

## MINUTES

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

November 15, 2023  
12:00 p.m.

**Councilors Present:** Alan Zelenka, Jennifer Yeh, Mike Clark, Greg Evans, Lyndsie Leech, and Randy Groves, and Matt Keating

**Councilors Absent:** Emily Semple

Mayor Vinis opened the November 15, 2023, work session of the Eugene City Council in a virtual format.

#### **1. WORK SESSION: An Ordinance Adopting An Amended Urban Renewal Plan For The Riverfront Urban Renewal District**

City Manager, Sarah Medary, introduced Development Programs Manager, Amanda D'Souza, who presented information on a proposed ordinance to amend the Riverfront Urban Renewal District.

Councilor Keating exited the meeting at 12:05 p.m.

#### Councilor Discussion:

- Councilor Yeh – asked if staff have discussed increasing the limit higher than the amounts in the presentation; asked staff what the negative impacts could be if the amount was increased beyond the proposed \$45 million; stated that the time and cost to complete projects is usually more than expected; would prefer to increase the spending limit further to ensure the project can be completed.
- Councilor Clark – noted this is a once in a generation opportunity to develop housing and commercial opportunities that will enhance the community along the riverfront; is in favor of increasing the spending limit beyond the amounts presented by staff.
- Councilor Groves – would support a higher spending limit than was presented; asked staff to outline the process and timeline impact if Council chooses to increase the spending limit; asked staff to explain what the process would be to expand the limit at a later date; stated that there are unknown variables to the project that could impact the cost of completion.
- Councilor Leech – noted that the proposed amendment is an opportunity to invest in an area of the City that needs improvements; supports increasing the spending limit; is concerned about the impacts to the timeline if Council chooses to increase beyond the \$45 million limit proposed.
- Councilor Clark – asked the City Manager if there is updated cost information for establishing Fire Station 17; noted the City is in a housing crisis and increasing the housing inventory is important; asked for guidance from staff on a better target

spending limit; supports increasing the limit to at least \$60 million; stated there has been public support for the Riverfront project.

- Mayor Vinis – is concerned about the impact of making changes to the limit at this time; noted that Council can move forward with the proposed \$45 million increase and make changes in the future to increase or amend it.
- Councilor Evans – supports a higher spending limit to account for the impact of inflation; stated he would support an increase to \$75 million.
- Councilor Yeh – asked staff if Council should decide on a set amount at this work session; supports the increase to \$75 million; stated it is important to complete projects right the first time.

**MOTION:** Councilor Clark, seconded by Councilor Evans, move to direct the City Manager to bring back for action an ordinance amending the Riverfront Urban Renewal Plan and including a spending limit increase of \$75 million.

- Councilor Clark –noted the full \$75 million amount does not have to be spent.
- Councilor Groves – stated support for the motion.

**VOTE: PASSED 5:1** (opposed by Councilor Zelenka)

## **2. WORK SESSION: Sports Bond Discussion**

City Manager, Sarah Medary, introduced Executive Director of Planning and Development, Denny Braud, Recreation Services Director, Craig Smith, Parks and Open Spaces Division Manager, Craig Carnagey and Chief Financial Officer, Twylla Miller, who presented information about a potential sports bond.

### Councilor Discussion:

- Councilor Clark – stated preference for separating the three projects into individual proposals; stated that Golden Gardens was turned into a park to increase safety for youth in the community; stated that children’s safety will be his primary consideration for any project at Golden Gardens; stated that the community deserves to make a decision on the Eugene Emeralds project separately from the other projects.
- Councilor Zelenka – believes that the Eugene Emeralds project should be considered separately; is in favor of a stadium only bond of \$15 million; believes it is too soon to consider Golden Gardens at this time; stated that the pickleball facilities request could be accomplished using system development charges; asked what the cost per household per year would be for a stadium only bond; believes that a bond supporting the stadium decided by the voters is the right option.
- Councilor Yeh – is not supportive of cutting services to support the construction of a stadium; asked staff to clarify if Lane County has committed any Transient Lodging Tax funds to support the project; asked staff how the request for \$15 million was calculated; asked staff to clarify that the \$13.5 million in contributions from the Eugene Emeralds would be for pre-paid rent; stated that Council has a high responsibility about how tax dollars are used or requested; expressed concerns that

Lane County has not committed to the project; noted that the City has a large funding gap that may need support from voters to balance; believes more information is needed before a commitment can be made.

- Councilor Groves – would like to divide the stadium from the other presented projects; stated that the Willamette Valley Babe Ruth Baseball organization also has a need for additional lighting at their fields; asked City Manager if it is feasible to get more information from Lane County before the winter break; stated that the budget deficit would not be addressed with a one-time bond; stated that a levy would be more appropriate for operational cost deficits; stated that Council needs more information and commitment from Lane County before making a decision on the stadium project.
- Councilor Leech – is in favor of dividing the projects into separate discussions; would be in favor of adding funding for pickleball to the system development charges eligible list; stated that there are too many questions around Golden Gardens park to make decisions right now; would like to see more information about the environmental impacts of the project; would support moving the Eugene Emeralds stadium to a bond by itself.
- Mayor Vinis – believes it makes sense for each project to be discussed separately; noted that a \$15 million bond would leave the Emeralds project short of its goal; asked if the bond should be larger to ensure project completion; has concerns about making decisions on the Eugene Emeralds project before the Revenue Team meets regarding the budget deficit.
- Councilor Clark – would like a commitment from Lane County prior to committing to seek bond funds; stated that the City is spending much more per year on homeless response than anticipated; has concerns about the large increase in funding commitments; stated that Golden Gardens is a former gravel pit; asked staff what criteria is applied to determine whether an area is a natural area.
- Councilor Groves – stated that there have been three separate instances of loss of life at Golden Gardens; stated that the first priority for projects at Golden Gardens should be public safety; believes that support for the Eugene Emeralds stadium should be decided by the voters; asked if Council can vote to send a bond measure to the public, contingent on a commitment from Lane County; believes that both a bond and a levy can be put to the voters with success if outlined appropriately.
- Councilor Yeh – stated that adding to the tax burden whether via levy, bond, or both to the community should be done thoughtfully; asked the City Manager if she believes the projects should be considered separately; noted that the impact of the budget deficit on jobs in the community could be large; is hesitant to move forward with asking the community to support a bond for a stadium when the City's budget is not balanced.
- Councilor Evans – believes that Golden Gardens is not a time sensitive project; believes that the pickleball project is the easiest request to move forward on; stated that the stadium issue is time sensitive and should go to the voters in a bond measure; would like the three projects to be discussed as individual proposals.
- Councilor Zelenka – believes that there has been enough public input to act on the Eugene Emeralds project; noted that there should be a way to signal to other entities that the City of Eugene will support the project if it moves forward; believes it is too early to move forward on Golden Gardens at this time; intends to make a

motion at a later date to add pickleball courts to a system development charges project list.

- Mayor Vinis – asked the City Manager if Council has provided enough direction for staff to come back for another meeting in December.

Mayor Vinis adjourned the meeting at 1:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Katie LaSala  
City Recorder

*(Recorded by Sara McKinney)*

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