

MINUTES

Eugene City Council Virtual Work Session Eugene, Oregon 97401

May 10, 2021
5:30 p.m.

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

Mayor Vinis opened the May 10, 2021, work session of the Eugene City Council in virtual format.

1. **WORK SESSION: Community Safety Initiative Engagement Sessions**

Community Relations Director Laura Hammond and Human Rights and Neighborhood Involvement Manager Acting-in-Capacity Fabio Andrade gave an overview of the Community Safety Initiative (CSI) community surveys and community focus groups process and results. Policy Analyst Jason Dedrick gave an overview on the key findings.

Council Discussion:

- Mayor Vinis - expressed gratitude for the work to help the process move forward, noting the book *Upstream* and the results of the survey reflect the idea of looking for upstream solutions.
- Councilor Keating - commented on the wealth of quantitative and qualitative data received; said he was intrigued and encouraged to see the same themes revolving around emergency shelters, services, and alternative responses to mental health crisis; asked how broadly the survey was promoted to community members, particularly in BIPOC and LGBTQ+ communities and if the survey was self-selecting.
- Councilor Groves - commented that there was a lot of variety in responses and said he was encouraged by the results; asked if there was a way to use the data for report writing for police officers as this can impact officer availability.
- Councilor Evans - said he thought the report was thorough and some responses caught his attention, noting the Hispanic/Latinx responses' emphasis on the need for more cultural availability for language and social services; said the results show the need to increase the number of BIPOC community members; expressed his desire to have an alternative police response to mental health, domestic violence and other calls for help.
- Councilor Clark - shared his biggest takeaway was that the community recommended how the system should be constructed; said he would have preferred to see what outcomes the community would like to see, which could then enable the City to say how the it can provide the community's desired outcome; commented that he voted against the payroll tax and felt the tax is unjust; recalled the tax being implemented as the only solution to fix a dire problem and felt the problem is changing; requested the Chief of Police give his presentation again in detail for Council to make a balanced decision.
- Councilor Yeh - agreed there is a lot of information to reflect on and appreciated the additional time to review and make thoughtful decisions; supported hearing again from Chief Skinner, Chief Heppel and all involved because shifting money and priorities is challenging; said she felt the process has been appropriate and productive; shared questions about what services are currently provided, the appropriateness of the City's actions, and Cahoots' capacity where additional funds could be used; voiced concern about language services as a barrier; supported the idea of a community safety officer.

- Councilor Zelenka – said he was eager to get more people’s input and the results were not surprising in terms of the services the community said are needed; noted that sworn officers are still needed in Eugene; appreciated the effort put into the process and report.
- Councilor Syrett - shared her appreciation for the report and data analysis; said it’s helpful to see the connection between people’s identities and their input; commented Council is navigating how to address this complex problem of delivering community safety to the public in a way that everyone feels well-served; suggested considering different metrics for success.
- Councilor Semple - shared her appreciation for the report details and seeing graphs of survey respondents’ differences; said she was not surprised by the results or the differences in responses by the different groups; said mental health services and support are a top priority.
- Councilor Keating – said he was encouraged by the demographics of the survey respondents, particularly the participation of youth and women; shared some key takeaways from the 2021 survey compared to the 2018 survey; asked what percentage of EPD uniformed officers are bilingual and what incentives the City offers to staff to encourage bi-lingual or multi-lingual capabilities; asked for the Chief’s, CAHOOTS’ and first responders’ input on the 911 call time response and other service gaps; asked questions regarding monetary allocation and funding details.
- Councilor Clark – said a major takeaway of the survey the apparently overwhelming support for the City to provide more homeless services and response; requested to see more information on survey questions and data.
- Councilor Zelenka – noted that there are responses that reflect funding allocation and items that reflect policy changes; commented that homelessness is a symptom and the causes are lack of mental health services, addiction services and affordable housing and said the CSI won’t fix these alone; said support at the State and Federal level is needed to effect real change; said he was hopeful that community members made the connection between wraparound services and community safety; said the City needs to act differently, act smarter, act with respect for people, and lead by example.
- Councilor Evans - asked how many youth responded to the survey, noting their input is critical, especially related to interactions with police in Eugene; shared ideas on how officers can build community relationships with the youth to create trust and view them as a positive force.
- Mayor Vinis - shared that the aspect of the survey that drew her attention was the unfamiliarity of many with the CSI, which speaks to the value of the work done to reach out to people who typically aren’t heard from; noted that the initiative is framed in terms of “community safety” and the survey respondents framed it as “community wellbeing” which presents an opportunity to shift the council’s perspective.

The meeting adjourned at 7:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Beth Forrest
City Recorder

(Recorded by Niyah Ross)

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