

MINUTES

Eugene City Council Virtual Work Session Eugene, Oregon 97401

May 19, 2021
12:00 p.m.

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

Mayor Vinis opened the May 19, 2021, work session of the Eugene City Council.

1. WORK SESSION – Unhoused Response Update

Assistant City Manager Kristie Hammitt, Public Works Director Matt Rodrigues, and Policy Analyst Regan Watjus provided an update on temporary urban camps and vehicle camping response and actions related to finding land, developing site plans and programming for the establishment of “Safe Parking” and “Safe Tent” sites.

Council Discussion:

- Councilor Groves – thanked staff for the effort and the assignment of Ed Russo as the business liaison; thanked businesses and Brittany Quick-Warner at the Chamber of Commerce for stepping up to help find solutions to this problem; asked staff if there is a way for Council to help hasten the acquisition and designation of safe camping sites; asked if a business or property owner will have any assurances that camping will be enforced nearby if it provides sites for campers; requested an update on what will be done regarding those who refuse to go to safe camping sites or are asked to leave the site; asked where campers are being directed to go when they are removed from riparian zones or near playgrounds.
- Councilor Zelenka – expressed appreciation for the work of the Unified Command team; requested staff develop a one-pager of talking points about the work currently being done around homelessness for councilors to use in discussions with constituents; suggested writing an op-ed piece on what is being done; agreed it is important to move slowly and carefully on this work now in order to move faster later.
- Councilor Yeh – expressed appreciation that site information will be provided in June; asked staff for an update on low-barrier options.
- Councilor Keating – thanked the Unified Command team; asked clarifying questions regarding metrics provided in the presentation; asked if there are plans to provide free pet inoculations and licensing for those in the safe camping sites; asked staff to describe the best practices learned from San Diego, Medford and Walla Walla; expressed gratitude for electricity and water provisions in the draft site plans; stated he has concerns for people who are moved from site to site for behavioral issues and advocated for an adult crisis center with County partners.
- Councilor Syrett – stated she is impressed by the work and gratified to see it moving along, and is glad to see a partnership with the Chamber of Commerce being established; stated it is important to remind the public the reason tents are being allowed in Washington Jefferson (WJ) Park is due to COVID and CDC recommendations that cities allow people to shelter in place; recognized this is an evolving approach and stated she is pleased that groups will potentially be able to move together from WJ Park to the safe camping sites.
- Councilor Clark – thanked staff for the work; asked staff questions regarding the type of information collected from the unhoused; stated he would like to know from the unhoused how

long each has been in Eugene and what brought them to homelessness in the first place; asked staff if surrounding neighborhoods of camps are policed to prevent drug use by campers.

- Councilor Semple – thanked staff for the work; stated she appreciates the approach of looking into what each individual needs to progress to housing and the possibility of groups moving together to safe camping sites; expressed concern over the increase in vehicle and tent camping in Eugene and wondered if the unhoused are coming from other cities or states; asked if camping laws will be enforced when COVID restrictions end and there are not enough safe camping sites to accommodate all campers; asked how the City is paying for the safe camping sites and if costs will be reimbursed by recovery funds.
- Councilor Evans – asked what the comprehensive public safety plan will be as the number and size of safe camping sites expand; stated more policing and a different way for Fire and Emergency Medical Services to respond to emergency situations will be needed; inquired if there is currently adequate personnel to staff the needed public safety response.

Mayor Vinis adjourned the meeting of the Eugene City Council and convened a meeting of the Eugene Urban Renewal Agency.

2. WORK SESSION – Steam Plant Redevelopment Proposed Terms

Business Development Analyst Amanda D’Souza presented the proposed terms for the disposition and redevelopment of the Steam Plant as negotiated with Dream Plant, LLC.

Council Discussion:

- Councilor Zelenka – asked questions of staff regarding asbestos removal and hospitality uses for the building; asked if this is pre-approval of a Multi-Unit Property Tax Exemption (MUPTTE); asked clarifying questions regarding parking, Southern Plaza siting, concessions, and System Development Charges (SDCs); asked staff to explain why the appraised value is negative and the public benefits to be accrued from this proposal.
- Councilor Evans – asked staff if the urban renewal district will need to be extended to accrue additional funds contingent on other asks that may be made by the developer, and how long the urban renewal district can be extended.
- Councilor Syrett – expressed concern over deal points that require the waiver of all SDCs when it is not yet known what uses will exist in the building; stated she cannot approve the terms presented with that much uncertainty in the framework; suggested a cap of SDCs could be proposed instead.
- Councilor Yeh – stated she agrees with Councilor Syrett’s comments regarding waiving SDCs; asked if the value of the property is known without saving the building; clarified for the public that the community space will not be closed off to the public but is also not a community center.
- Councilor Keating – inquired about accessing the Steam Plant site from the river and having a river exit there; thanked Councilor Syrett for her comments and suggestion regarding the SDC waiver.
- Councilor Clark – asked staff how many parking spaces need to be jointly identified and how many parking spaces are included with the EWEB Headquarters building.
- Councilor Semple – expressed frustration with the work session agenda and stated the Unhoused Response Update needed more of Council’s time and the Steam Plant proposed terms include a large unknown which will likely prevent Council from reaching a decision today; stated she likes the project but is concerned about the expenditure, and feels with the building demolished the land can be sold for a good profit in a few years; asked staff what the anticipated property tax will be and if there will be gas infrastructure; stated SDCs are used as a main incentive point and she is concerned how much this will cost since SDCs still have to be paid for out of the general fund; stated different ways to incentivize are needed or a limit needs to be

placed on the number of SDCs given away; stated she would like to postpone this vote to allow more time for discussion.

MOTION: Councilor Evans, seconded by Councilor Keating, moved to have staff return to Council with the requested information prior to July 31, 2021.

- Councilor Semple – asked staff what effect this delay may have on the developers.

VOTE: PASSED 8:0

Mayor Vinis adjourned the meeting at 1:38 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Beth Forrest
City Recorder

(Recorded by Jessica Gebb)

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