

MINUTES

Eugene City Council Urban Renewal Agency Virtual Work Session Eugene, Oregon 97401

October 25, 2021
5:30 p.m.

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

Councilors Absent: Greg Evans

Mayor Vinis opened the October 25, 2021 meeting of the Urban Renewal Agency in virtual format.

1. WORK SESSION – Steam Plant Redevelopment Update

Community Development Director Will Dowdy and Business Development Analyst Amanda D’Souza provided an update on the proposed redevelopment of the riverfront Steam Plant, including answers to Council questions from the May 19, 2021, work session.

Council Discussion:

- Councilor Groves – thanked staff for the presentation; addressed the recent vandalism and property damage to the steam plant interior, noting it was an affront to the community; said he was impressed by Mark Miksis’ and Mark Frohnmayer’s vision for the property, which serves to underscore the importance of working with local developers who understand the community; expressed concerns over the \$6.5 million gap and asked about potential funding sources; suggested future Council discussion on the pros and cons of renewing urban renewal district which is soon to expire; emphasized that the ground floor area and adjacent outdoor space would be open and usable by the general public.
- Councilor Syrett – thanked staff for the presentation; reminded all that the steam plant redevelopment is a part of the larger redevelopment of the former Eugene Water and Electric Board (EWEB) industrial site, which includes park space and affordable housing, a huge asset to the city; asked if the rooftop terrace space was newly added since last review by Council; expressed concerns over vandalism and what can be done to reduce such activities and better monitor the site.
- Councilor Clark – thanked staff for the presentation; echoed comments about the steam plant being a landmark in the community; noted his support of project but urged Council to be careful and cautious of what is in the best interest of the city when moving forward; stated his full confidence in the team to bring these plans to fruition, but will continue to advocate for limited use of local dollars.
- Councilor Yeh – said she believes the updated plans makes sense, and that pivoting from shared workspace to a hotel is a good idea; expressed concerns over funding gap and the prospect of allocating more local dollars when there are arguably more pressing needs within the community; asked Council and staff to consider whether there may be things that can no longer be asked for if a request is made for gap funding from the state legislature,.
- Councilor Keating – thanked staff for their work; asked for a count of market-rate housing units anticipated to be available in the adjacent property; asked if another boutique hotel is a priority during times of housed and unhoused crises; applauded the high likelihood of Bureau of Labor

and Industries (BOLI) classifying this as a prevailing wage project, adding that City projects should adhere to this practice as part of a broader community benefit agreement; advocated for Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) installations for proposed community art spaces.

- Councilor Zelenka – stated there is much to like about this project, including more hotel space and adaptive reuse of riverfront building, but it is nonetheless a very costly project; stated that the public benefit of open use space is worthwhile though there is still concern about closing the funding gap by extending the urban renewal district and its spending/debt limits; asked what other state and federal resources may be available; noted that, given all competing interests for local funding, a boutique hotel does not feel high on the list.
- Councilor Semple – expressed sadness and anger over the recent destruction and vandalism inside the steam plant; said she is excited for the rooftop and public performance spaces; said she believes a boutique hotel on the river will be a draw to the public; stated that the funding gap is concerning and the council must keep its eyes open for other funding opportunities.
- Mayor Vinis – noted that she took the challenges of this space to a mayor’s design conference in 2018 and many were quite excited about it; noted the already high level of private investment in this project; reminded Council that this is not just a hotel for visitors but a self-sustaining economic engine whose development is a public benefit.
- Councilor Groves – echoed comments from the Mayor; stated that this property is an anchor point for riverfront development and strengthens connections to downtown and the University of Oregon; noted that the developers have stated there is enough space for on-site parking, particularly given many are expected to take alternate forms of transportation; said he hopes to see this project bring forward the history of this building and its benefits to the city.
- Councilor Syrett – shared insights from developers and hoteliers who believe a boutique hotel will be a nexus for residents, businesses, visitors, and the public art spaces; echoed support for this project being subject to prevailing wage; noted that hoteliers have committed to hiring skilled workers at higher wages; said she believes having publicly accessible spaces for residents is a huge enhancement to their quality of life; stated that unified Council support of this project will be critical for garnering funding from state legislators.
- Councilor Keating – stated that the lack of a river exit for kayakers and other recreational users may have been a missed opportunity to drive river tourism; encouraged all to be thinking beyond the local impact of projects of this size and how they can serve to attract visitors from beyond the city.
- Councilor Clark – asked about public interactions with this space and if it will include dining opportunities; followed up to ask if usage of natural gas for any dining amenities will be precluded as part of their agreement; asked staff to speak further on scale and capacity of space as it relates to public interaction.

Mayor Vinis adjourned Urban Renewal Agency meeting at 6:23 p.m. and opened the October 25, 2021, work session of the Eugene City Council in virtual format.

2. WORK SESSION – Human Rights Commission Work Plan FY 2022

Human Rights and Neighborhood Involvement Manager (AIC) Fabio Andrade and Human Rights Commission (HRC) Chair Amanda McCluskey provided an overview of the HRC’s proposed fiscal year 2022 work plan. The HRC’s enabling ordinance, adopted in December of 1990 (Eugene Code 2.280), requires that it develop a work plan for City Council review and approval, with annual reporting on its progress.

Council Discussion:

- Mayor Vinis – thanked staff for the report and acknowledged those who are stepping off the committee and their contributions to advancing City policy work.
- Councilor Syrett – thanked staff for their presentation and important work; thanked current members for their ongoing support.
- Councilor Groves – noted that, as the Council member assigned to this commission, he greatly appreciates their dedication and professionalism.
- Councilor Keating – thanked staff and current/former members of commission for their efforts.
- Councilor Zelenka – thanked former members for their service to the community and the benefits granted through their efforts; said he believes the FY22 work plan is appropriate and well thought out; suggested a more diverse representation from all City Council wards, compared to current commission having 80 percent of its members from only two of the eight wards.
- Councilor Yeh – thanked staff for the hard work; asked those interested in becoming commission volunteers to reach out to their Councilor.
- Councilor Syrett – noted that commission volunteers are a joint effort across the City Council wards and that those from all wards should be encouraged to apply.
- Mayor Vinis – appreciated the HRC’s focus on equity and multiculturalism and said that this commission has liaisons on other commissions to ensure human rights considerations are represented and connected across all activities.

MOTION AND VOTE: Councilor Yeh, seconded by Councilor Syrett, moved to approve the Human Rights Commission Fiscal Year 2022 Work Plan. **PASSED 7:0**

Mayor Vinis adjourned the meeting at 6:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Brooke Freed
City Recorder AIC

(Recorded by Jay Ferris)

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