

MINUTES

Eugene City Council Virtual Work Session Eugene, Oregon 97401

June 23, 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 June 23, 2021, work session of the Eugene City Council in virtual format.

Councilor Evans joined the meeting at 12:13 p.m. and left at 1:16 p.m.

Councilor Keating left the meeting at 12:30 p.m. and rejoined at 12:51 p.m.

1. WORK SESSION – Reparations

Policy Analyst Jason Dedrick presented the efforts and best practices of other cities that have created programs to compensate or pursue restorative justice for those who have been impacted by systemic racism including segregation, discrimination, and legal and illegal race-based exclusions.

Council Discussion:

- Councilor Clark – asked staff if historical ordinances in Eugene that are particularly targeted to issues of race have been researched; stated he would like to see the City target its own wrongs when being restorative, especially related to housing; suggested the City create a loan program, much like a VA loan program, that guarantees the loan and allows lenders to create a \$0-down home loan for any person of color whose family lived in Eugene during the time it had laws that prevented those families from owning or purchasing homes.
- Councilor Zelenka – stated this is an important conversation about our history and pursuing restorative justice, and likes of the idea of expanding it to the BIPOC community as there are many wrongs to atone for; shared he likes the approach by Providence, RI, with a three-part process of truth, reconciliation, and reparations; shared he is less interested in direct payments and more interested in other types of reparations with emphasis on helping current residents of Eugene that have experienced discrimination, inequity and injustice; stated he likes the idea of loans for home ownership or helping people rent, and providing assistance for minority- and women-owned businesses.
- Councilor Syrett – stated this is an important topic and is grateful to Councilor Evans for bringing forward this work session; said she believes beginning with a robust truth and reconciliation process before types of reparations are discussed will result in the most productive processes; expressed appreciation for the ideas that Councilor Clark suggested and thinks they are top-notch; asked staff if the community might support opportunities to learn more about how to do this work.
- Councilor Yeh – asked staff questions regarding organizations identified in the presentation; shared that she likes Councilor Syrett’s suggestion of having a truth and reconciliation process first and feels this should be a community-led effort to ensure the choices being made are coming from the communities affected and not being done to them.
- Councilor Groves – shared he agrees with much of what other councilors have said and the ideas expressed; stated he thinks it would be helpful not to only focus on the BIPOC community but a broader community group to build better understanding and support for this to be successful; stated he would like anything that is done to be directed multi-generationally;

thanked staff for the presentation and suggested populations of cities be included when they are referenced.

- Councilor Semple – thanked staff for the presentation; agreed that starting with local history is important and that educational outreach is needed; shared she would like to see this effort directed by the community and is interested in restorative justice focused around housing and business assistance.
- Councilor Evans – shared that one of the reasons he put this work session poll forward was because of the national conversations on the topic that have accelerated in the past 10 years; stated he would like to see something that is going to be reasonable, that will reflect the values of the community, and is a way to move forward from a not-so-distant past where there were sundown laws and racial covenants in Eugene.
- Mayor Vinis – agreed it will be important to go through a truth and reconciliation process before jumping to conclusions about the right path; urged all to recognize the different stories and hardships of these groups and the opportunity to provide a targeted response; shared she is interested in finding out more about Mayors Organized for Reparations & Equity (MORE).
- Councilor Clark – shared it is important to him that something meaningful is done for people locally; agreed that an educational component is needed and that the solution be based on what the affected communities have experienced and value.
- Councilor Syrett – expressed appreciation for Mayor Vinis’ comments regarding honoring and recognizing the distinctive character of each peoples’ history and believes it would be a terrible mistake to blend all those histories and experiences together into one; stated she believes Councilor Yeh’s comments were suggesting that BIPOC members should be leaders in helping determine what Council might do to advance restorative justice.
- Councilor Yeh – asked staff about the cities researched, and if the ones that began with a truth phase cast a wide net or focused on individual communities; shared she anticipates this will be a long process and there should be a realistic expectation for the timeline.

2. WORK SESSION – Unhoused Response Update

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

Council Discussion:

- Councilor Groves – thanked staff for the presentation; asked if there is any plan to increase the capacity of parking enforcement to ensure the success of the parking code amendments recently passed; asked if there is a strategy to ensure spots are filled at rest stops, microsites and congregate shelters when the safe parking and tent sites are opened; inquired if there is a strategy to conserve camping space and provide a more manageable sheltering option, and gave as an example of inefficiency a single occupant in a 35-ft. motorhome; asked if there is a way to vet the non-profit organizations managing sites to determine how good of a job they will do; stated it would be appreciated if sites can be considered throughout the city to balance out the distribution of the safe parking and safe tent sites.
- Councilor Syrett – expressed appreciation for the work by staff and thinks the three sites highlighted are a good start; stated she would like the public to know that robust neighborhood outreach would not occur until Council has approved a site; stated she is not aware that the non-profits currently running rest stops are not doing a good job both in managing the sites and surrounding area and helping transition residents to permanent housing; reminded the public these safe tent and parking sites are part of many things the City is doing to address the current homelessness crisis, and efforts also include working with state legislators to find funding for

more supportive and affordable housing and shelter options; stated these sites are not part of a long-term solution but part of an emergency solution right now.

- Councilor Clark – asked staff how close the City is to being able to provide sanctioned camping sites for those who need it and allow enforcement of illegal camping; stated he does not feel this will be a successful effort until there is a strategy for dealing with unsanctioned camps and enforcement of illegal camping.
- Councilor Keating – asked staff how it will ensure there is buy-in by neighbors and the business community around the proposed sites; stated the service providers of the rest stop at 34th and Hilyard are asking to expand and he advocates for allowing this expansion of the rest stop; shared it has been brought to his attention that there may need to be diversity awareness or cultural competency training offered for some of the volunteers who provide assistance to the new safe tent and vehicle camping sites, and asked what trainings are available to volunteers.
- Councilor Syrett – stated it is excellent to hear the neighborhood around 34th and Hilyard advocating to expand the rest stop there; expressed appreciation for the support by the Whiteaker Community Council for the sites in Whiteaker and use of Washington Jefferson Park for shelter-in-place camping; noted that Trainsong does not have an active neighborhood association and encouraged staff to partner with Square One Villages to ensure the outreach in that neighborhood is especially robust; stated once the new safe tent and vehicle camping sites are established, the residents of Whiteaker want the Washington Jefferson Park back and do not want camping allowed there, and so will be relying on staff to figure out how that happens.
- Mayor Vinis – expressed appreciation to all and stated it is a great step forward under very trying conditions of never having enough resources or the ability to move fast enough; stated this is promising and expressed appreciation for how much work has been done to get to this point.

Mayor Vinis adjourned the meeting at 1:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Beth Forrest
City Recorder

(Recorded by Jessica Gebb)

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