

MINUTES
Eugene City Council
Work Session
Eugene, Oregon 97401

May 13, 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 May 13, 2024, work session of the Eugene City Council in a hybrid format at 101 W 10th Avenue, Eugene OR 97401.

1. EXECUTIVE SESSION: Pursuant to ORS 192.660 (2)(i)

2. WORK SESSION: Police Auditor Annual Performance Review

Keri Beraldo, Interim Employee Resource Center Co-Director, introduced Leia Pitcher, Police Auditor.

Councilor Discussion:

- Councilor Keating – noted his appreciation for Police Auditor Pitcher’s communication skills and responsiveness; noted her productive collaboration with the Eugene Police Department and the Civilian Review Board; thanked her for her service.
- Councilor Groves – stated his appreciation for her work; noted she has grown into the position over the past year; noted she has created good relationships with Eugene Police Department and the Eugene Police Employees’ Association; thanked her for her efforts.
- Councilor Clark – stated his support for the office of the Police Auditor; stated Police Auditor Pitcher is doing quality work and maintaining the integrity of the office.
- Councilor Yeh – noted Police Auditor Pitcher’s focus on relationship building and outreach; stated her appreciation for Police Auditor Pitcher’s work with the Police Commission; thanked Police Auditor Pitcher for her and her staff’s hard work.
- Councilor Semple – stated her appreciation for Police Auditor Pitcher and her work.

MOTION: Councilor Keating, seconded by Councilor Groves moved to award Police Auditor Pitcher a merit salary increase of 1 step which is equivalent to Step 9 (Grade 11), \$161,033.60/Annually (\$77.42/Hourly), and to authorize the Council President to execute an amendment to Pitcher’s employment contract with the awarded salary increase.

Councilor Discussion:

- Councilor Clark – asked to clarify Step 9.
- Mayor Vinis – stated Police Auditor Pitcher has done a good job building a strong team; thanked her for her leadership and for her thoughtful tone.

VOTE: 8:0 PASSED

3. WORK SESSION: Sustainable Budget Parks & Fire

City Manager Medary introduced Twylla Miller, Chief Financial Officer, and Matt Rodrigues, Assistant City Manager who provided an update and discussed potential strategies to address the critical funding gap in the General Fund that begins July 2024.

Councilor Discussion:

- Councilor Clark – asked if the proposed fees would increase the amount or quality of services offered by the fire or parks departments.
- Councilor Semple – asked how the fire fee would be collected.
- Councilor Groves – stated it is necessary to work to address funding gaps; stated awareness that the Fire Department has not increased staff since the 1980s, despite annual increases in population and call volume; stated the importance of community outreach around the proposed fee increases; noted a sales tax would increase our financial stability; stated the focus should be on long-term economic growth and development.
- Councilor Leech – asked about the range of the proposed parks stormwater fee; asked how the remaining budget gap will be solved; noted her support for the proposed fees; stated the importance of fire safety.
- Councilor Keating – asked about the wildfire mitigation specialist position; asked about the proposed fire squad concept; asked if the City would emulate the County’s Firewise program; asked if fuel reduction strategies could be used to offset the proposed fee; asked if vacant homes are more at risk of fires; expressed interest in exploring higher fees for vacant homes and short-term rentals.
- Councilor Zelenka – asked if the majority of fires are from cooking and electric appliances; asked how many budgets have been cut budgets during the last 16 years; asked about service reduction budget cuts versus revenues; asked if there is still a budget gap in Fiscal Year 2027(FY27); asked how other cities have implemented fire service fees; asked how to address the impact of the fire fee on low-income households.
- Councilor Yeh – stated her support for the proposed fees; spoke in favor of keeping taxes and fees simple and straightforward; noted her appreciation for Councilor Grove’s comments.
- Councilor Clark – asked to clarify the general fund budget reduction strategies from the last 15 years; asked if the majority of American Rescue Plan Act funds were spent addressing homelessness in the community; stated the City used one-time funding to spend several million dollars a year addressing homelessness for the past 3 years and is now trying to add that spending to the ongoing budget; asked if the projects and programs established with one-time funding replaced general fund spending.
- Councilor Groves – asked what will happen when one-time funding for homeless services ends; asked if the insurance industry is doing anything to support defensible space for wildfire mitigation; asked about a yearly inspection for defensible space; noted WUI stands for Wildland Urban Interface; noted fighting wildfires in the South Hills will have a financially significant impact to the City; noted his appreciation for the work of Althea Sullivan (in the Fire Marshal’s Office)”. Councilor Zelenka – stated the importance of stabilizing funding for homelessness, climate action, and affordable housing; noted the ongoing deficit discussion has caused those conversations to be set aside; spoke about service reductions and reductions in annual spending for the general budget during the last 15 years.

- Councilor Keating – asked if the fireworks prohibition has reduced fire incidents; asked about the fine for using or selling fireworks; asked if it would be beneficial to increase the fine.

MOTION: Councilor Keating, seconded by Councilor Groves moved to direct the City Manager to schedule a public hearing on an ordinance amending the definition of “stormwater service” to add the operation and maintenance of city-owned parks and open space as set out in Attachment A to this AIS. **VOTE: 7:1 PASSED** (opposed by Councilor Clark)

MOTION: Councilor Keating, seconded by Councilor Groves moved to direct the City Manager to develop a Fire Service Fee proposal for Council’s consideration and discussion in late summer/fall. **VOTE: 7:1 PASSED** (opposed by Councilor Clark)

The meeting was adjourned at 7:01 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Katie LaSala
City Recorder

(Recorded by Cherish Bradshaw)

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