

MINUTES

Eugene City Council Work Session Eugene, Oregon 97401

February 21, 2024
12:00 p.m.

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

Mayor Vinis opened the February 21, 2024, work session of the Eugene City Council in a virtual format.

1. WORK SESSION: River Road-Santa Clara Neighborhood Plan Adoption Package

City Manager, Sarah Medary, introduced Principal Planner, Terri Harding, who provided an overview of the River Road-Santa Clara Neighborhood Plan Adoption Package.

Councilor Discussion:

- Councilor Evans – asked if the City is changing the C-2 Community Commercial Zone and if the set back is moving closer to 65 feet instead of 120 feet; noted concern for this change due to the removal of the setback on West 11th avenue and the problems it caused.
- Councilor Clark– noted one of the biggest goals of his predecessor was to see Santa Clara Community Park completed; noted he is in favor of the neighborhood plan but has concerns with the code amendments; asked how the proposed code amendments facilitate the plan; noted concern with the code amendments considering what is on the horizon for the State Legislature; noted support for the plan and the policy statements; expressed interest in hearing from Planning Commission members regarding the code amendments at the upcoming public hearing.
- Councilor Leech – noted support for the plan and concern for the code amendments; noted interest in hearing from community members at the upcoming public hearing; noted the City is looking at bigger sets of code revisions in 2026; asked if there is a possibility to delay these code amendments; asked if the Urban Growth Strategies is City-wide rather than neighborhood specific; noted the code presented is impactful, but there is room for more business engagement.
- Councilor Zelenka – noted concern with details in the code amendments; noted the City had previously done commercial setbacks to prevent various issues; asked what exemptions have been granted since the setbacks were in place.
- Councilor Groves – indicated he thinks the plan is fantastic, but he would like to review the code and setbacks before it goes to a vote; noted the plan could be a model for outcomes and any lessons learned could be applied to other

neighborhoods; believes the City needs to streamline the process for neighborhood planning and is eager to see staff come back with a generic overlay.

- Councilor Clark –indicated the City should focus on compact urban development and travel corridors for growth; asked if River Road is still a major travel corridor; noted the River Road-Santa Clara Neighborhood is the only place Council recommended placement of an Emerald Express (EmX) bus line; indicated he hopes Council will have a new recommendation soon for the Emerald Express bus line; noted he wants to support the changes the neighborhood wants and that the planning commission recommends, leading to the kind of development outlined in the plan.
- Mayor Vinis – noted interest in the upcoming public hearing; indicated that it is difficult to find the right balance for this neighborhood, which describes itself as a garden district while having a former highway running through it; noted she is hopeful that the City will find the balance for the two realities in the neighborhood.

2. **WORK SESSION: Lane County Multi-Use Stadium Discussion**

City Manager, Sarah Medary, introduced City Attorney, Kathryn Brotherton, who answered questions regarding discuss the construction of a multi-use stadium at the Lane County Fairgrounds and the potential adoption of a resolution that refers a capital bond to the May ballot.

Councilor Discussion:

- Councilor Keating – noted that he occasionally serves as a guest announcer for the Eugene Emeralds; clarified the outcome of this discussion has no financial impact on him or his family.
- Councilor Zelenka – noted the Emeralds are an asset to the City and enhance quality of life; indicated concern with the plan to fund the stadium with public money rather than private dollars; does not consider the \$13 million of deferred prepaid rent as capital contribution; despite stated concerns, he could support sending the decision to voters; noted that a yes-no vote on a bond should be a concrete ask, not advisory or conditional; noted there is still a large funding gap; stated Council needs to know if the County will designate Transient Room Tax funds to the stadium; noted concern that none of the requested factors or information were provided before this decision.
- Councilor Clark – noted Council has received many emails from community members who care about the Emeralds; noted the bond is based on building a multi-use public facility on County land; indicated he thinks public funds would be better spent going towards a City jail; noted he will probably support a motion that lets voters decide if a new stadium is built.
- Councilor Groves – clarified that of the Emerald’s pledged \$13 million, only \$10 million is part of the lease agreement and the remaining \$3 million is capital contribution; noted the overwhelming community response, with most individuals being in favor of the stadium construction; clarified that the stadium is a County project that the City has been asked to contribute; asked for clarification on the

timelines for the bond and Council's decision; noted if the Emeralds leave, the City will have lost an affordable level of entertainment for the public.

