

MINUTES

Eugene City Council Work Session Eugene, Oregon 97401

February 26, 2024
5:30 p.m.

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

Councilors Absent: Greg Evans

Mayor Vinis opened the February 26, 2024, work session of the Eugene City Council in a hybrid format at 101 W 10th Avenue, Eugene OR 97401.

1. **WORK SESSION: Eugene Springfield Fire Governance Review Update**

City Manager Medary introduced Eugene Springfield Fire (ESF) Chief Michael Caven and consultant group AP Triton who provided an update on the Feasibility Study on Administrative Staffing and Governance Structure.

Councilor Discussion:

- Councilor Keating – asked about the benefits and disadvantages of establishing a Eugene Springfield Fire District.
- Councilor Zelenka – noted the Metropolitan Wastewater Management Commission serves three government entities; confirmed the cities of Eugene and Springfield have different benefits packages; asked about network configuration issues experienced by ESF staff; noted the issues mentioned sound like Information Technology legacy issues.
- Councilor Leech – asked about the difference between the number of employees and the budgets for Eugene and Springfield; asked if they would seek to establish a set spending proportion between the cities; asked how to address different taxation rates for retirement disbursements based on the city where an employee retires.
- Councilor Semple – noted she was part of the stakeholder meetings with AP Triton; noted the difficulty of balancing a budget while considering safety and employee morale; stated she is looking forward to the final recommendations.
- Councilor Groves – spoke about the history of the three-battalion system; noted the system began as a way to provide more effective service but evolved into a cost-saving measure as well; noted the difficulties merging seven contract districts, four unions, and two cities.
- Councilor Zelenka – asked how the differences between revenue and expenditures for the two cities work operationally; asked about the disparity in expenditures for vehicles and equipment and internal fee costs; asked how Eugene adding a fire station will affect the balance between the cities; asked about weighting and evaluation criteria that will be used to evaluate the five proposed options; asked how the option to create an independent fire district would be evaluated; asked what factors would not make it feasible.

- Councilor Groves – stated Eugene is a more complicated community for ESF to service due to its higher unhoused population; noted ESF has adapted response models for the unique challenges posed by the city of Eugene which accounts for some of the cost differentials; stated he was initially unsure if the merger would work; stated he is proud of ESF’s operations and training; noted the administrative and financial pieces are the final components of completing the merger; stated he is looking forward to AP Triton’s final recommendations.
- Mayor Vinis – noted her appreciation the presentation; stated she is looking forward to the final recommendations.

2. WORK SESSION: Finance & Revenue Update

City Manager Medary introduced Twylla Miller, Chief Financial Officer, who presented on the work of the Revenue Advisors group.

Councilor Discussion:

- Mayor Vinis – noted she has attended the revenue meetings and has found the conversations to be probing and thoughtful.
- Councilor Keating – asked about proposals he submitted that were not part of the final recommendations and if they will be revisited; asked if the committee will continue its work beyond the upcoming recommendations; asked if the committee had considered an admissions tax, a tax on short term rentals, a tax on rental vehicles, or a soda tax.
- Councilor Clark – noted the local government is funded mainly by property taxes; asked if the committee had considered increasing land volume or taxable value; asked to see how much the City has spent per capita over time.
- Councilor Zelenka – noted the committee had focused on near-term revenue; noted some ideas will not create enough revenue to outweigh the administrative costs; noted revenue ideas that will affect the University of Oregon were not considered because they are long-term strategies.
- Councilor Keating – estimated about half the attendees at a University of Oregon game are from out of the area; suggested future revenue advisory groups focus on long-term as well as short-term solutions.
- Councilor Clark – stated he hopes the revenue advisors are looking at long-term solutions as well as short-term; asked how to tell whether City of Eugene expenditures are growing at a sustainable level.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:07 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Katie LaSala
City Recorder

(Recorded by Cherish Bradshaw)

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