

MINUTES

Eugene City Council Work Session Eugene, Oregon 97401

November 25, 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 November 25, 2024, work session of the Eugene City Council in hybrid in-person and virtual format at 500 E. 4th Avenue, Eugene, OR 97401, North Building.

1. WORK SESSION: Mental Health and Substance Abuses Services-Eugene Panel

City Manager Sarah Medary introduced Assistant City Manager Kristie Hammitt, Eugene Police (EPD) Chief Chris Skinner, Eugene Springfield Fire (ESF) and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Chief Mike Caven, and Eugene Municipal Court Presiding Judge Greg Gill, who presented information on local mental health and substance abuse services.

Councilor Discussion:

- Councilor Groves – noted he is supportive of behavioral health programs and services; asked about the efficacy of the permanent supportive housing like facilities like The Nel; noted there has been a net gain from those facilities; asked how many police holds are repeats; noted he had recently observed two officers exhibiting patience and professionalism while addressing a camp by a waterway; stated his appreciation for the patience and professionalism of public response teams citywide.
- Councilor Leech – noted Crisis Assistance Helping Out On The Streets (CAHOOTS) was formerly housed with EPD and is now housed with EMS; asked how the change has affected response times; asked what areas are served by the County’s mobile crisis unit; asked about the services offered by the downtown co-responder program; asked how they build trust and rapport with people to encourage them to access services; asked how many responses are received from folks in areas outside downtown; asked what it would take to expand the program across the city; asked how opioid settlement money is being used and how it will be used to combat opioid addiction in the community; asked how marijuana charges are expunged or forgiven at the municipal level.
- Councilor Keating – congratulated Chief Caven on the 15 new firefighters graduating from the academy; congratulated Chief Skinner on his team members who received outstanding accommodations from the Oregon Police Officers Association; asked about the improved recidivism rate; asked if a shift is expected in the behavioral and mental health landscape under the incoming presidential administration; asked if staff has suggestions for policy changes.
- Councilor Zelenka – stated helping solve mental health issues, substance abuse issues, and increasing affordable housing will reduce homelessness; noted his goal with this work

session was to educate the community about our overstressed and underfunded local system; asked how many doses of Narcan are distributed daily; noted dealing with mental health and substance abuse issues is very time-consuming and resource-intensive for these departments; noted his appreciation for their dedication to creative solutions.

- Councilor Groves – noted our municipal court is leading the state in innovation; asked how to better utilize the jail for those experiencing mental health and substance abuse crises; noted he has met with representatives from local hospitals about diverting people from emergency rooms to free up capacity; asked about the proposed behavioral health hospital.
- Councilor Semple – noted her appreciation for their commitment to innovation and making the City happier, healthier, and safer.
- Councilor Leech – asked how staff are trained in mental health response like trauma-informed care.
- Councilor Zelenka – asked how much is left of the opioid settlement fund; asked about the plans for the remaining funds.
- Councilor Keating – asked if there are behavioral health components to the Citizen Police Academy; asked about future open house activities for the public to attend.
- Mayor Vinis – noted her appreciation for the presentation and questions from Council.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Katie LaSala
City Recorder

(Recorded by Cherish Bradshaw)

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