

## MINUTES

### Eugene City Council Public Hearing and Work Session Eugene, Oregon 97401

April 21, 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 April 21, 2025, Eugene City Council Public Hearing and Work Session in hybrid in-person and virtual format at 500 E. 4th Avenue, Eugene, OR 97401, North Building.

#### 1. PUBLIC HEARING: An Ordinance Adopting Hazardous Substance User Fees

Mayor Knudson opened the public hearing.

City Manager, Sarah Medary, introduced the topic and provided background information.

1. John Barofsky – spoke in favor of the substance user fee and concern for filling the Toxics Board.

Mayor Knudson closed the public hearing.

#### Councilor Discussion:

- Councilor Clark – asked staff to explain the benefits of the Toxics Right to Know program; clarified if the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) is the primary agency for regulating hazardous substances; asked how incidents like J.H. Baxter happen when there are programs to monitor and regulate hazardous substances; asked if this program combined with the DEQ oversight provides enough tools for the City to prevent hazardous substances incidents in the community; would like to have further discussions about the program in the future.
- Councilor Groves – outlined how hazardous substances are tracked locally; stated that before the Toxics Right to Know program, the State of Oregon started a similar program; asked if there is a way to make one automated reporting form for both the City and the State's needs; would like the reporting process to be more simple for industry; noted that it's difficult to find community members willing to serve on the Toxics Board.

Mayor Knudson opened the April 21, 2025 Eugene City Council Work Session.

#### 2. WORK SESSION and POSSIBLE ACTION: Interim Police Auditor

Mayor Knudson opened the floor for Council discussion. No discussion took place.

**MOTION:** Councilor Leech, seconded by Councilor Zelenka, moved to appoint Lindsey Foltz as the Interim Police Auditor and authorize the Council President to execute the Interim Police Auditor employment agreement set forth in Attachment A to this AIS.

**VOTE: 7:0 PASSED**

**IN FAVOR:** Kashinsky, Zelenka, Yeh, Clark, Evans, Leech, Groves

**OPPOSED:** None

**ABSENT FOR VOTE:** Keating

Councilor Keating entered the meeting at 6:13 p.m.

### **3. WORK SESSION: Council Discussion of Options regarding Referendum Petition 2025-1**

City Manager, Sarah Medary, introduced the topic and advised that the City Recorder, Katie LaSala, is available to answer timeline and process questions.

#### Councilor Discussion:

- Mayor Knudson – asked that as part of the discussion, Council outline what characteristics they would like to consider as an alternative path, such as a time limit or sunset for the ordinance; noted interest in a broader city service fee that is not limited to fire services; noted a desire to discuss simplicity of implementation and how it will impact the community.
- Councilor Clark – stated interest in a discussion on long term and permanent actions that can affect revenue streams instead of short term solutions or temporary fixes; noted that a process to alter or replace the fire service fee would require repealing the current ordinance; stated the importance of supporting community members who completed the process to put this matter to a public vote; would not support action to adopt a new fee in place of the fire service fee.
- Councilor Kashinsky – is not in support of repealing the fire service fee ordinance; stated a short term solution is needed; believes the proposed cuts to services if the fee is not passed will be detrimental to the community; stated that an immediate solution is needed to prevent cuts to services while the referendum process takes place; stated that the fire service fee was always intended to be a permanent item; noted that a sunset date would limit the ways the fee could be used; stated fire services are important to the community and having dedicated funds for those services should be a priority for Council; is not in favor of prioritizing other services with or over fire services.
- Councilor Yeh – stated support for considering a sunset date; prefers a six year sunset date to include two budget cycles; noted that reframing the service fee may make it easier for the public to understand and support; noted a desire for discussion regarding simplicity of implementation; stated if the name and format of the fee are changed, Council should consider keeping the \$2 million in the general fund that was going toward fire services and lowering the fee to have less impact on the community.

