

MINUTES

Eugene City Council Virtual Work Session Eugene, Oregon 97401

April 26, 2021
5:30 p.m.

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

Mayor Vinis opened the April 26, 2021, work session of the Eugene City Council.

- 1. WORK SESSION – Proposed Plan to Address Vehicle Camping in Commercial/Industrial Areas**
Public Works Director Matt Rodrigues, Traffic Engineer Chris Henry, and Administration, Parking and Technology Manager Jeff Petry presented a proposed plan to address vehicle camping in commercial/industrial areas as part of an overall strategy to identify needs and next steps for addressing the growing number of unhoused community members and its community-wide impacts.

Council Discussion:

- Councilor Clark – stated he supports the plan and expenditure because this is a serious problem in the community that needs an immediate solution; expressed concern that once the problem is dealt with in one area it will appear somewhere else; asked staff if they have scouted the area for similarly situated streets that people may move to and what the response will be; stated he has a strong concern over the lack of enforcement and asked if there is capacity for increased enforcement; asked the City Manager if departmental resources or capacities will impede enforcement and if she will return to Council if there are impediments.
- Councilor Groves – thanked staff for the work and requested regular updates on the issue; stated this plan works in parallel with relocating people to sanctioned camping sites and this tool is needed for people who do not voluntarily leave the area; stated this issue is causing real problems for people trying to work and run businesses in commercial and industrial zones; expressed appreciation for establishment of an Incident Command System and believes it is a crisis that warrants that kind of management; asked staff how enforcement will work with the 72-hour rule and vehicles moving two blocks, and stated he does not want to create a loophole that cannot be enforced; recognized that \$115,000 for signage may seem like a large sum but is nothing compared to the losses incurred by the businesses and workers in the area; stated Council needs to be prepared to shift tactics or strategy if this is not working.
- Councilor Zelenka – stated there will clearly be ongoing problems as people are forced to move and where people move to needs to be of concern to Council; stated he fears the effect will be to push people to the periphery, along streets with open spaces or woods such as Laurel Hill Valley and Bailey Hill; asked what the timeline is for the proposed plan and ordinance.
- Councilor Evans – asked staff if this is a temporary plan or will continue once the safe camping sites are established; inquired into current inventory and locations of rest stops, microsites, and sanctioned places for people to be.
- Councilor Semple – thanked staff for the quick work; stated this is a desperate situation and something must be done; expressed concern that there is nowhere to tell people to go; asked staff how long it will take to establish and open a safe camping site; asked if this proposed plan applies to the whole city.
- Councilor Syrett – stated that conflicts between unhoused residents and businesses and other residents is one of the most challenging parts of being a city councilor; asked staff if there is a

street parking permit for areas that do not have formal parking permit programs; cautioned Council that if this is passed, it should expect there will be unintended consequences; pointed out the City does not enforce parking after 5 p.m., so having an ordinance that restricts parking between 8 p.m. and 6 a.m. is useless, and suggested the City consider changing a shift time so parking can be enforced after 5 p.m.

