

## MINUTES

### Eugene City Council Virtual Work Session Eugene, Oregon 97401

April 12, 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 April 12, 2021, work session of the Eugene City Council.

#### 1. WORK SESSION – Homelessness Update

Assistant City Manager Kristie Hammitt and Public Works Director Matt Rodrigues provided an overview of the current homelessness crisis, shared an update of City responses, and identified needs and next steps for addressing the growing number of unhoused community members and its community-wide impacts.

#### Council Discussion:

- Councilor Zelenka – stated that more sites that are larger and managed need to be provided and this is a good start; stated that federal funds can be used to establish these sites but funds for ongoing costs of \$5-6 million will need to be found; stated the community has not been supportive of spending money on homelessness in the past but the problem has worsened to the point he believes it will be supported now, and shared he is working on a levy strategy to fund homelessness and climate change projects; stated homelessness is the symptom and the problem is lack of affordable housing, lack of mental health services and access to substance abuse services.
- Councilor Clark – stated he appreciates the fast work and attempt to respond to this problem; asked the City Manager if the CDC guidelines to shelter in place are an edict or law and why compliance is required; stated the City seems to be prioritizing that guidance over the impact on businesses and neighborhoods and thinks this may not be the right track; suggested that congregate shelter, even though it presents some risks, may be the less impactful option; suggested Council use the \$15 million set aside for City Hall to buy 5-6 sprung structures and create a centralized emergency system for housing; stated there are some people who want to live on the streets and will refuse a lawful sheltering option, which needs to be addressed.
- Councilor Groves – expressed appreciation for the work; shared that a recent City count reported 67 RVs, trailers and large vehicles and 33 cars in a very small geographical area in West Eugene and he is concerned for workers and businesses in the area; directed Council's attention to Attachment E, the COVID-19 public health criteria, and stated the City is not capable of enforcing the rules set under that criteria; asked staff what process the City is using to identify the safe sites and how quickly the sites will be identified; asked how private landowners are being brought in to help with the process; stated that establishing rules and enforcing them is going to be critical for the camps to be successful.
- Councilor Syrett – asked staff to confirm that the strategies laid out in the Technical Assistance Collaborative (TAC) report are still being pursued; stated what is being discussed is a tactical response to an acute crisis and not the City's strategy for reducing homelessness; supported the proposal by staff and agreed that purchasing sprung structures with Recovery Act funds may be a viable option; shared she met with staff to relay concerns from neighbors about the size of the

Washington Jefferson camp and that Whiteaker is once again being asked to shoulder a disproportionate share of the burden of providing places for people to be.

- Councilor Yeh – asked clarifying questions regarding the timeline to complete occupancy of sites; asked if this work is expected to impact the work being done on the TAC with the County; asked when staff will come back to Council with recommendations around parking issues; expressed appreciation that staff is looking for solutions.
- Councilor Keating – expressed gratitude to staff and service providers for the proposal; stated he believes that in the midst of a global pandemic it is irresponsible to ignore CDC and public health guidelines and that more than half of the unhoused population requires medical attention; stated the moratorium on evictions will expire in 2.5 months and that in one year car camping increased from 337 to 879 vehicles; asked what the metric for success is in terms of numbers and what the engagement plan is for the public and private sector regarding land acquisition.
- Councilor Evans – thanked staff for the presentation; stated the City’s current and past practice of doing sweeps clearly has failed, since people move out of a troubled spot and return a week later; stated the number of crimes are being under-reported against businesses, employees and the homeless themselves; stated the legitimately homeless need to be disaggregated from the predators and the City must figure out how to address these serious issues; asked if it would be appropriate to ask for FEMA money in an emergency context to deal with what is happening on the streets in terms of the human services situation; asked about the current capacity of Lane County to help develop specific strategies for those who are on the streets and need treatment or services.
- Councilor Semple – expressed appreciation for the amount of work being done and stated she supports the ordinance change for bigger sites; stated she is frustrated with what is going on every day and recognizes that the public is, too; stated this is a day-to-day crisis that is exhausting for everyone.
- Councilor Zelenka – stated this is a good proposal and will be another tool effective in the near-term as it is responsive and will help with the frustration the community feels; asked staff what the process is for approving the new sites and purchasing land; asked what Council’s role is and how the public engagement process will move forward.
- Councilor Clark – clarified his previous comments were meant to articulate that the City’s response is unbalanced in a manner that results in the community bearing the brunt of consequences that are excessive; asked for more detail regarding the rules that will be in place for the sites; asked what will be done with people who refuse to go to a site because they don’t want to follow rules; asked Police Chief Skinner how enforcement could be done differently in a scenario where there is adequate sanctioned space for the unhoused to be; stated he would like to have a discussion with the Municipal Judge about holding people accountable so the opportunities created are not ignored but rather taken advantage of.
- Councilor Groves – stated he agrees with much of what he heard from other councilors and believes it is critical and is Council’s responsibility as fiscal managers of public funds to have a way to measure progress and regression; stated he has two motions to make, including one dealing with challenges experienced in the industrial area as large trucks and semis attempt to make deliveries to business on streets that are filled with cars and vehicles with people living in them.
- Councilor Keating – stated a FEMA-style, low-barrier shelter would be appropriate especially considering Lane County has the highest unhoused population per capita of any county in the country; thanked staff and service providers for providing management of sites and acknowledged that every site must see some level of management to be successful; stated he is unsure a bond or levy would be supported to fund ongoing costs related to the unhoused, and instead believes it would need to be surcharge tax or consumption fee.

