

## MINUTES

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

November 22, 2021  
5:30 p.m.

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

Mayor Vinis opened the November 22, 2021, work session of the Eugene City Council in virtual format.

#### 1. **WORK SESSION: Renter Protections**

City Manager Sarah Medary introduced and gave background on the topic. Grants Manager Genevieve Middleton gave a presentation on the topic.

##### Council Discussion:

- Councilor Groves - shared his concerns about the rental rates for tenants, with 56 percent experiencing a housing cost burden and 34 percent who are extremely cost burdened and spending over 50 percent of their income on rent; shared concerns about rental agreements that are in 11-month increments so landlords can avoid the rules; asked how to implement protections for renters when property owners do not put homes on the market; asked what percentage of rental operations are “mom and pop” type; said he would like to know more about the Portland relocation program; asked if there are rental protection recommendations that can be implemented sooner than others; shared his concern that a wave of evictions is coming; asked to hear more information on the extension from the State legislature.
- Councilor Semple - shared that the Housing Policy Board had a lot of suggestions and recommendations but decided to limit what was forwarded in order to get more done; commented on the displacement prevention relocation assistance under the move-in/move-out stage, noting it would be very effective; asked what Council needs to do to get these initiatives moving; encouraged quick passage of the recommendation related to application fees because the fee can be detrimental.
- Councilor Yeh - commented that she feels the recommendations are doable; said she understands concerns about small businesses, noting they are often the ones who do things improperly because they are too small to notice; said she is interested in hearing about strategies to help people who are facing no-cause evictions.
- Councilor Keating - commented on the alarming statistics around cost burdened renters and extremely low vacancy rate; shared his experience looking for adequate rental housing for his family; said he feels the recommendations are sound, noting the need to explore the constitutionality of completely eliminating application and processing fees; supported one-stop shop for screening fees; indicated his surprise that there is no recommendation to raise the \$10-a-year rental fee for landlords; said he would like to see this fee doubled and be a resource for people to tap into if needed.



- Councilor Syrett - shared there was a recommendation to increase the landlord rental fee; noted that work session poll on renter protections was approved in 2016 and, although it has taken too long to schedule a Council conversation on this issue, she is glad Council is finally having this substantive discussion; commented that she would like to add the concept of displacement protection assistance for consideration at the next work session; agreed with the need to check the legality of removing the application and processing fees; said she is interested in the idea of a central application platform where those looking for housing pay one single fee for a universal application; pointed out that some of the fees are needed to do background checks and noted there is an abuse of that allowance; identified the need to prioritize accessible units and said she does not feel the three-day posting is the right way to do this; supported exploring the idea of a clearinghouse for postings and that might be more effectively coordinated through disability services such as Lane Living Alliance; suggested adding that the proposed documentation about appliances should be shared with tenants when they move in; asked what the budget needs would be for the three items suggested in the rental housing tax.
- Councilor Zelenka – shared he is also glad this issue is being discussed because rental protections are long overdue; stated the troubling statistics are not new and have been true for long time; asked why there was not a discussion around a universal intake system for landlords and renters, noting everyone could benefit from this; commented on the recommendation to process rental applications in the order received; said he feels if rental income is someone’s main source of their income, they might want to expedite processing applications; asked if there is a way to make an exception for people who have one to three rental properties; requested more information on credit scores and the correlation with the ability to pay; asked about the move-in/move-out education materials in terms of who creates, who prints and who pays.
- Councilor Clark - shared he spends most his day looking at people’s credit scores and understands the correlation between credit score and ability to pay; asked councilors to pause before acting to adopt these recommendations; gave an example about the eleven-month eviction ordinance that Council implemented and its effect on how the market behaves, noting Council’s action can lead to unintended consequences for renters; asked if the no-cause evictions that are reported are verified; stated he would like to see something that gives renters financial credit for things they do to increase the value of the property.
- Councilor Semple - asked what the landlord fee could cover; asked what the fee would have to be to fund an FTE to help with the ADA situation, educational material, and a hot-line; shared that eliminating the application fee is the Housing Policy Board’s preference and discussed the universal application fee; shared that the board struggled to find solutions and needs more ideas around the ADA issues.
- Councilor Evans - asked what can be done to help ex-offenders access rental housing, noting there are other classes of people who have challenges qualifying for a rental unit; asked about pest and rodent control and shared his experience in rental housing; stated unwanted insects and rodents make a place uninhabitable.
- Councilor Keating - agreed with the idea of credit for tenants who beautify a place and increase the property value of a home that is being rented temporarily; shared his experience adding value to a property as a renter; supported getting more information on these recommendations and any related legality issues; shared he wants to see Council act on renter protections; said he is interested in other renter protections not on the list such as prohibition on discriminating against families who have pets; shared the team at



Springfield/Eugene Tenant Association are doing great work trying to keep people housed; said he would like to see a moratorium on no-cause evictions.

