

MINUTES

Eugene City Council Virtual Work Session Eugene, Oregon 97401

February 17, 2021
12:00 p.m.

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

Mayor Vinis opened the February 17, 2021, work session of the Eugene City Council.

1. **WORK SESSION: 2020 Census and Ward Population Update**

Policy Systems Analyst Jason Detrick gave a brief presentation to provide context to Council for decisions it will be making that will guide the development of scenarios and process for ward redistricting.

Council Discussion:

- Councilor Keating – stated he leans toward direct oversight of the process by the Council rather than using a committee structure; asked if Council has considered criteria similar to the State’s redistricting criteria to have a connection with transportation corridors.
- Councilor Clark – (in response to Councilor Keating’s question) stated the State has been willing to do some interesting things over time in the redistricting process, and gave as an example the use of Highway 58 as a boundary line in Pleasant Hill, which was in conflict with another part of the statute that discouraged splitting communities; stated he is not sure how the criteria actually work in certain scenarios.
- Councilor Clark – stated his recollection of Council’s last process 10 years ago was that it went smoothly, and without conflicts or disputes as has occurred in the past; stated he would be comfortable maintaining the process used 10 years ago; asked staff if there will be access to any preliminary data prior to September; stated he would like to know broad data that is available because he expects disproportionate growth, especially on the north side; stated he believes Council should discuss its intention for newly filed candidates of wards that may have boundary adjustments.
- Councilor Zelenka – agreed with Councilor Clark that the process used 10 years ago went smoothly, and said he would advocate for direct oversight by Council; asked what the filing deadline is for the next Council election; stated this timeline presents a dilemma because the data will not be processed before the deadline closes; stated the criteria is really about contiguousness of the wards and not splitting up wards as much as possible; stated while transportation links initially seem to make some sense, it could result in neighborhoods being split into separate wards.
- Councilor Syrett – expressed appreciation for hearing from Councilors Clark and Zelenka about their experience from the past, and supported the idea of having Council do the process because it seems the most logical; stated she thinks the criteria used last time makes sense but would like Council to further discuss; stated with limited data she tends to agree with Councilor Zelenka’s position about the transportation link criteria; asked staff how many work sessions were needed for Council to do this work in the past and if there were significant changes to ward boundaries during those processes; stated she likes the proposed public engagement process and suggested the Equity Panel as another good resource to engage for this process.

- Mayor Vinis – asked what the reasoning was for not assuming growth in the previous process.
- Councilor Clark – (in response to the Mayor’s question) stated Council decided not to assume growth because it is never known for certain until a development takes place and because huge swaths of land were not being brought into the urban growth boundary; stated he would be fine with not considering future growth but thinks it looks likely that Ward 5 will have more than three percent growth with the developments already slated around the golf course.
- Councilor Zelenka – stated he agrees with Councilor Clark and while Council was last having this conversation, it was really about certainty versus uncertainty and trying to address where development would take place; stated the council decided not to assume growth because it was too speculative.
- Mayor Vinis – stated though she doesn’t know what the recourse is, the possibility that a candidate could file to run in a ward and then find it has been redistricted and they are no longer in the ward is concerning.
- Councilor Semple – asked what happens to an incumbent councilor when a ward is redistricted; asked if there was much contentiousness 20 years ago in determining where the ward boundaries should move.
- Councilor Zelenka – stated he agrees with the public engagement proposal and thinks it is a good list; suggested it would be helpful to have a public forum after the draft boundaries are set; asked if the candidate filing deadline can be moved back if the process is not concluded by January; stated if Council can complete the process in December or January before the end of the candidate filing period, then it will prevent the dilemma previously mentioned.
- Councilor Clark – stated Council should have intentions of the rules made clear before scenarios are presented to the public.
- Councilor Semple – stated she is concerned about this issue as well as it creates problems for candidates and the deadline is only a couple of months before the primary election.
- Mayor Vinis – asked if Council has the option to say the elections are valid for all candidates with the existing wards, even if they are not incumbents but are running for office.
- Councilor Syrett – suggested Council may want to seek public input for the criteria to be applied; stated she thinks the question of what to do if ward boundaries change after candidate filing should be put out for public feedback.
- Councilor Keating – asked if there are any disadvantages to delaying implementation to after May 2022; asked what other population information helps inform Council’s decision beyond Census data.
- Councilor Groves – thanked staff for the presentation; stated he is for full Council involvement in these decisions; raised the point that potential candidates may be excluded from running due to ward redistricting either because the lines move to exclude them, or the line doesn’t move and excludes them.
- Councilor Semple – stated any delay needs to go through November to accommodate a potential run-off election between the primary and general elections.
- Councilor Zelenka – stated that hearing these potential situations makes him feel that accelerating the process rather than delaying it is a better idea.

MOTION: Councilor Yeh, seconded by Councilor Syrett, moved to designate the Eugene City Council as the review and decision-making body for ward boundary criteria, scenarios, and process.

Council Discussion:

- Councilor Clark – suggested Council decide today to accept the criteria used 10 years ago.
- Councilor Yeh – stated that from councilors’ comments made today she understood that public feedback was desired before finalizing the criteria.

VOTE: PASSED: 7:0 (Councilor Evans absent)

Councilor Evans joined the meeting at 12:41 pm.

2. WORK SESSION: Interim Police Auditor

City Attorney Kathryn Brotherton gave a brief opening for the discussion of the appointment of an Interim Police Auditor to serve in the position until permanently filled by City Council.

Council Discussion:

- Councilor Yeh – stated she spoke with Deputy Police Auditor Leia Pitcher regarding her interest in the Interim Police Auditor position; stated the contract presented to Council is acceptable to Ms. Pitcher as currently written.
- Mayor Vinis – stated Council is fortunate that Ms. Pitcher is willing, able and prepared to step in to do this job, and to have a smooth transition at this time.

MOTION AND VOTE: Councilor Yeh, seconded by Councilor Syrett, moved to appoint Deputy Police Auditor Leia Pitcher as the Interim Police Auditor and authorize the Council President to execute the Interim Police Auditor employment agreement set forth in Attachment A. **PASSED:** 7:0, Councilor Evans did not vote.

The meeting adjourned at 12:57 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Beth Forrest
City Recorder

(Recorded by Jessica Gebb)

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