

MINUTES

Eugene City Council Work Session Eugene, Oregon 97401

January 22, 2025
12:00 p.m.

Councilors Present: Eliza Kashinsky, Alan Zelenka, Jennifer Yeh, Mike Clark, Greg Evans, and Lyndsie Leech

Councilors Absent: Matt Keating and Randy Groves

Mayor Knudson opened the January 22, 2025, Eugene City Council Work Session in a virtual format.

1. **WORK SESSION: Council Budget Priorities: Process & Timeline**

City Manager, Sarah Medary, provided information on the City's budget process and timeline for developing the 2025-2027 Proposed Budget.

Councilor Discussion:

- Councilor Kashinsky – noted the impact of budget discussions on City staff and community members who rely on City services; noted the need to make clear decisions within the following weeks to provide certainty to the community; noted preference for Council to first decide on implementing the fire fee, as the decision would determine the severity of budget cuts.
- Councilor Clark – noted the importance of staff morale; noted the City has expanded its services beyond what the revenue base can sustainably support, leading to the current budget challenges; asked for clarification on the legal distinction between the fire fee and property taxes and why the fee is not subject to property tax compression; asked if the owners of a rental property or the tenants are paying the fee with their utilities.
- Councilor Zelenka – noted many previous City budgets have involved cuts, creating anxiety for both staff and the community; noted he is prepared to decide by February 10, 2025; noted preference for Council to first decide on implementing the fire fee; asked for the process of discussing budget cuts if the fire fee is not approved; noted the process would take time and require further discussions about whether police and fire services would be included in cuts.
- Councilor Leech – noted the property tax system in Oregon is outdated, based on 1995 rates, and does not meet the needs of Oregon cities; noted other jurisdictions are implementing similar fees; noted support to vote in favor of the fire fee and the continued discussions on the remaining budget cuts.
- Councilor Clark – stated Oregon's property tax system is not broken and reflects the will of Oregon's residents; noted concerns with the fire fee's short-term and long-

term consequences; asked for clarifications on the timeline for a potential referendum to reverse Council's decision; noted a petition effort was already in discussion with community members.

- Councilor Yeh – noted the ease of getting issues on the ballot but highlighted it should not prevent necessary decisions; noted preference for Council to first decide on implementing the fire fee; noted the difficulty of budget cut discussions due to differing values on Council.
- Mayor Knudson – asked if, without the previous \$20 million in cuts, the budget gap would be \$31.5 million; asked if Eugene is piloting the fire fee or if other areas have implemented similar fees before; asked if Eugene has the lowest general fund full-time equivalent employees per thousand residents in its history; asked if nearly 60 percent of the general fund is dedicated to fire and police.
- Councilor Clark – asked for the impact on the 2025-2027 budget if the Council votes in favor of a fee that then receives the necessary number of signatures to put it on the ballot; noted he does not support the fee as it could jeopardize the public safety payroll tax funds; noted preference to explore alternative budget strategies.
- Councilor Yeh – asked whether service and job cuts would be replaced in the foreseeable future; noted concern that the reductions could be long-term without new revenue sources; asked if Council will likely need to find more cuts in the future if the City does not find new revenue sources.
- Councilor Evans – noted concern with tax fatigue among residents, due to increased Eugene Water and Electric Board rates; noted the need to evaluate services and explore alternative service delivery models; noted public pushback could lead to the fire fee being overturned at the ballot, forcing the Council to reconsider its approach.

2. WORK SESSION: Intergovernmental Relations – 2025 Legislative Priorities

City Manager, Sarah Medary, introduced Intergovernmental Relations Manager, Ethan Nelson, who provided an overview of the 2025 Eugene State and Federal Policy document and the 2025 Eugene State Priorities document.

Councilor Discussion:

- Councilor Clark – noted support for finishing work on Clear Lake Road and the industrial capacity provided by utility installations in the area; noted satisfaction with the passage of Crow Road funding in the last legislative session; noted the high priority of housing and that 48 percent of Eugene's buildable lands lack access to utilities, making them unbuildable; asked why infrastructure funding for housing was not a priority ask; thinks while developers should pay for utilities near developments, large-scale public utilities are a public responsibility; asked if the City asking for funding from the State for City-operated shelters negatively impacts the County.
- Councilor Zelenka – asked for clarification on statements regarding infrastructure expansion funding; noted homelessness is driven by a lack of affordable housing,

mental health services, and substance abuse treatment; noted the need for state funding and leadership to address homelessness.

- Councilor Clark – noted he does not support shifting infrastructure expansion costs from developers to the public but rather for ensuring that public infrastructure responsibilities are met; noted concern with the City requests for State shelter funding potentially taking resources away from the County; noted advocacy efforts in the capital should not come at the County’s expense.

MOTION: Councilor Zelenka, seconded by Councilor Clark, moved to adopt the 2025 Eugene State and Federal Policies document and the 2025 Eugene State Priorities document as approved by the IGR Committee.

VOTE: 5:1 PASSED

IN FAVOR: Kashinsky, Zelenka, Yeh, Evans, and Leech

OPPOSED: Clark

Mayor Knudson adjourned the meeting at 1:22 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Katie LaSala
City Recorder

(Recorded by Natalie Venhuda)

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