

## MINUTES

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

July 21, 2021  
12:00 p.m.

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

Councilors Absent: Greg Evans

Mayor Vinis opened the July 21, 2021, work session of the Eugene City Council in virtual format.

#### 1. **WORK SESSION – Unhoused Response Update**

Assistant City Manager Kristie Hammitt and Public Works Director Matt Rodrigues provided an update on temporary urban camps and vehicle camping response/actions. Data on homelessness in Lane County was reviewed, as well as current distribution of sites and programming within the City of Eugene. Three new sites were proposed for council consideration and action.

#### Council Discussion:

- Councilor Syrett – thanked staff for their hard work and expediency in moving forward; expressed a sense of urgency around this matter; said she has discussed ongoing concerns with Whiteaker residents about the lack of access to Washington Jefferson Park this summer; suggested the possibility of consolidating the unhoused in this park to free up space for resident use, such as in and around skate park; asked for clarification of need to have Chase Commons as both safe tent and parking site instead of only one or the other; asked about the occupancy estimate for Garfield site (50-60 unhoused).
- Councilor Groves – thanked staff for their work, and the public for dealing with these spaces which are not being used for their intended purposes; acknowledged the need to keep pushing on expansion and building of these sites; gave additional thanks to businesses who have paid to set up adjacent dumpsters in an effort to keep their community clean; offered further thanks to Pastor Gabe Piechowicz, who has worked to organize unhoused communities for refuse pickup in multiple areas.
- Councilor Clark – thanked staff for their hard work, particularly considering the scale of the required effort; asked about the parking implementation ordinance and what efforts are being taken to reduce illegal, long-term roadside parking; stated that camps at and around 13<sup>th</sup> and Jefferson are also illegal camping and questioned if the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) shelter-in-place recommendations as it relates to relocating these camps has changed; asked if the council could vote to enforce City ordinances on illegal camping; expressed that he is in favor of providing solutions for unhoused, but nonetheless frustrated with lack of enforcement for illegal camping.
- Councilor Zelenka – thanked staff for the presentation; recognized community frustrations with slow movement on this issue while understanding progress on such complicated matters takes time and effort; said he was looking ahead to eventual dispersal of unhoused from Washington Jefferson Park and asked Public Works what will be needed to repair these public spaces (such as structural and landscaping) once it has been vacated.
- Councilor Yeh – echoed comments from Councilor Syrett around the possibility of re-opening some or all of the skate park section of Washington Jefferson Park and clearing it for greater

public access during the summer; regarding safe sites, asked if there a timeline for future site suggestions; said she was also hoping for more capacity at Chase Commons but understands proximity of nearby waterway limits maximum occupancy.

- Councilor Keating – appreciated the iterative approach to solutions for the unhoused; said he understands the broader frustration but strongly supports the ongoing approach; voiced concern about any proposed council action that goes against current CDC recommendations; urges council to adhere to CDC recommendations, particularly for more vulnerable unhoused populations.
- Councilor Semple – thanked staff for their ongoing efforts; said she also wishes progress was faster but understands critical work is progressing at an appropriate pace; concurred that re-opening the Washington Jefferson skate park is a good idea; also concurred with following all CDC recommendations.
- Councilor Groves – stated that this is the most pressing issue faced by the City; expressed frustration that councilors do not have a say in the timing allotments during council meetings.
- Councilor Syrett – recommended that the City Manager be prepared to call an emergency meeting as more sites become available in lieu of waiting for fall meeting.
- Councilor Clark – asked about the number of spaces in emergency camps that are currently unfilled, and additional detail about the nature of calls for service related to homelessness; concurred with Councilor Groves that the policy response is inadequate relative to the scope of these issues facing the City; stated that Council should be empowered to act more quickly; concurred with Councilor Syrett on calling emergency meeting as new sites are ready to be proposed.
- Councilor Zelenka – concurred with Councilor Syrett’s proposal to call an emergency meeting as new sites are ready to be proposed; asked about local nonprofits and their capacity to manage all current, currently proposed and future sites.

**MOTION AND VOTE:** Councilor Yeh, seconded by Councilor Syrett, moved to approve Chase Commons for use as a Safe Tent site. **PASSED 6:1, Councilor Clark opposed.**

**MOTION AND VOTE:** Councilor Yeh, seconded by Councilor Syrett, moved to approve 310 Garfield Avenue for use as both a Safe Tent and a Safe Parking site. **PASSED 6:1, Councilor Clark opposed.**

**MOTION AND VOTE:** Councilor Yeh, seconded by Councilor Syrett, moved to approve 450 Highway 99N for use as a rest stop site. **PASSED 7:0**

## 2. WORK SESSION – Sustainability Commission Work Plan

Eugene Sustainability Commission Chair Zach Mulholland, Vice Chair Mtima Richardson, staff liaison Samantha Roberts and Sustainability Manager Chelsea Clinton presented the Eugene Sustainability Commission’s Annual Report, providing highlights of FY21 accomplishments and a comprehensive overview of their FY21 work products, plan summaries and recommended next steps, concluding with an opportunity for City Councilors to provide their feedback on the proposed next steps and recommendations.