- Councilor Evans – stated he would like to look into having more Community Service Officers (CSOs) who don't wear uniforms assigned to specific trouble spots that do not require an armed police response.

**MOTION AND VOTE:** Councilor Yeh, seconded by Councilor Syrett, moved to direct the City Manager to schedule an April 26, 2021, public hearing on the Ordinance set forth in Attachment F of this AIS, with the revised May 1, 2023, sunset date and, due to the immediate need to establish lawful sites to park vehicles or erect tents, authorize the abbreviated notice of the public hearing date as allowed pursuant to Section 28, subsection 4 of the Eugene Charter. **PASSED 8:0**

**MOTION:** Councilor Groves, seconded by Councilor Clark, moved to direct the City Manager to return to Council within two weeks with a proposed plan for actions intended to address vehicle camping through parking restrictions in the West Eugene commercial/industrial areas. Those administrative actions should include: (1) implementation of no parking zones on one side of each street in the area; (2) no parking zones on both sides of the street where private travel lanes or driveways lead to loading docks or loading/unloading yards requiring a 90 degree turn from the street; and (3) the provision of limited duration parking on the side of streets where parking is allowed in the areas recommended by staff.

Council Discussion:

- Councilor Groves – stated this is critical to the businesses and workers in West Eugene who are experiencing difficulties conducting business; stated there is raw sewage being dumped in the street and this area contains a number of businesses that prepare food; stated it is a bad situation which needs to be brought under control now.
- Councilor Zelenka – stated the same problem is everywhere, not just in West Eugene; suggested a friendly amendment to provide broader application by removing the restriction to West Eugene.
- Councilor Keating – asked a clarifying question regarding the April 26 public hearing.
- Councilor Clark – stated this issue is critical and businesses and workers have waited too long for Council to address it; stated that acting now in this specific way signals that Council is hearing how bad it is for people in our community.
- Councilor Semple – stated everyone is desperate to see Council doing something now; voiced concern over telling people to leave with nowhere to go; stated that crime that is unrelated to camping needs to be addressed.
- Councilor Zelenka – pointed out the motion is not implementing anything, it is directing the City Manager to return with a proposed plan in two weeks; said he would like to see that plan and is willing to have the motion move forward now.
- Councilor Groves – stated his goal is to provide a framework for the plan that comes back to Council, who will then have a chance to discuss this further; stated he wishes it could move faster because the workers and businesses in West Eugene need relief.
- Councilor Keating – stated he thinks the motion is overly prescriptive; stated the City has a history of using dislocation rather than relocation tactics; stated he worries this may set a precedent for how Council advances policy in the future and would be more comfortable fleshing this out in two weeks rather than the eleventh hour; stated he would prefer to table the motion to April 26.
- Mayor Vinis – stated she agrees with Councilor Keating in not wanting to rush on something which Council hasn't had a chance to digest or discuss; questioned whether a vote is needed today.
- Councilor Groves – stated he is trying to do what is right for the workers in West Eugene who cannot operate businesses and earn wages without deliveries.

- Mayor Vinis – stated she is not questioning the need, just whether this motion needs to move forward today if the topic is already on the agenda in two weeks.
- Councilor Groves – stated he would like the motion to move forward today so as to specifically frame the proposed plan that comes back to Council.

**MOTION AND VOTE:** Councilor Keating, seconded by Councilor Yeh, moved to table the motion until April 26. **FAILED 3:5 (Councilors Keating, Yeh, and Evans in favor)**

**RESTATED MOTION AND VOTE (with friendly amendment):** Councilor Groves, seconded by Councilor Clark, moved to direct the City Manager to return to Council within two weeks with a proposed plan for actions intended to address vehicle camping through parking restrictions in commercial/industrial areas. Those administrative actions should include: (1) implementation of no parking zones on one side of each street in the area; (2) no parking zones on both sides of the street where private travel lanes or driveways lead to loading docks or loading/unloading yards requiring a 90 degree turn from the street; and (3) the provision of limited duration parking on the side of streets where parking is allowed in the areas recommended by staff. **PASSED 7:1 (Councilor Keating opposed)**

Mayor Vinis adjourned the meeting at 7:14 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Beth Forrest  
City Recorder

*(Recorded by Jessica Gebb)*

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