

MINUTES

Eugene City Council Work Session Eugene, Oregon 97401

July 11, 2022
5:30 p.m.

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

Mayor Vinis opened the July 11, 2022, work session of the Eugene City Council in hybrid format at 101 W. 10th Avenue, Suite 114, Eugene, OR 97401.

1. **WORK SESSION: Sale and Use of Personal Fireworks**

City Manager Sarah Medary introduced Interim Fire Chief Scott Cockrum who presented information regarding personal fireworks use and the existing ban in Eugene.

Council Discussion:

- Councilor Semple – noted that despite her love of fireworks, it is time to ban personal use of them.
- Councilor Syrett – stated it is past time for a citywide prohibition on sale and use of fireworks; noted there will need to be an educational component and enforcement; noted that multiple Oregon cities have already banned the sale and use; shared a personal story from her past about fireworks and fire danger; stated it is important to move on this item soon so that nonprofits who rely on fireworks sales for fundraising can prepare and plan accordingly.
- Councilor Yeh – noted a desire to do the right thing; asked staff to explain if the current, legal fireworks are dangerous.
- Councilor Groves – stated his preference is for a complete ban on the sale and use of personal fireworks; explained ways that currently legal fireworks are altered that makes them more dangerous and illegal; noted a total ban would lessen confusion in enforcement and reporting; noted the impact fireworks have on those with post-traumatic stress disorder, domestic animals, and wildlife; noted that education and enforcement will determine how successful a ban will be.
- Councilor Keating – stated support for a complete ban on sale and use of personal fireworks; noted that this ban would not ban professional displays at events; asked staff to clarify if the numbers of reports from 2021 and 2022 came from the app or from the Eugene Police non-emergency line; noted that many people had issues using the reporting app; stated he would be interested in seeing a report from the non-emergency line as well; stated his concern for those who are impacted by fireworks.
- Councilor Clark – indicated he would likely vote against the proposed ban; asked if staff remembers a time when exploding or flying fireworks were not illegal in the city of Eugene; noted these types of fireworks have been illegal for decades; noted that negative impacts to people and animals are from illegal fireworks and enforcement is the issue.

- Councilor Zelenka – stated his preference is a complete citywide ban based on the fire danger and negative impacts on people and pets; noted the enforcement on a total ban will be easier than banning specific types; suggested that Council donate to or match a grant for a 4th of July celebration in the future.
- Councilor Syrett – asked staff if a full ban is more helpful in enforcement; noted that legal fireworks are loud and dangerous for users and manufacturers; asked staff to clarify what a smoke bomb is; stated she has no concern with sparklers as they are quiet and less dangerous.
- Councilor Semple – noted that the biggest issue is fire danger and it is too easy to start fires with any type of fireworks; stated that the noise factor is a large issue that causes distress to people and animals; clarified that public or professional shows would still be allowed in the July 3rd to July 5th time frame; noted that she would appreciate having free, accessible public fireworks shows; stated she is in favor of having a community celebration.
- Councilor Groves – stated he would be in support of a community-wide display; noted that sparklers burn between 1,200 and 2,000 degrees; stated that currently legal fireworks can be dangerous based on how they are used, stored and disposed of; noted Council’s number one priority is to protect residents and banning personal fireworks mitigates a lot of risks.
- Councilor Clark – noted that he would also support a community celebration; asked if it is possible to host a professional show on Skinners Butte so that all residents can see it.
- Councilor Keating – stated he would be interested in looking at funding a community event with revenue generated from something such as a fine for using banned fireworks; asked how it will progress from education to enforcement if a total ban is enacted; asked to confirm that there were 11 fires since 2012 in the banned area south of 18th and east of Agate, with three of those taking place during the ban; questioned if a community-wide show is the right message to send when banning fireworks; noted an interest in using technology, such as drones, for a community celebration show.
- Councilor Zelenka – stated that providing a spectacular community fireworks show would provide an alternative for those who want to experience fireworks as part of their celebration; noted the importance to move quickly to give notice to nonprofits who sell fireworks as a fundraiser.
- Councilor Semple – stated it is important to her that a community fireworks show is free for all who wish to attend.
- Councilor Syrett – noted a desire for a future work session regarding a municipal fireworks display; stated she would support the display on Skinners Butte with input from residents at Ya-Po-Ah Terrace; noted that the display could start with Council contingency funds but eventually be built into the budget; said she is interested in eventually moving to technology displays that Councilor Keating suggested.
- Mayor Vinis – expressed appreciation for the presentation and the insight that Interim Chief brings from experiences in other municipalities; stated she is in support of a community celebration.

