

**MINUTES**  
**Eugene City Council**  
**Special Meeting**  
**Eugene, Oregon 97401**

**September 30, 2024**  
**5:30 p.m.**

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

**Councilors Absent:** Alan Zelenka

Mayor Vinis opened the September 30, 2024, special meeting of the Eugene City Council in hybrid in-person and virtual format at 500 E. 4th Avenue, Eugene, OR 97401, North Building.

**1. SPECIAL MEETING: Revenue Proposal: Fire Service Fee**

City Manager, Sarah Medary introduced Chief Financial Officer, Twylla Miller and Assistant Finance Director, Neil Obringer to discuss the fire stabilization fee.

Councilor Discussion:

- Councilor Semple – noted her appreciation for the presentation; stated it feels fair to have everybody pay something; noted while people do not like paying new fees, this is a pragmatic and equitable solution.
- Councilor Groves – noted the City budget has structural problems; stated his support for foundational services including fire; noted the fire department has struggled with understaffing for over 40 years; noted he is conflicted about increasing fees paid by the community given rising inflation and cost of living; stated he prefers this revised proposal to the original.
- Councilor Yeh – stated the revised proposal is an improvement over the original; noted she likes the customer care model; stated this is a hard decision; stated she supports drafting the ordinance and soliciting feedback from the community.
- Councilor Keating – noted while the revised proposal is better than the original, there are still areas for improvement; asked if the proposal has been workshopped with the business community and neighborhood organizations; noted the median family would pay 120 dollars a year; noted the community recently rejected a bond measure for a multi-use facility at Lane County; asked if the fee would include funding for additional services; asked what two million dollars of additional services would include; noted the local number of Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Yet Employed (ALICE) individuals was alarming; asked about priorities of previous councils that may be better executed by the for-profit or non-profit sectors; noted he is not interested in cutting the library budget; asked about the top priorities of recreational and cultural services, given the constrained budget of the fire department.
- Councilor Leech – stated her appreciation for the thoughtful presentation; noted she is against reducing services; noted she was a part of the Revenue Advisory Committee, and the fire fee was the most viable option; stated her support for drafting the ordinance.

- Mayor Vinis – noted concern the funding gap will widen as the community continues to grow; stated concern that if the tax structure remains unchanged, the financial situation will worsen without action.
- Councilor Keating – suggested additional revenue sources including traffic cameras, consumption fees and short-term rental fees; asked how the proposed fire fee would be assessed on an additional dwelling unit (ADU); asked how tenants of apartment buildings would be charged; noted concerns about higher fees being paid by those living in larger dwellings because of their families; noted he does not support the current proposal.
- Councilor Groves – asked what foundational services the city needs to provide for safety and security; stated the need to be able to prioritize city services; noted the structural issue with the state tax system; noted most states besides Oregon have a sales tax in addition to property and income taxes; stated support for seeking feedback from the community; stated support for working on economic development.
- Councilor Clark – noted the limits on property taxes indicated the residents of the state wanted to limit the growth of government; stated support for developing structural growth like increasing the number of local taxpayers; noted interest in hearing feedback from the local business community.
- Mayor Vinis – stated if economic development is a key long-term strategy then we should focus on quality of life; stated the quality of life in the community depends on parks, libraries, and roads in addition to emergency services; noted reducing the budget for services may negatively impact the city’s economic growth; noted the community safety payroll initiative was viable because it was a broad and shallow tax for a service everyone benefits from; stated there is not time to piece together small funding solutions given the July 1 deadline; encouraged Council to act now and not delay the decision another two years.
- Councilor Yeh – asked what further direction staff needs from Council; noted concerns about cutting an additional 10 million from the City budget; noted cutting the budget would impact all departments, including parks and library expansion; stated support for stabilizing the fire department as a foundational service.
- Councilor Clark – stated support for focusing on long-term solutions for stabilizing revenue; stated support for incentivizing housing construction.
- Councilor Leech – noted the City has not added additional firefighters since the 1980s; asked about the population then versus the population now; stated she would feel more secure as a resident if the City had an additional fire squad given that the population has nearly doubled since the 1980s; noted as a member of the Revenue Advisory Committee she had anticipated a revenue solution comprised of many small pieces but the administration cost is too high to make them effective; stated the importance of handling the structural budget gap as a step towards achieving broader goals around housing and climate.
- Councilor Keating – stated fire and emergency services are at the top of a priority based budget; noted he is unsure about the fire fee as a proper pathway for stabilizing the budget; noted he is looking forward to hearing community feedback.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:41 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Katie LaSala  
City Recorder

*(Recorded by Cherish Bradshaw)*

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