

MINUTES

Eugene City Council Work Session Eugene, Oregon 97401

November 28, 2022

5:30 p.m.

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

Mayor Vinis opened the November 28, 2022, work session of the Eugene City Council in a hybrid format at 101 W 10th Avenue, Eugene OR 97401.

1. **WORK SESSION: Alternative Response Study**

City Manager, Sarah Medary introduced Sustainability Manager, Ian Penn, Building and Permit Services Director, Lydia Bishop, and Building Official, Mark Whitmill, who presented information on building electrification and decarbonization community engagement planning.

Council Discussion:

- Mayor Vinis – noted that public engagement is an important part of this process.
- Councilor Zelenka – thinks that the City should pursue home energy score programs similar to Portland and other Oregon cities; asked if the engagement plan presented includes commercial and industrial sectors; noted his previous motion was intended to include all sectors; stated the importance of making engagement inclusive of all business and industry.
- Councilor Evans – asked if staff has the capacity to complete the work outlined; asked about the priority level of each project; asked how electrification would impact the local agricultural community and businesses.
- Councilor Clark – prefers to have inclusive business engagement; asked if the Chamber of Commerce is included in the engagement process; asked if the City has received guidance from the State regarding legality of enforcing the electrification ordinance; asked about reporting on the regulatory framework for electrification; asked if denying a specific utility type to people would be create regulatory issues in the future.
- Councilor Groves – would like the Eugene Business Alliance included in the engagement process; asked if manufacturing is considered commercial or industrial; noted that industrial business involvement is crucial to the decarbonization discussion; stated that this issue should go to a public vote; asked about the projected timeline for electrification.
- Councilor Yeh – noted this work will impact the entire community; stated that thorough research and asking the right questions is imperative in this process; stated she would not support sending this topic to a public vote.
- Councilor Keating – noted that public hearing testimony in opposition of electrification was in opposition to limiting choice, not in favor of natural gas; asked if any of the testimony provided at the public hearing shaped the engagement process plan.

- Mayor Vinis – stated that the framework presented will help to build relationships and a foundation for community engagement; noted that this topic stems from the Climate Action Plan 2.0; noted that the food and beverage sector could have the biggest impact and should be engaged in this process.
- Councilor Semple – noted that an engagement process is important; noted that education is an important first step to engaged and informed community input; stated that all forward progress will rely on the education and engagement part of the process; noted Council has two jobs, representation and leadership.
- Councilor Clark – asked if the planned engagement is based on educating the public or opinion gathering; would support sending this topic to public vote; noted that sending this to a public vote could help to rebuild trust with the community.
- Councilor Zelenka – noted that there is currently no viable alternative to burning fossil fuels; asked staff if the public outreach can include alternatives to an overall ban, to allow specific uses for natural gas; is interested in hearing opinions on alternatives from the public.
- Councilor Evans – asked how to incentivize decarbonization in the community, including commercial and industrial; asked what other cities are doing to incentivize decarbonization.
- Councilor Keating – noted that the demand for green HVAC systems will create new career pathways and stable jobs; indicated a desire to partner with building trades for job creation in the green energy sector.
- Councilor Zelenka – noted that the Inflation Reduction Act includes \$27 billion for greenhouse gas reduction projects; noted there are only 18-20 green banks in the United States; stated the City should consider creating a green bank in Eugene; noted that there are state and federal grants for many projects for green upgrades.
- Councilor Clark – is in favor of incentivizing decarbonization.
- Mayor Vinis – noted that nurturing the conversation with the public is vital; noted that going directly to a public vote without an outreach and education engagement process would further confuse and frustrate the issue.
- Councilor Groves – is in favor of incentivizing decarbonization; noted that engagement is important for the success of this process and for rebuilding public trust.
- Mayor Vinis – noted that solar is the fastest growing job industry in Philadelphia due to their solar upgrade programs and training; stated that climate policy directly impacts housing policy, green upgrade grants can make older homes safer and more livable.

Mayor Vinis adjourned the meeting at 6:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Katie LaSala
City Recorder

(Recorded by Sara McKinney)

Webcast of meeting available [here](#).