MOTION AND VOTE: Councilor Syrett, seconded by Councilor Keating, moved to direct the City Manager to prepare an ordinance prohibiting the use and sale of

all consumer fireworks citywide and schedule a public hearing on the ordinance in the fall. **PASSED: 7:1**, opposed by Councilor Clark

2. **WORK SESSION: University of Oregon Project Proposal**

City Manager Sarah Medary provided background information on a previous motion by Council to have the City Manager bring project ideas to Council when it is determined that the project has merit. City Manager Medary introduced Executive Director of Planning and Development Denny Braud, who presented information regarding a proposed University of Oregon project and land swap.

Council Discussion:

- Councilor Keating – noted his support for the Science Center to move into the EWEB building and said he would support the project if this were part of the deal; noted that it would take a generation for trees to fill in the project area; noted concern about University of Oregon potentially changing conferences; stated that the Science Center should be at the forefront of the discussion; stated he does not believe that it is in the City's best interest to move forward with the proposed land swap and project.
- Councilor Zelenka – noted his concerns have been about parking for the Cuthbert Amphitheater and the Science Center and this project appears to improve the parking for both; noted that the community will benefit from the upgraded Americans with Disabilities Act parking improvements and the stormwater upgrades; asked staff to confirm that the Science Center is comfortable with the plan; stated he thinks that the 8.1 acre land swap is good for the community, the bike path, and the new Riverfront Park; noted increased vendor space at the Cuthbert would also be a benefit.
- Councilor Groves – noted that this is an early phase and an opportunity for Council to direct the City Manager to gather more information; noted that small parts of the project such as moving the fence line for the Cuthbert to allow more vendors, give added value to the proposed project; noted that proposed changes in college sports cannot be controlled by Council and that the University of Oregon is a great community partner that brings wealth into the community; noted that gaining more riverfront space connecting to the Riverfront Park helps to link areas back to each other.
- Councilor Yeh – noted that the proposal has improved since the initial project discussions; asked if this is the only option for the University of Oregon or the easiest; noted that once land is given up it is gone forever and Council must be extremely thoughtful about swapping land; asked how important the new facility is to their program.
- Councilor Clark – noted that the net benefit is the most important thing to consider.
- Councilor Semple – noted that the project is intriguing and will upgrade the area; noted that she is in favor of the swap to gain more riverfront property for the City.
- Councilor Syrett – asked how close Leo Harris Parkway would be moved to the canoe canal; noted concern regarding the money that some spend on college sports when there are many in the community who are suffering; stated that the University could go further to offer support to the Science Center; noted that mitigation plans present many improvements; stated that she would want a memorandum of understanding that the new facility would be available to the City in the case of an emergency that would require a safe indoor space; stated that she would want the majority of the land swap to be park land, not parking.

- Councilor Zelenka – noted that the proposed facility would be all electric and use local timber; agreed with Councilor Syrett regarding using the facility for emergency situations; stated the swap would be asphalt for park land and a dramatic net increase in park land; outlined some improvements that the City would gain in the land swap.
- Councilor Yeh – stated that parking is needed for people to get to and enjoy the parks; stated she would like to hear how the new park land would impact the parks department; noted that a memorandum regarding emergency use of facility should clearly state who determines when it is an emergency; asked if there would be a formal public hearing on this item; noted she would like public input and engagement on the project; stated she would like the City Manager to continue discussions about this project.
- Councilor Groves – asked staff what the total square footage difference is between the Moshofsky Center and the new proposed indoor practice space; noted the new space would create a second emergency gathering place; asked if there are any deed restrictions that Council should be concerned about.
- Councilor Syrett – noted that she is in favor of public engagement but does not see a need for public hearing at this point; asked if the City Manager needs more direction from Council.

MOTION: Councilor Syrett, seconded by Councilor Keating, moved to authorize the City Manager to negotiate with the University of Oregon and develop a more detailed proposal for City Council to consider taking action on after summer break.

Council Discussion:

- Councilor Semple – asked to clarify what action would be taken after summer break.

VOTE: PASSED 7:1, opposed by Councilor Keating

Mayor Vinis adjourned the meeting at 1:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Katie LaSala
City Recorder

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