

MINUTES
Eugene City Council
Work Session
Eugene, Oregon 97401

February 24, 2025
5:30 p.m.

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

Mayor Knudson opened the February 24, 2025, 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: Urgent Community Needs - Downtown and Public Spaces Update

City Manager Sarah Medary introduced Michelle Parkins, Public Spaces Incident Commander, and Ray Brown, Downtown Incident Commander, who provided an update on the Downtown and Public Spaces work to increase vibrancy, economic vitality, and livability of downtown and the broader community while responding efficiently and effectively to the impacts of unsanctioned camping in public areas.

Councilor Discussion:

- Mayor Knudson – asked about the average time to report an issue through the form on the City’s website.
- Councilor Kashinsky – noted the effectiveness of the Rapid Response Clean Team; noted her appreciation for the new trashcans in the downtown area; asked if the focus was primarily on public property; asked about the comparative approach of other jurisdictions.
- Councilor Keating – noted his appreciation for the updated website form to report issues downtown; spoke about recent experiences he had downtown with individuals seemingly experiencing mental health crises; stated while downtown feels more clean, it doesn’t feel more safe; asked if the consultant’s report will include recommendations to increase the enforcement of the camping ban within 1000 feet of a library or school, to ban panhandling, or to compel those who decline services to accept services they need.
- Councilor Zelenka – noted appreciation for downtown being safer, cleaner, and more activated; stated local problems with homelessness and lack of mental health and substance abuse services have happened over decades and will take a long time to fix; asked which related services will be cut if the fire service fee does not pass; asked if the Alternative Response Coordination team, Neighborhood Service Officers, and Rapid Response Clean Team would be cut if the fire service fee is not implemented.
- Councilor Yeh – asked how to follow up on reports made through the form on the City’s website; asked if the statistics showing a decrease in drug overdoses

were for the entire city or just the downtown area; asked if we coordinate with service providers when clearing camps; asked about local shelter capacity.

- Councilor Clark – asked about the 43 percent of individuals who decline services; asked what services are being offered; asked about the typical situations responded to by the co-responder teams; asked about issues on Highway 99; asked whether there are alternative strategies to address recurring issues; stated no budget cuts have been decided yet.
- Councilor Evans – asked about design elements successfully implemented in the downtown; asked about strategies to deal with areas requiring repeat clean ups; noted recent conversations with residents feeling unsafe due to experiencing property crime and vandalism; asked about the difference between crime statistics and people's perceptions of safety.
- Councilor Leech – noted the reduction in crime statistics in 2024; noted crime prevention and appropriate responses lead to improved outcomes; spoke in favor of expanding the downtown response strategies to the Whiteaker neighborhood and Highway 99; asked about the feasibility of being proactive rather than reactive over time; noted the possible long-term cost-effectiveness of housing individuals rather than policing them.
- Councilor Groves – noted the uptick in camping along waterways; stated homelessness is caused by more than a lack of housing; asked if the parking meter issues in downtown have been resolved; stated the new lighting along the Fern Ridge bike bath has improved safety; stated he is looking forward to an upcoming work session about metal theft.
- Councilor Keating – asked about the fatigue experienced by local businesses about calling in vandalism as it pertains to a decrease in call volume; emphasized the need to not give up on reporting crimes; asked about changes in the partnership with Crisis Assistance Helping Out On The Streets (CAHOOTS).
- Councilor Zelenka – stated not passing the fire fee would have led to deep cuts to the budget; noted cuts to the downtown safety programs would set back or reverse progress.
- Councilor Clark – stated there is currently no proposed budget; noted he hopes any budgets cuts will be to programs other than public safety.
- Councilor Yeh – noted her appreciation for the work of staff; stated she has seen an improvement in downtown over time; noted while some individuals initially decline services, there are hundreds of people on shelter waitlists.
- Mayor Knudson – noted her appreciation for the work of staff.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:56 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Katie LaSala', with a stylized, cursive script.

Katie LaSala
City Recorder

(Recorded by Cherish Bradshaw)

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