- Councilor Leech – respects the referendum process; noted concern for services that will be cut before the voting process is complete; does not believe it's in the community's best interest to make the proposed cuts or use reserve funds during this process; is open to altering, replacing, or creating a sunset date for the fire service fee; would like a sunset date to cover two budget cycles; stated that more time is needed for developing long term plans and prioritizations; noted a desire for gradual end dates for services, not overnight closures; stated that if the fee is made more broad, there should be more clarity on what services are receiving the funding; stated interest in discussing ways that funding could support alternative response services.
- Councilor Zelenka – asked for more information regarding the cost and timeline of both an August or November election; is not interested in an August election; noted that the election will cost the City more than a quarter of a million dollars for either option; asked how potential modifications like a sunset date and an accountability feature would work; asked what the options are for a broader service fee; noted that a similar service fee was previously sent to the ballot and did not pass.
- Councilor Groves – believes the fire service fee should have been put to a public vote in May; is open to finding alternative ways to move the community forward; stated there is still confusion in the public over the name of the fire service fee and which services it would fund; noted a desire to discuss Council priorities and receive feedback from the public on those priorities; stated support for another work session if it leads to a decision.
- Councilor Evans – asked how much funding in reserves is available to close part of the gap.
- Councilor Clark – stated one long term solution is to grow the permanent tax base to be able to afford the services currently provided; stated a desire to discuss policies that could increase tax revenue for long term and on a permanent basis; asked for clarification of a tax versus a service fee; asked if a service fee can be applied to Lane County and the University of Oregon; stated desire to look at the entire budget to determine ways to look for long term solutions.
- Councilor Kashinsky – asked to clarify that the current cost estimate for the election is the same for both August and November; asked for more information about the elections timelines; asked if there is an alternative revenue option that could be implemented fast enough to be effective July 1; confirmed the steps that would be required to move toward an alternative revenue option; asked to clarify if the ordinance states the funds can only be spent on new or existing fire services and the administration of the fee; stated that there is not a single solution for the budget deficit; stated that the fire fee was meant to be a long term solution, not a short term solution.
- Councilor Zelenka – stated the City can either cut services or raise revenue; is not in favor of cutting the proposed services; believes a prioritization process will lead to cutting community centers, libraries, recreation, pools and other community programs; stated police and fire services are sixty percent of general fund expenditures; stated libraries, parks and recreation, community programs and pools are equally important to the community; stated interest from the public for more

programs for kids and childcare; stated the proposed fire service fee could have saved valued community programs.

- Councilor Groves – stated the funds to support police and library, recreation and cultural services are equal in size; asked for comparisons from similar sized communities and how the budget is proportioned, when prioritization conversations take place; stated a willingness to consider alternatives in the short term, but wants to respect the referendum process; stated a desire to have the referendum petitioners be a part of the discussion if a repeal and replacement option is discussed.
- Councilor Yeh – stated a repeal and replacement option may be uncomfortable but worth discussing with the petitioners; does not believe there is a negative intent behind the petition process to end library services; stated Council needs to invest in better conversations and education with the community; stated a desire to fix the process to ensure that the community understands the proposed changes.
- Councilor Keating – believes the current conversation is part of the process to move forward; stated that the Chamber of Commerce staff have indicated a desire for a sunset or expiration date of any service fee proposed; stated his support for a ten year sunset length, but is open to compromise; believes Council can provide oversight for the accountability of the fee, but could be convinced of an alternative such as a mayor-appointed board for oversight; asked for deadlines for decision making to avoid a divisive and costly election; would not support an August election.
- Councilor Evans – stated the community has an expectation for level of service; noted that the City of Springfield has a program that handles parks and recreation separate from the general fund; supports finding a short-term solution to provide time for further discussion about long-term priorities.
- Councilor Leech – asked the City Manager about a pathway for a fee structure not based on square footage of a home; asked the City Manager if it would be possible to bring back a draft ordinance in the next couple of weeks; desire to act quickly.
- Councilor Kashinsky – stated communications from constituents have been overall in support of the fire service fee to avoid cuts to other services; noted people in support or indifferent to the fire service fee typically do not attend hearings or give public comment; stated concern over making compromises without knowing what the majority of the public wants; stated that compromises like a sunset date make the fee a less good and effective option for solving long-term budget problems; will be in support of something that keeps services in place.
- Councilor Clark – is open to ideas that create less conflict in the community; stated the community has gone through the petition process to have a say in the decision; is concerned about taking any steps that remove the public ability to cast their vote on this decision.
- Mayor Knudson – asked the City Manager to provide timelines for follow up information; noted there has been an interest in exploring a sunset option for a fee; noted there are questions regarding potential names for an alternative fee; stated a need for follow up information regarding the structure of an alternative fee and how it will be assessed; asked for an update on implementation timelines; asked if Monday, April 28 would be a possible next date to discuss the topic.

- Councilor Kashinsky – asked to clarify if a vote to repeal the fire service fee ordinance would be required to continue discussions about an alternative fee.

**MOTION:** Councilor Leech, seconded by Councilor Zelenka, moved to direct the City Manager to schedule a work session on April 28 and May 14 for further discussion of Council's options.


**VOTE: 8:0 PASSED**

**IN FAVOR:** Kashinsky, Keating, Zelenka, Yeh, Clark, Evans, Leech, Groves

**OPPOSED:** None

Councilor Mayor Knudson adjourned the meeting at 6:53 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Katie LaSala  
City Recorder

*(Recorded by Sara McKinney)*

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