

MINUTES

Eugene City Council Virtual Work Session Eugene, Oregon 97401

February 22, 2021
5:30 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 22, 2021, work session of the Eugene City Council.

1. **WORK SESSION: Emergency Management and Operations Update**

Emergency Manager Kevin Holman and Fire Chief Chris Heppel provided an overview of the functional aspects of the City's COVID-19 emergency response and Emergency Operations Center (EOC), including lessons learned.

Council Discussion:

- Councilor Groves – asked staff if the EOC was open 7 days a week, 24 hours per day during COVID-19; stated his concern is an event like Cascadia where staff are lost before the EOC can be operational, and suggested a way to help populate an EOC is to use retirees and keep them minimally trained to FEMA requirements to have as a standing group to use when needed.
- Councilor Keating – asked staff if there is a way to see how much of the federal funding has been used and how much remains; asked staff which agency is responsible for the public service commercials containing the COVID-costumed man; asked if public service announcements will pivot to vaccine distribution and ultimately recovery assistance messages.
- Councilor Semple – expressed gratitude and admiration for the EOC and its staff, and stated she was relieved in such a frightening time to have the EOC to keep the community safe and informed.
- Mayor Vinis – asked if there are any significant gaps or areas the City needs to pay attention to going forward, particularly given the possibility of a Cascadia event.

2. **WORK SESSION: Commercial Setback Requirements**

Assistant Planner Althea Sullivan provided information on initial feedback from focus groups on conceptual land use code changes that would require minimum building setbacks and landscaping for development on commercially zoned property.

Council Discussion:

- Councilor Zelenka – stated setback requirements are needed to improve livability, aesthetics, walkability and safety; stated the focus group contained professionals with a bias toward less regulation which was reflected in half the feedback, and the other half of the feedback came from the public expressing dislike of many of the developments; stated the real question is where and under what circumstances should exceptions be granted; stated he did not read many solutions in the feedback; asked staff why the conditions listed merit exception and whether the work will be completed within six months.
- Councilor Clark – asked staff to give more detail about the feedback received from the design community about the changes; stated it would be desirable for intersections of public and private spaces to be more welcoming and there are some cases, especially along transportation

corridors, where this is not the case; expressed concern for precluding places that are ripe for redevelopment.

- Councilor Keating – asked staff if restaurants providing outdoor seating as they have done during the pandemic will be affected; asked what category a hybrid model of ground floor retail with housing above would be and if it makes sense to treat residential and commercial the same for this scenario.
- Councilor Groves – stated he appreciates the aesthetics of the setback requirements; stated that concern has been expressed regarding ADA compliance with these design changes and would like Council to see renderings of what ADA compliance could look like; cautioned that if design features create costs Council will need to be aware of this so as not to stifle efforts to create middle and affordable housing.
- Councilor Syrett – asked a clarifying question regarding terminology; stated there seems to be a theme from the feedback of off-loading the problem to the City without changing the current code; stated she understands that lost square footage due to setback requirements can mean lost revenue; stated much more thinking on these proposals is needed, and suggested a possible modification from the full face of the building being set back to a partial face setback.
- Councilor Yeh – stated these proposals will need more work to focus in on what Council wants to accomplish and how to do it; stated she echoes Councilor Groves’ thoughts about ADA compliance.
- Councilor Semple – expressed appreciation of the agenda materials prepared by staff and the feedback of the focus group; stated she hesitates to dictate what requirements should be everywhere, and these proposed changes feel too cookie-cutter or standardized to be applied across the entire city; asked staff what goes under the 3-foot raised first floor.
- Councilor Clark – raised the question of how potential redevelopment goals along 6th and 7th Avenue would be met under these proposed code changes; stated he did not want to create new code that precludes existing buildings from building up additional floors of housing.
- Councilor Zelenka – stated that all buildings should not be treated the same, and more tools and options are needed to make the city look better and have increased mobility and safety; asked staff the difference between C-2 and C-3 zoning.
- Mayor Vinis – stated there is a need for the design of a building and the design of the streetscape to be in alignment.

The meeting adjourned at 6:57 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Beth Forrest
City Recorder

(Recorded by Jessica Gebb)

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