

MINUTES

**Eugene City Council
Harris Hall, 125 East 8th Avenue
Eugene, Oregon 97401**

**May 8, 2019
12:00 p.m.**

Councilors Present: Emily Semple, Jennifer Yeh, Alan Zelenka, Chris Pryor, Greg Evans, Betty Taylor, Claire Syrett

Councilors Absent: Mike Clark

Mayor Vinis opened the May 8, 2019, work session of the Eugene City Council.

Councilor Yeh made a statement about the use of white nationalist language during a recent rally; she supported the right to free speech and called for the community to speak out against prejudice and discrimination. Mayor Vinis and Councilor Yeh extended their gratitude to the Eugene and Springfield Police Departments for their skillful handling of the situation.

1. WORK SESSION: Community Safety Initiative Funding

Assistant City Manager Kristie Hammitt and Police Chief Chris Skinner presented a revised recommendation for a payroll tax incorporating several new provisions including limits on the use of the funds, and equity considerations for minimum wage employees,

Council Discussion:

- Councilor Semple – supported the recommendation and asked for clarification regarding the investment for minimum wage earners; asked about the additional monies added to the recommendation, and whether owner-employees of small businesses would also pay the employee tax; expressed concerns about small business owners feeling “double-taxed;” asked for clarification on the tax impact for minimum wage earners who receive raises.
- Councilor Pryor – reflected on the process over the years that led to the recommendation; encouraged council to show leadership on this matter.
- Councilor Syrett – asked whether the calculations incorporated future minimum wage changes; explained that council has few options to grow the General Fund, which generally funds essential services like public safety and encouraged everyone to contribute to the community’s safety; thanked the contributors to the proposal and expressed her support for the recommendation.
- Councilor Taylor – asked whether the tax would be abolished if people voted against the proposed charter amendment; expressed opposition to any tax on minimum wage earners.
- Councilor Zelenka – expressed gratitude for including accommodations for low-income wage earners and accountability mechanisms; expressed support for the package, especially because half of the people who work in Eugene do not live in the city, but still benefit from public safety; asked about LTD’s payroll tax and whether the Department of Revenue would draw a second transaction for this additional tax.
- Councilor Semple – advocated for taking a draft ordinance to a public hearing.
- Mayor Vinis – said a public hearing would help council understand what they might not be accounting for as well as what they may need to do in terms of communicating with the public about such a proposal; asked for clarification on whether there would still be a roll-out of rates; emphasized that a public hearing does not indicate a final decision.

- Councilor Zelenka – said he would like to hear from the public about which path the council should take—to put the issue before voters or to pass an ordinance; said that he was inclined to give the choice to the voters.
- Councilor Taylor – stated she did not believe public hearings impacted council votes much, if at all; thought council should consider an adjusted base pay rate higher than minimum wage because voters care about others who are barely getting by.
- Councilor Semple – encouraged educating the public about the plan’s accommodation for minimum wage earners

MOTION AND VOTE: Councilor Taylor, seconded by Councilor Semple, moved to direct the City Manager to prepare an ordinance with a payroll tax rate of 00.0040 on employees and 0.0020 on employers., **PASSED 6:1**, Councilor Taylor opposed.

MOTION AND VOTE: Councilor Taylor, seconded by Councilor Semple, moved to direct the City Manager to schedule a public hearing for May 28, 2019. **PASSED 7:0.**

The meeting adjourned at 12:47 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Beth Forrest
City Recorder

(Recorded by Cas Casados)

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