

MINUTES

Eugene City Council Virtual Work Session Eugene, Oregon 97401

November 8, 2021
5:30 p.m.

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

Councilors Absent: Greg Evans

Mayor Vinis opened the November 8, 2021, work session of the Eugene City Council in virtual format.

1. **WORK SESSION – Sustainability Commission FY22 Work Plan**

Staff Liaison to the Sustainability Commission Samantha Roberts, Commission Chair Mtima Richardson and Vice Chair Laura Allen presented the Sustainability Commission's Proposed FY22 Work Plan.

Council Discussion:

- Mayor Vinis – expressed appreciation for the structure and clarity of the report and the proposed plan; said she understands Council is concerned about improving the tree canopy and pursuing fossil fuel bonds and thanked the commission for its contributions to that important work.
- Councilor Syrett – thanked staff for their focused work, as well as their efforts to research options, ideas, policy and funding recommendations; stated strong support among the Council for air quality recommendations.
- Councilor Semple – thanked staff for the presentation and said the council is looking forward to working with the commission once the work plan is approved.
- Councilor Zelenka – thanked staff for the work plan; stated that the local tree canopy remains impressive but nonetheless continues to diminish in size every year; noted that the purchase of carbon offsets, when done with proper protocol, can be very effective and useful; provided an example of energy offsets with cost/size comparison; expressed hope that the Sustainability Commission will find a cost effective way to purchase local offsets as the City should be stimulating the local economy whenever possible while striving for a greater impact.
- Councilor Keating – thanked staff for the update; echoed comments on the specificity of plan and appreciation for flexibility on emerging areas of interest in sustainability; echoed support for expanding the dwindling tree canopy.
- Councilor Yeh – thanked staff for their work; asked about the intent behind the commission adding more committees as part of work plan.
- Councilor Groves – thanked staff for the presentation; emphasized the use of local carbon offsets whenever possible to keep that money in the community; suggested a targeted effort to expand the tree canopy in locations where it is most effective, such as providing shade for hardscapes and waterways.
- Mayor Vinis – asked Council and the commission to consider the formation of a local tree bank to maintain/grow canopy.

MOTION AND VOTE: Councilor Yeh, seconded by Councilor Syrett, moved to approve the Fiscal Year 22 Sustainability Commission Work Plan. **PASSED 7:0**

2. WORK SESSION – 2020 Census and Ward Population Update

Policy Systems Analyst Jason Dedrick provided a population overview of the eight City Council wards, including potential scenarios for updating ward boundaries. Every 10 years, the Eugene City Council examines the population of City Council wards, based on the results from the U.S. Census. Council previously directed staff to engage community members and stakeholders on two scenarios that would address population imbalances between Council wards. This work session is an opportunity to review community input and to direct staff to prepare the final ordinance and map for adoption in December.

Council Discussion:

- Mayor Vinis – thanked staff for the presentation and inclusion of full survey responses.
- Councilor Groves – thanked staff for their hard work; expressed ongoing concern that the process is rushed; noted that one review every 10 years makes it challenging to perform a deeper dive into community concerns; asked if anything precludes Council from reviewing ward boundaries more frequently; asked if the council is under any legal obligation to have the process completed by end of calendar year.
- Councilor Yeh – asked to clarify whether the process had to be concluded by election deadlines in May; shared concern that waiting another 10 years to reevaluate may cause more problems than it creates; asked about methods for increasing response count and engagement levels from community feedback.
- Councilor Clark – thanked staff for their hard work and strategic approach towards redistricting efforts; said he was pleased that council represents different neighborhoods and community elements; expressed his slight preference for Scenario 2; noted that an incremental approach to boundary changes is well thought out, as minor alterations historically lead to fewer disputes.
- Councilor Syrett – thanked staff for the presentation; concurred with Councilor Clark that incremental changes to ward boundaries create less conflict; stated that Council has a responsibility to ensure that population counts are balanced across the wards as it helps to ensure equitable voting; expressed uncertainty as to what would be accomplished by delaying this process.
- Councilor Semple – thanked staff for their efforts and for following the criteria previously laid out by Council; said she was concerned about renters feeling they have unequal representation yet was uncertain what redistricting efforts would be needed to correct that; questioned how soon ward boundaries can be reviewed again, with greater community outreach and a balanced, responsive approach.
- Councilor Zelenka – noted the tight deadline for this process relative to upcoming election processes; stated he did not think the ward allocation system is broken or controversial towards renters; stated that a difference of approximately 24,000 voters in one ward is high and changing it should not be delayed; asked if options could be mixed and matched across the (2) presented scenarios; noted the differences in how both scenarios would further split neighborhood associations across ward boundaries; expressed his preference for Scenario 1 overall.
- Councilor Keating – concurred with Councilor Zelenka’s sentiments that distribution of renters across wards does not seem contentious; stated his preference for Scenario 1; asked staff to review the map showing current distribution of renters across the wards; stated that they consider ward, county and legislative boundaries to fundamentally benefit land owners, particularly given that renters move around more; encouraged current and future councilors to prioritize options that allow for a diverse array of voices to be at the table for discussion.
- Mayor Vinis – addressed questions regarding the 10-year review timeline and suggested that with code changes being confirmed in House Bill 2001, along with the completion of new housing developments and growing population, the 10-year boundary adjustment timeline serves to consider broad-sweeping changes in our community at the appropriate scale.

- Councilor Syrett – stated that the council views the engagement survey responses as a sampling of viewpoints from around the community; noted they need compelling evidence that delaying this process would lead to greater insight and better decision-making; expressed support for Scenario 1.
- Councilor Clark – reiterated the statute which states the Council’s obligation to not separate communities of common interest, noting that is a somewhat subjective phrase; asked Council to consider whether the neighborhood associations being split across multiple wards is a benefit due to broader representation; stated his desire that Council discussion on the nature of appropriate representation continues.
- Councilor Yeh – expressed appreciation for everyone’s comments and the team approach to Council discussion; said she is uncertain whether Council is ready to make this important decision as it is unclear whether they all see the same problems surrounding it; questioned if making sweeping changes to ward boundaries would actually aid in diversifying Council; stated she would like to see this become an ongoing topic for future discussions and work sessions.
- Councilor Keating – appreciated staff’s work and attention to detail; asked if it is known what percent of landlords are paying the \$10 per unit annual fee for education and enforcement of the City’s Rental Housing Program; followed up to ask if the amount has been adjusted since its implementation approximately 20 years ago; expressed interest in proposing a work session on this fee, its amount and best use in times of housing crises.
- Councilor Clark – shared that the Rental Housing Program fee has not been adjusted since its inception.
- Councilor Zelenka – clarified that the primary difference between scenarios 1 and 2 is the shifting boundary between wards 4 and 5; proposed that Council direct the City Manager to adopt changes which represent both scenarios.
- Councilor Semple – reminded all that a session for the Housing Policy Board on renter’s protections is forthcoming.

MOTION AND VOTE: Councilor Yeh, seconded by Councilor Syrett, moved to direct the City Manager to prepare a resolution and map to adopt ‘Scenario 1’ with ward changes for wards 4 and 5 based on ‘Scenario 2’ as Eugene’s new ward boundaries.
PASSED 7:0

Mayor Vinis adjourned the meeting at 6:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Brooke Freed
 City Recorder AIC

(Recorded by Jay Ferris)

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