- Councilor Semple – noted Council needs focus on both the City's urgent needs and vital services as well as factors that make Eugene a wonderful place to live; noted concern with lack of certainty of State and County funding; noted concern that the City will be blamed for the failure of the project if it does not go to the ballot; asked if another bond would be proposed if the project needs more money or if the project will be canceled; noted concern with the location of the proposed stadium as it could change surrounding neighborhood's character; questioned whether the stadium is actually going to be multi-use; indicated she supports putting the bond on the ballot for the community to vote on if Council still has the opportunity to pull it in March; asked if Council is writing a pro or con statement; does not think she can support it if the statement is not neutral.
- Councilor Yeh – noted concern with credibility as the County has not committed its own funds or demonstrated that the project is sustainable; indicated she would not vote to allocate money for a project that has not been shown as viable.
- Councilor Keating – noted if Council sends this to a public vote, it opens up the potential for an additional \$7.5 million in State funding; indicated the stadium is a County priority as the County adjusted the Transient Lodging Tax by two percentage points; noted the Emeralds are supporters of nonprofit organizations in Eugene; indicated he supports giving voters a choice.
- Councilor Leech – noted affordable community gathering spaces are important, but expressed concern that the community is facing compassion fatigue; noted concern with the project not having the desired level of planning, neighborhood engagement, or needs assessments; questioned if other types of community spaces would better benefit the City long term; noted she sits on the Revenue Committee and that the City has a huge gap in its budget and is looking at cuts to library, fire, and police services; indicated she is willing to move forward with the bond and revisit it in March, but will not support it if Council's questions are not answered.
- Councilor Evans – noted Council is facing an estimated \$15 million deficit in the City's General Fund that will likely require cutting services or asking voters to support a levy or funding measure; asked if the \$15 million requested from the City is enough and if it will be the only funding requested from the City; noted his increasing concern in the City's financial situation but is in support of letting voters decide if the bond moves forward.
- Councilor Zelenka – clarified that of the \$13 million in contributions from the Emeralds, \$10 million would be prepaid rent, which is not capital; clarified the stadium is not a legislative priority; asked for clarification on a potential special election; asked what happens in May if the voters move forward with the bond; noted concern with perception of the City if the bond is not presented to voters; questioned how the bond will affect future asks of voters and if it will diminish taxpayer appetite for funding basic services; noted that he is willing to move forward now and revisit the issue in March.
- Councilor Yeh – noted that she was also curious about a potential special election and next steps.

- Councilor Keating – asked for a clarification on the difference in cost between a special election and placing the bond on the ballot for a scheduled election; asked what the cost is to add it to the May election.
- Councilor Groves – clarified the difference between the volume of people who attend baseball games and the county fair; noted if the bond goes forward, the Council statement should be as neutral as possible; indicated that he is ready to vote yes and revisit the item in March; noted if the County moves the fairgrounds somewhere else, there is an opportunity for redevelopment and revitalization of the site.
- Councilor Semple – asked if Council needs to work on the proponent statements before March; asked if the rebuttals are from Council or other community members; asked if Council is allowed to write a neutral statement; noted she does not like that Council cannot take a neutral position; questioned why the County is not putting out the bond as it would reach more people.
- Councilor Clark – asked for clarification on the requirements of the proponent statement in City Code; noted he does not think it is Council’s job to advocate and wants to know what the public thinks.

MOTION (*with friendly amendment*): Councilor Keating, Seconded by Councilor Groves moved to adopt A Resolution Calling a City Election on May 21, 2024, for the Purpose of Referring to the Legal Electors of the City of Eugene a Measure Authorizing the Issuance of a Maximum of \$15,000,000 of General Obligations Bonds to Help Fund the Lane County Multi-Use Stadium, and moved to direct the City Manager to schedule a work session on March 13, 2024, for Council to discuss any additional funding or information related to the Lane County multi-use stadium that is unknown at this time.

Council Discussion:

- Councilor Semple – asked if the first motion includes whether Council is coming back in March; noted she does not want to approve the first motion without the second motion; made a friendly amendment to put the motions together.
- Councilor Groves – noted he would rather keep the motions separate; asked for clarification on what keeping the motions together does that separating them doesn’t.
- Councilor Semple – noted if the motion to ask for a bond passes and the motion to have another work session fails, Council is done regardless of what the County does; noted concern with not having the option to come back with more information.
- Councilor Groves – reiterated that he thinks the motions should be kept separate but accepted the friendly amendment (*friendly accepted*).
- Councilor Zelenka – asked what the difference is if Council passes each motion separately or all three together at once.
- Councilor Clark – noted he thinks the motions will pass either way and that Council always has the option to bring it up to reconsider at a future point.

VOTE ON MAIN MOTION *(with friendly amendment)*: **7:1 PASSED**
(Opposed by Councilor Yeh)

MOTION: Councilor Keating, Seconded by Councilor Groves moved to appoint Councilors Keating and Groves to the voters' pamphlet proponent committee for GO Bond ballot measure to help fund the Lane County Multi-Use Stadium.

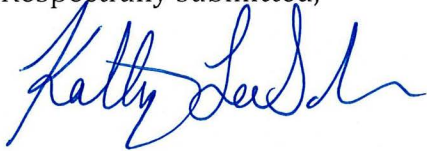
Council Discussion:

- Councilor Clark – noted he does not need the ability to vote on what his colleagues prepare but hopes they take into account the desire for a neutral position.

VOTE: 7:1 PASSED (Opposed by Councilor Semple)

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

Respectfully submitted,



Katie LaSala
City Recorder

(Recorded by Natalie Venhuda)

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