- Councilor Yeh – expressed concern about doing something citywide when she thought the focus was on commercial/industrial areas; stated these recommendations along with establishing safe camping and parking sites seem appropriate considering the issues being dealt with; agreed there may be unintended consequences and liked the idea of revisiting the topic in the future to see if less or more is needed; stated that overall she is supportive of this proposal.
- Councilor Keating – stated the lack of sanctioned sites for people to be causes him to not support this proposal; asked the City Attorney clarifying questions regarding legal protection under the law and bias crime.
- Councilor Clark – stated his two concerns are dealing with the problem in one spot only to have it show up somewhere else, and enforcement, and stated the hours of enforcement are critical; asked the City Attorney if the City is criminally or civilly liable if this ordinance is passed and enforcement does not occur; encouraged the adjustment of parking enforcement staffing to meet the need; asked staff what criteria will be used in determining street signage; asked staff if there is a negative effect if the distance required to move is four blocks instead of two to eliminate the possibility of people moving only two blocks along the same street and remaining in the same area; asked the City Attorney if there are any legal issues with removing people or asking people to move from somewhat permanent structures built as domiciles along city streets.
- Councilor Groves – expressed agreement that it is worth looking into after-hours parking enforcement, and with regard to enforcement there will be perceived inequities no matter what Council does; stated he has talked to the businesses and workers who are being impacted personally and professionally and having their livelihoods jeopardized and who need the City's help because they are dealing with problems that are criminal in nature; stated the City needs these people on its side as it tries to address the long-term problem and come up with solutions.
- Councilor Zelenka – stated this is a very challenging issue and Council will be visiting this topic again as new problem areas emerge; asked staff if the ordinance will be brought back to Council before or after the report back on the implementation of the pilot and suggested both items return to Council simultaneously.
- Councilor Evans – asked what the conversations have been with abutting businesses around these problem areas and stated many want to contribute to a solution; asked staff how the private sector can be involved in finding solutions, and if staff are working with the County to identify any land that can be used; stated the sense of urgency is not restricted to commercial/industrial areas.
- Councilor Syrett – stated she does not believe this proposal is unconstitutional but is concerned that sanctioned alternative sites are not yet ready and it will be a while until they are; stated she is willing to support the proposal because she agrees the businesses need help; pointed out that the people living on the streets who will be displaced by this policy will also need help; stated she is not condoning the criminal activity which is a capacity issue as well.
- Councilor Keating – stated he wants to ensure any code created is not discriminatory in nature; asked staff if the timelines related to enforcement of the proposed parking code amendments and the receipt of federal or state funds to explore land acquisition will coincide or be months apart; suggested that \$115,000 for street signage would be better used to purchase 57 Conestoga huts.
- Councilor Semple – asked clarifying questions regarding the timeline for implementation of the proposed code amendments; stated Council is once again in the position of having to choose to make people move with nowhere to go, which is difficult to do and makes saying yes to this proposal difficult as well; asked staff if they are working with providers on plans for site set-up and management at the same time as looking for land; stated that moving four blocks rather than two could be problematic for residential areas and citywide effects must be considered.

- Councilor Zelenka - stated he feels it will be a long time before there will be adequate sanctioned space for people to go; stated that follow-up will be required after implementation of this plan to inform Council of progress or problems.
- Mayor Vinis – said she feels the struggle within the council of having to choose between people who are unsheltered and the disruption the illegal campers cause in business districts and neighborhoods; stated that some basic guidelines have been established in the urban camping policy that direct how people are expected to behave when living in public spaces, which can help with outreach on street parking and reduce impacts; stated what Council wants is to provide housing and services for everyone who wants or needs it, but the capacity is not yet there so the work must be done incrementally.

MOTION AND VOTE: Councilor Yeh, seconded by Councilor Syrett, moved to support the plan and strategies presented during today’s work session and to direct the City Manager to report back to Council in three months on plan implementation progress. **PASSED 8:0**

MOTION: Councilor Yeh, seconded by Councilor Syrett, moved to direct the City Manager to schedule a public hearing on the proposed ordinance attached to the AIS as Attachment B.

MOTION TO AMEND: Councilor Clark, seconded by Councilor Groves, moved to amend for all places that state two blocks to substitute with four blocks.

Council Discussion:

- Councilor Evans – asked staff if there is a significant difference between two blocks and four blocks or if it adds to the problem.
- Councilor Clark – stated he specifically asked staff if there would be any negative effects if he suggested this amendment and none were provided; stated the distances in some of the problem areas are longer than two blocks and he would not like to see Council propose this as a solution only to have a loophole exploited and have to revisit this months later because the problem was not actually fixed.
- Mayor Vinis – clarified that this proposed ordinance will go to a public hearing and Council will have an opportunity to reconsider based on what is heard at the public hearing.
- Councilor Clark – stated he wants the public to be presented with an effective solution by Council.
- Councilor Zelenka – asked the City Attorney if it would be a substantive change to the proposed ordinance to change from two to four blocks after the public hearing; stated his preference would be to continue with the way the ordinance is worded now, and let people comment on it at the public hearing.

VOTE ON MOTION TO AMEND: FAILED 3:5, Councilors Clark, Evans, and Groves in favor.

VOTE ON MOTION: 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](#).