- Councilor Syrett – said she would also like information on funding an additional FTE position, an update on the usage of the funds now, and a report on the effectiveness of the work being done on rental housing code education; appreciated the comment about unintended consequences and shared this needs to be part of the conversation to make sure the issue is not miscommunicated; shared this can be difficult to anticipate and noted that looking at Portland’s renter protections and any analysis on unintended consequences could help guide Council on what is implemented in Eugene.
- Councilor Clark – said he feels information about landlords would be useful in this dynamic system; stated he would like to remove assumptions that some may have around who the landlords are; stated he wants to know how many landlords own one or two rental properties compared to the number of companies that may own multiple rentals and gave an example of how the two could respond differently to rental protections.
- Councilor Evans - asked about staff capacity around code enforcement and whether there are enough code inspectors; asked what the average number of complaints are related to rental housing code issues.
- Councilor Zelenka - stated he would like to add displacement prevention assistance, no-cause evictions, reimbursements for work done, and a universal application system portal to the list of recommendations; shared he is troubled by the 11-month lease agreement and how this issue can be resolved; commented he would like to see the other renter protections recommendations that were suggested but not forwarded and what the landlord committees said; shared he is interested in what is happening with federal dollars for renters who have unpaid balances and are facing eviction; suggested calling this the Norton Cabell Bill in honor of his work around renter protections; asked if the timeline for a follow-up work session can be moved up to maintain momentum on this issue.
- Councilor Groves - asked what recommendations on the list and suggestions from colleagues can be implemented sooner than later and requested a timeline that maps this out; commented he feels pressure to act as February is approaching and said he hopes the state extends the eviction moratorium further; noted that the disparity between the cost of rent and people’s income is partly caused by the lack of living wage jobs in this community; stated Council needs to get serious about what can be done to stimulate higher wage jobs and affordability for owning homes.

**MOTION:** Councilor Yeh, seconded by Councilor Syrett, moved to direct the City Manager to return with information about feasibility and resources needed to implement renter protections consistent with the Housing Policy Board recommendations and to include items discussed tonight. **PASSED 8:0**

Council Discussion:

- Councilor Clark – said he does not think Council has enough information to make decisions and the motion, as worded, directs the City Manager to accept all the recommendations; asked for clarification of the motion.
- Councilor Zelenka - asked to add a friendly amendment for coming back first quarter 2022; identified a list of items to include to bring back more information on.
- Councilor Clark - added he would like more information about property ownership.



## 2. **WORK SESSION: Intergovernmental Relations- 2022 Legislative Priorities**

City Manager Sarah Medary introduced and gave background on the topic. Intergovernmental Relations Manager Ethan Nelson gave a presentation on the topic.

### Council Discussion:

- Councilor Syrett- provided some context for the work done by the IGR Committee.
- Councilor Evans - asked how the \$7million gap will be closed for the Riverfront project; shared ideas on how to get additional funding from the state or extend the urban renewal district to cover some of the costs incurred as the project moves forward.
- Councilor Zelenka - shared concerns about the IGR process, noting that councilors who are not on the IGR committee are detached from the process and do not have a chance to provide much input; recommended weekly updates and implementing some process to bring up concerns that Councilor's have.
- Councilor Clark - commented that the process does not allow for a minority opinion to be heard; said he feels there are several things listed that are good things to do; asked if there has been discussion at IGR about advocating for some manner of support from the State for funding a new stadium for the Eugene Emeralds; suggested that both IGR and local people and groups have lobbied many times for money for University of Oregon for sports facilities, noting the Eugene Emeralds is a community institution and should be supported as a priority.
- Councilor Keating - said the Eugene Emeralds has been brought up at IGR meetings and he continues to be an advocate for finding some creative ways for the organization to thrive in the community; said that the IGR committee is a public meeting, and anyone can watch the process and review the minutes.
- Councilor Groves – supported efforts to find funding for a stadium for the Eugene Emeralds; appreciated the work the IGR committee does.
- Councilor Semple - commented she does not know what the committee does in terms of meeting topics; supported a way to better communicate the topics being discussed; noted that that emails are sent frequently with IGR information.
- Councilor Syrett - commented on what the IGR committee does and how the information comes back to Council; shared she is committed to weekly updates and meeting more frequently; noted the IGR committee is a non-partisan body.
- Councilor Evans - supported building a multi-purpose facility for the Ems, concerts, and other events; shared that different sites are being looked at as possibilities.
- Councilor Zelenka - agreed that minority opinions are not always welcome or heard; shared the Eugene Ems is a higher priority to him than the 2022 World Championships funding and the Steam Plant; wondered why this issue is not a high priority for Council.

**MOTION:** Councilor Yeh, seconded by Councilor Syrett, moved to adopt the 2022 City of Eugene-State and Federal Legislative Policy and the 2022 Oregon priorities.





**MOTION TO AMEND AND VOTE:** Councilor Zelenka, seconded by Councilor Clark, moved to add the following language to the motion on the table - to provide full Council with weekly written reports during session, a process for bringing up concerns for non IGR and Council members minority opinions and add a policy for support of keeping the Eugene Emeralds in Eugene. **PASSED 5:2**, councilors Keating and Semple opposed, Councilor Evans absent.

**VOTE ON MAIN MOTION AS AMENDED** (*restated*): Councilor Yeh, seconded by Councilor Syrett, moved to adopt the 2022 City of Eugene-State and Federal Legislative Policy and the 2022 Oregon priorities and to provide full Council with weekly written reports during session, a process for bringing up concerns for non IGR and Council members minority opinions and add a policy for support of keeping the Eugene Emeralds in Eugene. **PASSED 7:0**, Councilor Evans absent.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:06 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Brooke Freed', with a stylized, flowing script.

Brooke Freed  
AIC City Recorder

(Recorded by Niyah Ross)

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

