

MINUTES

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

September 13, 2023
12:00 p.m.

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

Mayor Vinis opened the September 13, 2023, work session of the Eugene City Council in a virtual format.

1. **WORK SESSION: Climate-Friendly and Equitable Communities Parking Reform Land Use Code Amendments (CA 23-1)**

City Manager Sarah Medary, introduced Land Use Supervisor, Reid Verner, Building Permit Services Director, Lydia Bishop, and Associate Planner, Leah Rausch, who presented information on the Climate-Friendly and Equitable Communities Parking Reform Land Use Code Amendments (CA 23-1).

Councilor Discussion:

- Councilor Groves – is concerned about the State’s mandated changes; asked how reducing off-street parking will reduce greenhouse gas emissions; is concerned that people will drive more searching for parking; is worried about the impacts to neighborhoods; stated that the narrow streets in Eugene limit parking to only one side of the street, reducing available on-street parking; believes this reform will create more problems.
- Councilor Zelenka – does not support the mandated changes, and believes changes should be phased in over time; stated that the City does not need these rules to achieve the greenhouse gas reduction targets; likes the electric vehicle requirements; stated that Oregon has 68 thousand electric vehicles and 16 percent of new vehicle sales are electric vehicles; stated that this mandate would only apply to new development; stated that the intended purpose of reducing off-street parking is to increase use of alternative modes of transportation; believes this theory is flawed; believes this parking reform will push parking into neighborhoods and create problems; is concerned about unintended consequences; believes that developers and lenders will continue to provide parking in new developments.
- Councilor Semple –stated that if the City complies with the mandate before the deadline it has the option to change it later; noted that the City will be stuck with the State’s outline if it does not meet the deadline; is in favor of moving forward with plan one; stated that properties with parking are desirable, which will encourage developers to continue to provide parking; is concerned about the amount of staff time it would take to create new parking plans.

- Councilor Keating – is concerned about the ‘one-size fits all’ parking mandate from the State; is concerned about the public safety impact of additional on-street parking on narrow streets in the South Hills; stated confusion over mandates that encourage electric vehicle use but do not provide for off-street parking for charging of those vehicles; asked why Council should support less off-street parking for electric vehicles; asked about studies on similar parking reforms and how it impacts renters.
- Councilor Semple – is in favor of more electric vehicle usage; stated that electric vehicles cannot charge on the street; is concerned about extension cords being run across sidewalks for charging vehicles.
- Councilor Zelenka – stated that electric vehicle charging without off-street parking would be difficult and inequitable; stated that hard-wire charging is the only option right now and that non hard-wire charging will not be available or affordable for a long time; stated that the current electric vehicle charging build-out relies on off-street parking; thinks that there is a disconnect between Land Conservation Development Commission and Department of Environmental Quality in regard to electric vehicle promotion and parking reform; is interested in public testimony on this topic; asked the public to provide testimony with options and solutions; noted that this is a State mandate and Council has to comply.
- Mayor Vinis – stated that the simplest pathway is the best option; stated that developers can still choose to provide parking; is interested to see how the equity of this reform works; hopes that this reform will help to increase the supply of affordable homes; asked if a public charging parking area would be a feasible option for the City to provide.
- Councilor Evans – asked staff to provide information on how a tax on parking lot revenue would work and what benefits it may provide; asked staff to clarify how the ‘one-half parking space’ per unit would work; asked staff to confirm that if Council adopts option 1 prior to the State deadline, it can come back and add or subtract parts of the ordinance.
- Councilor Zelenka – asked staff to provide analysis on the work required to adopt option 2A or 2B.
- Mayor Vinis – stated that the Planning Commission spent a lot of time on this plan and would be a good resource to Council to get more information.
- Councilor Clark – believes that this parking reform will increase emissions created while people look for parking; does not support the State imposition of reform; encouraged constituents to communicate to their legislators about this type of top-down mandate.

Mayor Vinis adjourned the Eugene City Council work session and called the September 13, 2023, meeting of the Eugene Urban Renewal Agency to order.

Council Keating left the virtual meeting at 12:40 p.m.

2. **WORK SESSION: Proposed Riverfront Urban Renewal Amendment**

Agency Director, Sarah Medary, gave a brief introduction to proposed amendment and

introduced development Programs Manager, Amanda D'Souza, who presented information regarding the proposed Riverfront Urban Renewal amendment.

Councilor Discussion:

- Councilor Clark – asked why staff chose to not provide any preliminary cost information for Fire Station 17; is in favor of moving forward with the proposed changes; would like to have the option to use some of the Riverfront space for Fire Station 17; asked how to ensure that Fire Station 17 is not precluded as an option for funding.
- Councilor Evans – asked staff for more specific information about the \$6.3 million gap for the Steam Plant project; asked what kind of project funding is required to make the Steam Plant project move forward; asked staff to provide information regarding what projects the funding would be applied to.
- Councilor Groves – stated that the cost of building Fire Station 17 would depend on what type of fire station it would be; stated that Fire Station 1 was funded by a bond in 2002 of approximately \$10 million; asked if there is any blight in the Riverfront District; asked if there is a plan for the eight acres that would be acquired in the University of Oregon land swap and what the cost would be to make it usable land; is concerned about the cost of taking on new land; asked if City Hall work can be paid for by the District; is interested in using District funds for future balloon payments on City Hall.
- Councilor Zelenka – is not in favor of Urban Renewal Districts; is in favor of using funds to increase housing; does not consider the Steam Plant hotel project a housing project; stated that option C only puts 40 percent of the funds toward housing; asked if the Steam Plant project does not move forward, can that funding be applied to housing projects; asked staff to add a statement that would direct any unused Steam Plant funds to housing; would like City Hall and Fire Station 17 to be options in the project list; stated that the eight acres in the University of Oregon land swap should be undeveloped park land.
- Councilor Semple – asked if Council needs to set funding allocations now; asked if all potential projects must be included in the amendment to be eligible; asked if previously approved project funds, like the railroad quiet zone, are still set aside; asked if those previously approved projects can receive additional funds from this amendment; asked for clarification of what funds are being used for the 8th Street project; asked if the protected bike lane on High Street is also funded; asked staff to clarify the tax implication of the amendment on homeowners.
- Councilor Yeh – would be in support of more funding for housing; looks forward to public input on this proposed amendment.
- Mayor Vinis – stated that the Steam Plant is the definition of blight, the purpose of Urban Renewal is to address blight; hopes that Council will move forward on this amendment; would like to see the Steam Plant be funded.

MOTION: Councilor Groves, seconded by Councilor Semple, move to direct the Agency Director to bring the process of amending the Riverfront Urban Renewal Plan using spending scenario B, consistent with the draft Plan and Report included in Attachments A and B.

Councilor Discussion:

- Councilor Zelenka – asked if Council can move forward all three options staff presented; proposed a friendly amendment to move forward spending scenario A, B, or C.
- Councilor Semple – is concerned that if Council chooses the \$45 million option, they will get stuck spending it; does not want it to become a slush fund; would like to explore all of the options for spending scenarios.
- Councilor Groves – stated that Council would not be required to spend all of the allocated funds.

MOTION (with friendly amendment) and VOTE: Councilor Groves, seconded by Councilor Semple, move to direct the Agency Director to bring the process of amending the Riverfront Urban Renewal Plan using spending scenario A, B, or C consistent with the draft Plan and Report included in Attachments A and B. **VOTE: PASSED 7:0**

Mayor Vinis adjourned the meeting at 1:34 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Katie LaSala
City Recorder

(Recorded by Sara McKinney)

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