimately must be demolished and leads to its former tenants seeking alternate forms of shelter; asked if there are any plans to meet with leadership from the Department of Housing and Urban Development.
- Councilor Groves – stated this problem is bigger than Eugene and it extends to the regional, state and federal levels; asked if there are currently any methods in place to measure the performance of nonprofit providers; stated that housing people in large recreational vehicles and trailers is inefficient given their large footprint; asked if there are ways to incentivize people out of these larger vehicles, particularly for the many whose vehicles appear uninhabitable; expressed hope that the Mayor will be given an opportunity to update Council on her work with Mayor Wheeler in Portland.
- Councilor Clark – stated he believes staff are doing a phenomenal job with a herculean effort to successfully implement policy; noted it is Council’s job to decide on a policy approach which staff then implements; stated he only wants to highlight failures in policy; stated the general public expects the City to have a plan for ramping down expenditures and demand for emergency shelters; noted one of the biggest failures is that people receiving homelessness services are not required to seek wellness; stated his concern for the lack of accountability for those receiving services.
- Councilor Keating – thanked staff for the presentation; asked if there has been a conversation around deploying physical and/or online resources where people most in need can access

information on specific site locations and hours of availability; noted the difficulty and confusion that can be caused by each site having a different name/naming format.

- Councilor Zelenka – noted figures showing very low investments and resources for substance abuse and mental health services in Oregon; stated homelessness is often a symptom of mental health and substance abuse problems; asked about metrics to help ensure funding is spent in an effective and efficient way; noted that current services require approximately \$5 million of ongoing funding that is not currently available, which underscores the need for comprehensive and diverse funding approaches.
- Mayor Vinis – noted the City’s short-term legislative priorities do not directly address substance abuse and mental health services but agreed it needs to be a top priority.
- Councilor Evans – noted the Intergovernmental Relations Committee is not focused on access to substance abuse and mental services in this short session of the state legislature but should consider their approach to it during the long session in 2023 and how to move forward with municipal partners; stated something beyond money and resources are needed, including a strategic approach to address lack of services and affordable housing.
- Councilor Syrett – noted her role as Intergovernmental Relations Committee Chair, and if members of Council want them to lobby on funding for substance abuse and mental health services, Council will need to take an explicit position on it, which they have yet to do.
- Mayor Vinis – thanked all for their discussion and work; referred to her earlier comments noting this work allows the City to begin answering questions; recognized the opening of the 75-bed Navigation Center will bring greater clarity to how people move along the continuum of services; stated as one-time funding runs out there will need to be structured asks from legislative bodies, the conversations for which are in the early stages of being orchestrated.

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

Respectfully submitted,



Brooke Freed  
City Recorder AIC

*(Recorded by Jay Ferris)*

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