### Council Discussion

- Councilor Zelenka – thanked staff for their hard work; noted his request for a work session on climate change funding coupled with homeless service funding; noted that trees are still plentiful in Eugene, yet the canopy has been declining in part due to storms as well as construction/development efforts; said the Climate Action Plan 2.0 included a commitment to

meeting annual goals and, when these goals are not met, the City should be looking at purchasing carbon offsets to maintain this commitment; recommended investing with local partners for climate reduction projects; said 80 percent of local carbon emissions come from buildings; said EWEB and NW Natural planned to be carbon neutral by 2023; suggested that the City continue focusing on projects that have the largest impact per dollar spent.

- Councilor Clark – requested that the council return to its discussion on prior topic (Work Session #1 - Unhoused Response Update) if there is any time remaining once this topic has concluded.
- Councilor Keating – thanked staff and the commission; said he welcomes the opportunity to bring any recommendations or concerns from the commission report, Climate Action Plan 2.0 and existing ordinances to the Lane Regional Air Protection Agency (LRAPA); which may include such items as uncertified wood stoves, ongoing monitoring of known polluting offenders instead of relying solely on citizen complaints, idling trains/vehicles and gas-powered leaf blowers; requested the City’s and Mayor’s support for LRAPA to advance City’s agenda; requested to convene a special committee including Eugene LRAPA representatives, Councilor Keating, Howard Saxton, Zach Mulholland, and City of Eugene staff to advance this work.
- City Attorney Kathryn Brotherton - clarified the specific policies outlining committee formation and made herself available to discuss further.
- Councilor Syrett – suggested a work session around these recommendations in lieu of a formal or informal committee.
- Councilor Keating – thanked Councilor Syrett for the suggestion of a work session and said he would like to discuss further.
- Mayor Vinis – thanked Zach, Mtima and staff for their work on the Sustainability Commission.
- Councilor Semple – echoed thanks to the Sustainability Commission; said she looks forward to future work together.

### **3. WORK SESSION – Further Discussion, Unhoused Response Update**

In response to a request from Councilor Clark, Public Works Director Matt Rodrigues returned to his graph on “Unhoused Response Requests for Service”.

#### Council Discussion

- Councilor Clark – asked for clarification on the number of calls for service placed by home and business owners versus those placed by City staff or unhoused residents; asked why vehicle camping complaints/requests are increasing at a much higher rate compared to park camping or right-of-way camping; asked whether vehicles with complaints of illegal parking are being impounded; asked if illegally parked vehicles being moved is based on a policy decision; asked what work is being done to follow up on illegally parked vehicles after they move and those that only move their vehicle a few blocks away; asked if City policy is helping to decrease the number of complaints or if a new policy is needed; thanked Matt for his work; stated he believes City policies and policy response are inadequate; questioned whether current lack of mental health and addiction recovery services is directly responsible for all homelessness and those lack of services the responsibility of the public; stated that this notion creates much disagreement in the community; agreed that mental health services are important, but current policies do not address those who have no desire to get well.
- Councilor Groves – concurred with many of Councilor Clark’s statements; added that frequent relocation of illegally parked vehicles leads to less accumulation of refuse and “turf mentality”; said the current policy is far from perfect but has a positive impact; questioned whether license plate tracking is useful given many illegally parked vehicles do not have a current registration; said large recreational vehicles take up much more space than other options; said camps continue to be the better option due to favorable space-to-occupancy ratios; asked to confirm

whether local nonprofits have capacity to manage the camping sites, noting organizations such as St. Vincent DePaul have recently stated that they are already at or above capacity; expressed appreciation for Assistant City Manager Kristie Hammitt's response that there is capacity for all current sites as well as those three proposed and approved during the work session; reiterated it will be important to keep a close eye on nonprofit capacity and resources as programs continue to grow.

- Mayor Vinis - thanked everyone for their comments; agreed that investment in nonprofit partners is one of the most critical components to ensuring the success of these programs and that this will continue to be an important conversation at the local, state, and national level.

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

Respectfully submitted,



Brooke Freed  
City Recorder AIC

*(Recorded by Jay Ferris)*

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