

## MINUTES

**Eugene City Council and Eugene Urban Renewal Agency  
Harris Hall, 125 East 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Eugene, Oregon 97401**

**October 30, 2019  
12:00 p.m.**

**Councilors Present:** Betty Taylor, Emily Semple, Alan Zelenka, Jennifer Yeh, Greg Evans (*via phone*), Claire Syrett, Chris Pryor

**Councilors Absent:** Mike Clark

Mayor Vinis opened the October 30, 2019, work session of the Eugene City Council.

City Manager Pro Tem Sarah Medary thanked partners at Lane County and St. Vincent de Paul for quickly working together to open a warming center. She reminded people that both branch libraries and community centers are open for drop-in warming during the day.

### **1. WORK SESSION: Downtown Fiber Project Update**

Economic Development Planner Anne Fifield gave an update about the completion of the downtown fiber project and its positive impacts.

#### Council Discussion:

- Councilor Pryor – said he remembers the fiber project vision and initial conversation that started 25 years ago and now the results are being seen; thanked Milo Mecham for his contributions to this vision.
- Councilor Syrett – said she’s excited to see such success for a project that could have appeared a risky investment when started; said she’s excited to see the employment opportunities and products that have come out of this; expressed desire to see the next phase of this project scoped out, expanding to residential and other areas of the city.
- Councilor Zelenka – said this project has been worth the investment of resources, noting the jobs it has created and the revitalization of downtown; talked about this originally being a hub-and-spoke conversation with the downtown as the hub and asked how the City will expand to the spokes and what the costs will be; asked about potential public-private partnerships; said he’d like to see a rate of return on the investment made.
- Councilor Semple – said she’s happy to hear how successful the fiber project has been and would also like to see what it would take to expand the network; talked about the goal of putting utilities underground, acknowledging how expensive that is; expressed desire to look for feasibly opportunities to do so; said she’s interested in keeping the internet publicly owned to be affordable and available to more people.
- Councilor Pryor – talked about the policy decisions around fiber and how they have been relatively easy to this point, but they will likely get harder as the City thinks about the ultimate goal of getting high-speed fiber into homes.
- Councilor Evans – said he thinks 4J has access to the fiber network right now but wondered if there are plans to connect the Bethel School District; said there may be federal dollars to support the connection to rural communities, such as a partnership with Junction City.

## 2. WORK SESSION: Town Square Project Update

Urban Development Manager Will Dowdy, Matt Koehler from Cameron McCarthy, and Francesca Gambetti from Shiels Oblatz Johnsen talked about the town square concept design, the community vision, and the options for next steps.

*Mayor adjourned the meeting of the Eugene City Council and convened a meeting of the Eugene Urban Renewal Agency.*

### Council Discussion:

- Mayor Vinis – said she enjoyed the video and it was nice to see what the space would look like.
- Councilor Zelenka – said he really likes the design, concept, and public involvement that has occurred around this project; said he likes that the Saturday Market would have space designed specifically for the market and that it's critical the construction gets done during the off-season; asked what would happen with the salmon sculpture from the current fountain and if that could get incorporated into the new design; asked if the eastern portion of the market was included in the plan and budget as well.
- Councilor Syrett – said she participated in outreach events and that with the excellent public outreach received she feels confident that the design reflects input from the public as well as the farmers market and Saturday market boards; said she appreciates many of the project details including taking out curbs and other accessibility components; said she likes opening the space and removing the walls, the improved stage, the fountain concept, the lighting, and keeping the trees; said she's ready to approve the recommended motion to advance this design forward.
- Councilor Semple – said she also appreciates the great public involvement and hopes it's a model for the future; said she appreciates that the farmers and Saturday markets won't get displaced if construction is done during the off-season; said the one critical thing that's missing is a restroom in the park blocks; said she likes that the trees are being kept, but it feels like there's a lot of concrete versus lawn and she'd like to see more lawn; said the proposed pavilion looks as big as city hall and wonders how that matches up with priorities; voiced concerns about paying for this project and wondered about phasing the features of the project.
- Councilor Yeh – asked how much funding has been identified for this project right now; asked what it would mean if council approved the design now in terms of looking at funding later.
- Councilor Taylor – asked at what point a contractor is pursued, before or after a public hearing; said she'd prefer to wait until after a public hearing to hire a contractor; said we need restrooms, places for people to sit including moveable chairs and tables; said she's not sure there has been enough broad participation; asked why removal of the current fountain is being proposed; asked how the City can attract money for the project; shared objections to urban renewal money because it's too easy to spend.
- Mayor Vinis – clarified that what she's hearing from staff is that design information would come to council incrementally and become increasingly specific along the way.
- Councilor Pryor – talked about the choice between fast, cheap, and right and said this project ultimately needs to be right; said he's willing to negotiate around the timeline and the money; said in thinking about the next design steps, it's a good investment to spend a reasonable amount of money on a contractor now so they're with us in next steps; said he's ready to move to the next step of the thinking and designing process.
- Councilor Zelenka – said phasing is an interesting concept, but it costs more and it's never going to be cheaper later; said keeping and adding more trees is an important part of the project; shared concerns about integrating the new city hall into the town square plan and asked how that will work; said that having 10,000 participants weigh-in so far is enough for him to want to move forward with this project.

- Councilor Syrett – mentioned that the stage, fountain, pavilion, and benches all represent sponsorship opportunities to contribute to the legacy of the space; said she’s excited to see the enhanced usability and transformation of the space.
- Councilor Taylor – asked if any of the proposed motions are related to city hall; said the public should be asked if something needs to be done with the parks and wants people to remember that the urban renewal money for these projects comes from citizen taxpayers;

**MOTION:** Councilor Taylor, seconded by Councilor Semple, moved to direct the Agency Director to advance the Town Square design based on the proposed Concept Design and return for work sessions in early 2020.

Council Discussion:

- Councilor Zelenka – mentioned that the staff presentation did not go over information in the agenda packet related to the survey results; said that the results show that a majority of people want to see changes made to the park blocks.

**VOTE: PASSED 6:1**, Councilor Taylor opposed.

The meeting adjourned at 1:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Beth Forrest  
City Recorder

*(Recorded by Elena Domingo)*

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