

MINUTES

Eugene City Council Work Session Eugene, Oregon 97401

February 12, 2024
5:30 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 12, 2024, work session of the Eugene City Council in a hybrid format at 101 W 10th Avenue, Eugene OR 97401.

1. **WORK SESSION: Urgent Community Needs – Economic Drivers and Strategies**

City Manager Medary introduced Anne Fifield, Economic Development Manager and Henry Fields, Oregon Employment Department Workforce Analyst and Economist for Lane and Douglas Counties, who presented on key economic drivers impacting Eugene and the region, and some of the work the city is doing to advance the City’s strategic goals related to economic development.

Councilor Discussion:

- Councilor Keating – asked for the average wage in Eugene; noted construction sector wages seem strong; asked about the viability of the proposed expansion for the Port of Coos Bay; noted the port may reduce greenhouse gas emissions; asked about potential changes to the shipping sector if the port is connected by rail.
- Councilor Zelenka – asked how Eugene and Lane County plan to take advantage of funds made available by the federal government as part of the Inflation Reduction Act; noted the current strategy for recruiting large companies to the area often fails; believes the city should position itself to attract more family wage jobs to the area.
- Councilor Yeh – noted she is happy the plan focuses on helping existing local businesses; asked how to raise local wages; asked if other local minority groups like Plaza de Nuestra Comunidad have been recipients of the City’s Microenterprise Training; noted the importance of supporting local minority communities.
- Councilor Clark – asked about future population growth from migration; asked how migration can be leveraged for economic growth; asked if the City is maximizing its partnership with the University of Oregon to take advantage of potential economic opportunities generated by the Knight Campus; asked how to use anticipated student population growth due to University of Oregon’s acceptance into the Big Ten athletic conference for the economic good of the community.
- Councilor Evans – asked how to retain locally trained nurses; noted local nurses are moving to other areas that offer better wages and benefits.
- Councilor Leech – asked how remote work opportunities affect the local economy; stated her interest in seeing how the evolving landscape of remote work affects local infrastructure like co-working spaces.

- Councilor Groves – spoke about his experience with the Knight Campus; noted the University may not be aware of local tech companies and their need for interns and skilled workers; noted a local company’s struggle attracting and retaining engineers; noted companies in industries like solar like to co-locate because it allows them to stabilize supply chains; noted large companies have considering locating here but were unable to find enough land to meet their needs; noted about nine percent of the local workforce are in manufacturing; asked how that percentage compares to other similarly sized communities; asked if it’s common for industries like solar to prefer to cooperatively relocate; stated the City should support the expansion of the port in Coos Bay.
- Mayor Vinis – asked about the impact of the arts on the local economy; asked how a “difficult to fill” job is defined; asked if limitations with the local workforce are best solved through migration or training.
- Councilor Keating – asked how many people in the community work multiple jobs to make ends meet; asked how we compare to other similar communities; asked about the age demographics of those moving to the area; asked if we can attract hospitals to co-locate to the area.
- Councilor Zelenka – asked about unique local features that may attract businesses; asked how to promote Eugene as a well-organized, mid-size city with great parks and open spaces as well as a robust arts culture.
- Councilor Groves – asked if residential structures are changing due to the increase in remote work; asked if Council should change their housing policy strategies to align with changing housing trends.
- Mayor Vinis – stated it is useful to think of the local economy as an ecosystem; noted her appreciation for the presentation.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Katie LaSala
City Recorder

(Recorded by Cherish Bradshaw)

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