

## MINUTES

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

October 11, 2021  
5:30 p.m.

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

Mayor Vinis opened the October 11, 2021, work session of the Eugene City Council in virtual format.

#### 1. WORK SESSION – Community Safety Initiative

Assistant City Manager Kristie Hammitt, Project Manager Kevin Alltucker, Chief of Police Chris Skinner and Executive Director of Library, Recreation and Cultural Services Renee Grube reviewed Community Safety Initiative outcomes and service investments to achieve established outcomes. The Community Safety Initiative funds critical community services including police, fire and emergency medical services, municipal court and prosecution services, prevention and homeless services. While the funding is limited to these services by ordinance, there is flexibility in how funds are distributed among these services to achieve desired community outcomes. Staff requested input regarding areas of focus and proposed strategies for FY22.

##### Council Discussion:

- Councilor Evans – thanked staff for the thorough and comprehensive report showcasing a path forward to improved public safety; asked Chief Skinner about overworked and stressed police officers who may be looking for opportunities elsewhere and the tools available to increase mental health support; asked how we reconnect police officers with local schools, building and strengthening the relationships needed to pursue productive youth prevention work; asked if the culture of the police department needs to be rebuilt or reframed in a way that creates a more proactive relationship with the community.
- Councilor Groves – thanked staff for the presentation; stated that there is a capacity problem and more officers are needed, noting the department has been unable to keep pace with call volume growth; said incidents rattle people’s safety and their perception of safety and this is a system deficiency problem; agreed with focusing on youth prevention opportunities further up the education and social services pipeline; said he believes the best chance for changing future paradigms is through relationship-building, lifting at-risk youth out of chronic poverty and unstable housing and into healthy and safe environments with positive role models; regarding officer mental health, noted that overworked officers make poorer decisions in the field, and much more so with high-risk, low-frequency events.
- Councilor Clark – echoed Chief Skinner’s thoughts that 4J and Bethel School Boards made a mistake in altering their relationship with the Eugene Police Department School Resource Officers; stated that reestablishing these relationships remains an opportunity for youth prevention programming; asked about 2018 bridge funding for 40 new officers and how many have been hired to date; asked how much longer will it take to complete the additional 30 hires remaining given current funding and hiring timelines; asked about lateral movements between Portland Police Department and Eugene Police Department; asked if there is any awareness around the number of officers that may leave due to a COVID vaccine mandate.

- Councilor Syrett – thanked staff for the thoughtful information; stated the importance of the many resources beyond the Community Safety Initiative in terms of providing upstream interventions and alternative responses, which are receiving investments of time, policy and funding; noted the future work session on rental protections and other mechanisms that can help ensure vulnerable residents are secure and maintain housing; agreed that investment in youth services is a high-impact strategy and should be expanded further; expressed hope that federal initiatives to provide child tax credit payments and childcare assistance will contribute to public health and safety improvements; asked about community court status in terms of residents served and coverage map.
- Councilor Yeh – thanked staff for the clear and concise information; agreed with Councilor Syrett’s remarks on creating further stability within homeless and social service programs; asked about youth program long-term funding sources to ensure continuance of positive outcomes; said she stands with Council on its commitment to officer wellness; stated that the impact of forced overtime is not minimal and is glad to see the City on the path to shoring up officer vacancies in the Eugene Police Department.
- Councilor Keating – thanked staff for the informative presentation; noted that Community Safety Initiative was launched in 2018 prior to COVID pandemic and restrictions; stated that instead of framing office vaccination rates as having the potential to lose officers, it would be better to see it as a mechanism for building trust with the community; asked for the exact number of officers who are vaccinated versus unvaccinated, and what efforts if any are being employed to bolster vaccination rates locally and in their field overall; asked if Chief Skinner would hire new Community Service Officers who are unvaccinated; asked Chief Skinner to demonstrate how an increase in Community Service Officers and peace officers is not an investment in military hardware; asked what efforts are being employed to hire a more diverse array of officers; asked what strategies are in place to support officers experiencing mental health concerns.
- Councilor Semple – thanked staff for a thorough report and expressed appreciation for its intention and innovation; stated it is not an either/or decision between having police and defunding police – more of both are needed; more officers are needed to reduce response times and to provide additional outreach for youth and the community at-large; stated she opposes forced overtime as work/life balance is critical to mental health in high demand jobs such as these; said she wants more officers available, not because more arrests are needed, but for the greater protection and safety of the community and its officers; said she believes alternative courts are more effective and should be funded as such.
- Councilor Zelenka – agreed with the key findings and areas of focus in the Community Safety Initiative engagement sessions; agreed there is a capacity problem in the community safety systems; stated that homelessness remains the council’s highest priority in this area and additional alternatives are needed in lieu of officers acting as mental health first responders; asked about CAHOOTS (Crisis Assistance Helping Out On The Streets) capacity, funding and opportunities for increasing their capacity; said he wants to see a modest shift of resources to the prevention side within the Community Safety Initiative, but should also be considering an increase in overall funding streams.
- Mayor Vinis – expressed appreciation for this conversation and stated support for the Community Safety Initiatives framework and recent adjustments, key areas of focus; stated that more eyes on the street are needed to ensure the local public safety system is visible, available and familiar to our community in a positive manner.
- Councilor Zelenka – asked about the possibility of some Community Service Officers and peace officers being dedicated to homeless population and the issues that arise in those areas.

**2. WORK SESSION - Right-of-Way Resolutions on Federal-Aid Projects (TABLED TO 7:30PM COUNCIL MEETING)**

Due to time constraints, this work session was postponed to the October 11, 2021, 7:30 p.m. City Council meeting, with discussion to take place in the time remaining after public forum.

Mayor Vinis adjourned the meeting at 7:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Brooke Freed', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Brooke Freed  
City Recorder AIC

*(Recorded by Jay Ferris)*

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