

MINUTES

Eugene City Council and Lane County Board of Commissioners Virtual Work Session Eugene, Oregon 97401

February 10, 2021
12:00 p.m.

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

Commissioners Present: Heather Buch, Laurie Trieeger, Jay Bozievich, Pat Farr, Joe Berney

Mayor Vinis opened the February 10, 2021, work session of the Eugene City Council.

Lane County Board of Commissioners Chair Joe Berney opened the February 10, 2021, meeting of the Lane County Board of Commissioners.

1. **JOINT WORK SESSION: Homeless Systems Transformation**

Sarai Johnson, Joint Shelter and Housing Strategist for the City of Eugene and Lane County, gave a presentation to update progress on the implementation of the homeless systems transformation.

Council Discussion:

- Councilor Yeh – expressed appreciation for having the 12-month plan outlined; asked staff about plans for next winter and asked about provider capacity.
- Commissioner Farr – extended a special greeting to Councilors Zelenka, Syrett and Evans; asked Steve Manela, Lane County’s Intergovernmental Human Services Program Manager, to speak to the value of the coordination of efforts that has worked through the Poverty and Homelessness Board and its sub-committees; asked Sarai Johnson to speak to how well the coordinated efforts between the City and County are going.
- Councilor Groves – asked staff what specifically is being done to help youth and stated he is concerned about the vulnerable youth population; stated there is a lack of adequate space for trailers, recreational vehicles and campers that are landing in the West Eugene industrial area and causing access issues for large delivery trucks, and asked staff if there is any work being done on this issue.
- Commissioner Buch – expressed appreciation in seeing so many parts of the Technical Assistance Collaborative (TAC) report starting implementation; stated there is a vast gap between the information staff just presented and what the public is seeing in the community, and asked how this gap can be filled so the public is aware of the work that is happening and the successes; stated she would like to see a mechanism in place the first half of the year to provide the public with information on progress; stated she would like to see at the next joint meeting a presentation on funding, and metrics on how rural communities are being reached.
- Councilor Syrett – thanked staff for the presentation; reminded Council and the Board of Commissioners about the decision that had been previously made by these bodies to focus specifically on single adults because this population, proportional to the need, had the least number of resources available; asked the City Manager if Council should plan to vote to approve the revised homeless numbers attributed with the TAC work; asked if there is a plan for a decision about resources to come back to Council for a vote.

- Commissioner Trieger – stated it is important to shore-up the provider community; stated she wonders where the opportunities are for engaging the public in outreach work, both for more capacity and because it opens eyes to the challenges being faced; suggested a coordinated effort of messaging through social media channels; encouraged rethinking the mechanisms being used to address homelessness issues and whether they are still the right ones based on what is known now versus when they were created, and gave as an example the Poverty and Homelessness Board.
- Councilor Clark – expressed appreciation for the partnership created for this work; stated he thinks 350 permanent supportive housing beds is radically insufficient and a course correction is warranted; asked staff for the net number of new people per month becoming homeless, and inquired what the impact will be if this number doubles as he suspects it will this summer; expressed hope that these bodies will individually and then collectively reassess goals and tactics.
- Councilor Keating – thanked staff for the presentation; expressed excitement about efforts to ramp-up Operation Turnkey; asked if staff is exploring using former schools, churches, banks and empty building or lots beyond hotels and motels, and the potential to explore a vacant lot tax; stated he is keenly focused on alternative funding mechanisms, broader partnerships, best practices and communications; stated he would like to explore ways to make the City accessible to businesses and faith partners in the community to find locations and microsites; stated he would like to explore funding mechanisms that revolve around surcharges for events or consumption fees at either the municipal or county level.
- Councilor Zelenka – welcomed Commissioner Trieger; stated progress is being made but the story is not being communicated well to the public; stated he likes the approach being taken but more money will be required to take it to the next level; stated a bond or levy needs to be considered to further this work and thinks it will be supported by the public.
- Councilor Evans – asked staff if any progress has been made to acquire the site at Highway 99 and Roosevelt Blvd.; stated he is pleased that warehouses or similar facilities that can be retrofit to be used as emergency shelter are being pursued.
- Councilor Semple – thanked staff for the report; acknowledged much has been done but compared to the problem it is not enough, and more action will take more money; stated she is happy with the actions taken with the COVID financial disbursements; stated ideas need to be expanded to include looking at parking lots and warehouses where large-scale shelter can be provided; stated work needs to happen upstream as more providers for mental health and drug addiction are needed.
- Commissioner Berney – stated he hopes to hear at the next joint meeting a report about potential vacant spaces that can be used; agreed that tactics and strategies may want to be revisited; stated he would like to see included how to draw private investment to partner with public resources to solve these problems; stated the community’s youth and families need to be included in looking at the homeless problem; stated this work needs to be presented in not just a systems perspective but a client-centered approach, where the client needs drive the systems work; encouraged a public-facing dashboard that can be used to leverage resources from non-profits and the business network.
- Mayor Vinis – recognized that outreach has been important through the pandemic and there has been a proliferation of new providers in the form of ad-hoc citizen groups that have come together; stated that capacity-building within provider organizations around trauma-informed care needs to take place and can potentially be privately funded, and suggested the Poverty and Homelessness Board could help orchestrate this; stated she hopes the medically fragile will be prioritized when utilizing the River Avenue facility post-COVID; suggested bringing back the steering committee to analyze City and County roles moving forward.

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

Commissioner Berney adjourned the Lane County Board of Commissioners meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Beth Forrest".

Beth Forrest
City Recorder

(Recorded by Jessica Gebb)

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