

**MINUTES**  
**Eugene City Council**  
**Work Session**  
**Eugene, Oregon 97401**

**March 11, 2026**  
**12:00 p.m.**

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

**Councilors Absent:** Greg Evans

Mayor Knudson opened the March 11, 2026 Eugene City Council Work Session in a virtual format.

**1. WORK SESSION: Long Range Financial Planning – Benchmarking and Next Steps**

City Manager Pro Tem, Matt Rodrigues, provided background information and introduced Twylla Miller, the Chief Financial Officer and Sarah Emmans from SME Consulting who presented the benchmarking presentation. Neil Obringer, the Assistant Finance Director, introduced the next steps of the financial planning process.

Councilor Discussion:

- Mayor Knudson – stated the presentation identified Eugene as stretching resources and noted this may explain why the City is viewed as well managed; stated the information provides a clear picture to help Council and the incoming City Manager focus on building opportunity and stability in the community; stated appreciation for updated data since the technical advisory group’s review.
- Councilor Zelenka – noted the benchmarking comparisons can be misleading; stated cities differ in structure and responsibilities which makes direct comparison difficult; stated concern about using such comparisons for policy decisions because they can be easily misinterpreted; noted differences in general fund accounting, service scope, and economic transitions all affect the data; stated the economic transitions and shift in employment are not included in the gross numbers making the comparison difficult.
- Councilor Clark – stated appreciation for the multi-city comparison; noted that the information can help Eugene learn from other communities; asked whether surrounding communities near the comparison cities were reviewed; asked if regional demographic information could be added to show where young families are living relative to Eugene.

- Councilor Groves – stated appreciation for the presentation and the planning timeline; noted the value of side-by-side city comparisons and noted that differences between communities—such as 911 service models, ambulance operations, and airport size—should be highlighted to help interpret the data; asked for additional information on how nearby communities are growing in jobs and housing, especially given Eugene’s limited land supply.
- Councilor Kashinsky – stated appreciation for the report’s clarity and the way differences between cities were explained; asked whether Eugene’s spending patterns suggest that the City is putting more of its resources into public safety than the comparison cities.
- Councilor Keating – noted that city size and density could guide future policy; noted concern about the high property crime rate; asked for more information about how Eugene compares to its peer communities on public safety; asked why Bend is growing so quickly in population and employment and what lessons Eugene might draw from that growth.
- Councilor Yeh – noted data can be useful while also being limited; stated support for using the information as a starting point rather than an end point; asked how Eugene might frame regional partners as allies rather than competitors, especially when considering growth in neighboring cities.
- Mayor Knudson – noted that the information presented will give the Council a clearer picture of the City’s strengths and challenges; stated the data will support future work with the incoming City Manager and help guide decisions on fiscal stability and economic development.

## **2. WORK SESSION: Wednesday Work Session Format**

City Manager Pro Tem, Matt Rodrigues, introduced Katie LaSala, City Recorder, who provided a summary and presentation about the hybrid Wednesday work session format.

### Councilor Discussion:

- Councilor Clark – asked for clarification about the cost of security and staff needed for in-person meetings; asked whether the costs were new expenses or transfers within the City’s existing budget.
- Councilor Groves – stated in-person meetings are productive and easier for conversation; stated concern, however, about adding any new costs at a time when the City is facing budget pressures; stated he would vote no on the motion.
- Councilor Kashinsky – stated in-person meetings improve collaboration and constructive conversation; asked whether a hybrid format that excludes the public from attending in person would still require security staffing; stated support for minimizing costs, including not providing meals.

- Councilor Zelenka – stated the current virtual format does not appear to be causing problems; stated concern that even a low-cost hybrid model may not provide enough benefit to justify the expense.
- Councilor Yeh – stated agreement that in-person meetings improve the quality of Council’s work; stated support for a hybrid approach provided the cost is minimal.
- Councilor Keating – stated agreement that Council works more effectively when meeting in person; noted that in-person meetings support stronger working relationships with staff and with the incoming City Manager; stated he supports not incurring the cost of extra meals; stated flexibility for remote participation should remain available when needed and that the goal should be to meet in person whenever possible for the benefit of the community.
- Councilor Leech – stated strong support for returning to in-person work sessions; stated that Council makes better decisions when working together in the same room; stated she supports minimizing costs, including eliminating extra meals; stated support for a hybrid Wednesday work session option.
- Councilor Clark – noted Council works more effectively in person because it allows for conversation and clearer decision-making; stated he has concerns about adding costs; noted concerns about the public’s right to be present when Council meets in person; stated holding a meeting in City Hall without public access raises questions about whether the City should either allow public attendance or avoid the additional cost; stated he is uncertain about which approach is best, but he understands the value of meeting together.
- Councilor Keating – stated the current virtual work sessions do not allow public comment; stated the public continues to have full access to Council through email and by watching meetings live; noted the hybrid format does not reduce public engagement because the public will be able to view session online; stated the purpose of a work session is for Council to hear information and discuss policy; encouraged support for the hybrid format option.
- Councilor Zelenka – asked for clarification about the hybrid format and the related costs; noted the hybrid model would reduce expenses because meals and security would not be needed.
- Councilor Kashinsky – noted comments from the public about access; noted that moving to a hybrid format on Wednesdays would not reduce public access; stated she asked about allowing media to attend in person because that might offer a public presence, but noted doing so would not save money and would add costs the hybrid model is meant to avoid.

**MOTION:** Councilor Leech, seconded by Councilor Kashinsky, moved to direct the City Manager to transition the Wednesday Council Work Sessions from the current virtual-only format to a hybrid format where Council and City staff are in person

and the public is virtual and to address any budgetary needs though a supplemental budget request and note that meals will not be included.

- Councilor Zelenka – asked if the hybrid format would remove the need for security costs because only Council and staff would be present; noted that Council will proceed without meals; stated that councilors would still have the option to participate remotely if needed.
- Councilor Clark – asked whether the City should consider security needs even if the hybrid format does not include public attendance; noted that protests sometimes occur when Council meets in person and asked whether the City Manager Pro Tem believes security coverage is still necessary.
- Councilor Kashinsky – asked whether external presenters would be allowed to attend in person under the hybrid format.

**VOTE: 5:2 PASSED**

**IN FAVOR:** Kashinsky, Keating, Zelenka, Yeh and Leech

**OPPOSED:** Clark and Groves

The meeting was adjourned at 1:39 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Katie LaSala  
City Recorder

*(Recorded by Rosa Roach)*

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