

## MINUTES

### Eugene City Council and Eugene Planning Commission Virtual Joint Work Session Eugene, Oregon 97401

October 18, 2021  
5:30 p.m.

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

Councilors Absent: Alan Zelenka, Greg Evans

**Commissioners Present:** Ken Beeson, Dan Isaacson, Lisa Fragala, Tiffany Edwards, Chris Ramey

Commissioners Absent: Kristen Taylor, Thomas Fiorelli

Mayor Vinis opened the October 18, 2021, work session of the Eugene City Council in virtual format.

Planning Commission Chair Beeson opened the October 18, 2021, work session of the Eugene Planning Commission.

#### 1. **WORK SESSION – Joint Meeting of the City Council and Planning Commission**

Planning Director Alissa Hansen and Principal Planner Terri Harding provided an overview of the role of the Planning Commission and highlighted projects that will be coming to the City Council through the Planning Commission work plan. The work session includes a discussion of ways the Planning Commission can support the City Council in making important decisions related to planning and land use, with a focus on the Middle Housing Code Amendments.

##### Council Discussion:

- Mayor Vinis – thanked staff for the presentation and the Commission for the increased number of meetings, noting many of the projects with which they deal are complicated and fraught with controversy.
- Councilor Groves – thanked staff for the presentation and the Commission for their work; stated he is seeking a balance between increasing affordable housing and livability; asked about projected parking density for new housing and the potential impact of off-street parking not being a requirement; expressed concerns about lack of parking as just offloading problems onto neighborhoods.
- Commissioner Fragala – noted the seven pillars of the Planning Commission’s community vision are all things that have been repeatedly reinforced by the community; discussed the balance between affordable housing and livability as it pertains to parking and the need to begin thinking about the City’s Climate Action and Transportation Plans; stated middle housing is an important piece of that puzzle and can reduce the reliance of single-use vehicles.
- Councilor Keating – thanked staff and Commissioners for their efforts; asked about providing incentives to developers for protecting and expanding tree canopy coverage; asked what protections can be put in place to prevent displacing current renters whose housing could be converted to middle housing.
- Commissioner Edwards – shared her perspective on how the Commission approaches their work; reminded all that they are working to implement a state law, but Eugene has an opportunity to customize the implementation in a way that better suits the community and

matches real needs with action; stated that smaller and more affordable housing can increase the supply and diversity of options as well as opportunities for home ownership; noted public involvement with this plan has been robust and equitable with input from many different voices across the community.

- Councilor Clark – thanked staff and the Commissioners for the presentation and their hard work; noted he sees three groups to keep in mind during housing planning – City-level policy makers and influencing bodies, developers, and the market; stated at this time the City is unlikely to reduce the number of vehicles, but may find ways to reduce the overall number of people who rely on vehicles; noted those who depend on vehicles seem less likely to pursue housing that lacks adequate parking; asked staff to discuss the affordability considerations of creating middle housing and what other factors they have taken into account; asked if code amendments are being analyzed related to housing affordability; noted a healthy community has approximately 65 percent homeowners to 35 percent renters, with Eugene being split closer to 50 percent on either side; asked whether an analysis has been performed on proposed changes producing more renters vs owners.
- Commissioner Beeson – noted the state has set minimum standards for middle housing, with the Commission looking to go beyond it to provide greater flexibility and diversity for the Eugene community; stated their assumption that more affordable housing can be constructed when it is smaller and diverse, something which also opens up the potential for greater home ownership to a much broader community.
- Councilor Syrett – appreciated the Commissioners’ comments regarding their robust outreach efforts to connect with those typically not engaged in such processes; stated the City’s Street Tree Program also bolsters efforts to promote a healthy tree canopy; asked if the updated code will allow for multi-unit dwellings to be owner-occupied; asked for clarification on the process of dividing larger lots into smaller sublots.
- Commissioner Fragala – addressed ownership and affordability, noting the time and effort spent by the Commission on these issues; stated House Bill 2001 focuses on availability and diversity of housing and provides bonuses around greater density and overall number of units in an effort to promote affordable, smaller buildings; stated only so much can be addressed with updates to the code, as it is but one piece of a larger effort by the City, such as the Housing Implementation Pipeline.
- Mayor Vinis – asked staff to clarify the minimum standards set forth by the state surrounding middle housing/lot size considerations.
- Councilor Clark – noted that, as housing prices go up year after year, homeowners have experienced a wealth increase whereas renters have not; stated the fastest way to decrease wealth inequality is to have more homeowners; expressed concern about efforts that may create a greater number of new rentals than it does opportunities for home ownership; noted federal rules created by Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac will be more impactful to potential home ownership than will state law; asked if the Commission is taking into account these federal restrictions on lending when looking at standards allowing for smaller middle housing lots.
- Commissioner Isaacson – echoed Commissioner Fragala’s comments that this is one of many tools in the kit to combat a multifaceted problem facing the community; discussed the positive impacts of owner-occupied, multi-unit dwellings.
- Commissioner Ramey – thanked staff for their efforts; noted this a state-mandated process the City is attempting to fine tune for specific local needs and to honor those in the community seeking greater flexibility and diversity in housing; stated the need for affordable housing in the ‘sweet spot’ of 800-1000 sq. ft. per unit, as data shows it is the ideal size for affordability in the middle areas of the community currently unable to afford housing.
- Commissioner Edwards – responded to Councilor Clark’s comments on affordability; discussed steps being taken to incentivize development of affordable middle housing.

- Councilor Clark – stated strong support for the goal of providing affordable housing; questioned the consequences of creating more rentals than opportunities for ownership.
- Commissioner Beeson – underlined the Commission is in the final stages of public involvement and review of draft code amendments; noted the next Commission public hearing is on November 16 and encouraged those interested to submit their comments and attend public hearings.

Mayor Vinis adjourned the meeting at 6:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Brooke Freed  
City Recorder AIC

*(Recorded by Jay Ferris)*

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