

## MINUTES

**Eugene City Council  
Harris Hall, 125 East 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Eugene, Oregon 97401**

**January 15, 2020  
12:00 p.m.**

**Councilors Present:** Betty Taylor, Emily Semple, Alan Zelenka, Jennifer Yeh, Mike Clark, Claire Syrett, Chris Pryor

**Councilors Absent:** Greg Evans

Mayor Vinis opened the January 15, 2020, work session of the Eugene City Council.

### **1. Executive Session**

**An executive session was held pursuant to ORS 192.660(2)(e).**

### **2. WORK SESSION: City Council Process Session**

City Manager Pro Tem Sarah Medary and City Attorney Kathryn Brotherton reminded council where its conversation on piloting several changes to Public Forum ended at its work session earlier that week; there were three motions on the table from the previous work session. Council began with a discussion on the motion limiting the Public Forum time to two minutes.

**MOTION:** Councilor Zelenka, seconded by Councilor Clark, moved to limit testimony to two minutes.

#### Council Discussion:

- Councilor Yeh – asked for clarification of whether the motion for change was for a six-month trial.
- Councilor Semple – expressed concern about the public’s response and advocated for a six-month review; Councilors Zelenka and Clark accepted the idea as a friendly amendment.

**VOTE (with friendly amendment): PASSED 7:0**

Mayor Vinis reminded council that the second motion from the previous work session was to limit Public Forums to twice monthly for 60 minutes each.

**MOTION:** Councilor Zelenka, seconded by Councilor Clark, moved to limit the times for Public Forum to two times a month for one hour.

#### Council Discussion

- Councilor Semple – offered a friendly amendment for a six-month review of the changes; Councilors Zelenka and Clark accepted the friendly.
- Councilor Taylor – thought Public Forum should last for as long as it would take to hear all the speakers who signed up.
- Councilor Semple – supported ending Public Forum after 90 minutes.
- Councilor Syrett – supported Councilor Semple’s 90-minute Public Forum idea.

- Councilor Clark – expressed concern that randomizing speakers for Public Forum would still result in limiting newer voices who did not get the chance to speak to council; preferred limiting each speaker to 15 minutes per year.
- Councilor Pryor – was supportive of a 60-minute Public Forum, given that it was longer than any other city, including Portland.
- Councilor Zelenka – noted Eugene’s Public Forum was more than twice the length of any other city; thought the repetition of speakers was not contributing to more knowledge and was getting in the way of council’s business.
- Councilor Yeh – thought the repetition of the same speakers was the biggest problem; was supportive of a 90-minute forum, but not a 60-minute forum; thought council’s need for more work time was not necessarily due to the length of Public Forum.
- Mayor Vinis – noted that 90 minutes was enough time for 45 speakers and that the upcoming discussion regarding randomization of speakers may be the time to address other issues.
- Councilor Semple – thought limiting the speaking time to two minutes would still result in an overall reduction in Public Forum time; voiced concern about limiting accessibility to council; said she planned to make a friendly amendment for 90 minutes; the friendly was not accepted.
- Councilor Clark – said council was very accessible to the public compared to legislative bodies of its type and size; thought Public Forum had become about performance rather than sharing new information and ideas with council.
- Councilor Taylor – was supportive of a 90-minute Public Forum; thought one of the purposes of public forum was for people to talk to the community; opposed a 60-minute Public Forum.
- Councilor Pryor – did not think Public Forum should be an opportunity for community members to speak to one another or provide entertainment for themselves or each other; agreed with Councilor Yeh that one of the problems was with the small number of speakers who came repeatedly and said he would be willing to have a 90-minute Public Forum as long as there was a variety of speakers making testimony that was effective, appropriate and addressed to City Council.
- Councilor Semple – was concerned about free speech issues; questioned how limiting time would deal with repetitive speakers or those who wanted to entertain.

**MOTION TO AMEND and VOTE:** Councilor Semple, seconded by Councilor Yeh, moved to amend the 60-minute Public Forum limit to 90 minutes. **PASSED 5:2**, Councilors Clark and Zelenka opposed.

**VOTE on AMENDED MOTION (with friendly amendment): PASSED 7:0**

Mayor Vinis reminded council of the third motion on the table from the previous work session regarding randomizing the order of speakers at Public Forum.

**MOTION:** Councilor Zelenka, seconded by Councilor Clark, moved to randomize the order of people speaking once they’ve signed up.

Council Discussion

- Councilor Clark – asked for clarification on how randomizing of speakers might work; expressed concern about the motion not addressing the lack of variety of speakers.
- Councilor Taylor – opposed the proposal to randomize speakers’ names.
- Councilor Zelenka – thought randomization would help with some of the equity and “gaming the system” issues; said the entertainers and repetitive speakers were still a

problem and that limiting the number of times individuals could speak to council was still necessary; suggested people speaking about the topics on council's tentative agenda or those who haven't spoken as frequently go first.

- Councilor Syrett – pointed out a couple of ways speakers were able to “game” the system currently; thought Councilor Zelenka’s idea of splitting up the speakers between upcoming council topic areas and general comments was worth trying.
- Councilor Yeh – thought the motions did not address engaging new people; thought the steps to limit frequent speakers should be paired with investing in engaging new speakers.
- Councilor Pryor – asked for clarification on the legal requirements surrounding public forum; did not think the number of times someone testified was as persuasive or constructive as a good argument; thought outreach about the purpose of public forum and how to effectively get your ideas to council was important.
- Councilor Semple – asked whether council was considering changing the sign-up window; proposed a friendly amendment to review the new practice after six months; Councilors Zelenka and Clark accepted the friendly.
- Councilor Clark – asked for clarification from Councilor Zelenka on legislative intent and on whether the motion applied to public hearings as well; asked for clarification on the legality of randomizing speakers.
- Councilor Zelenka – questioned whether the motion would address the problems they were trying to solve; suggested a friendly amendment (to his own motion) that council limit people to speaking once monthly; the friendly was accepted by the second, Councilor Clark

**MOTION TO DIVIDE and VOTE:** Councilor Semple, seconded by Councilor Syrett, moved to divide the randomization portion of the motion from the limiting of speakers portion of the motion. **PASSED: 5:2**, Councilors Clark and Zelenka opposed.

**VOTE ON SPEAKER RANDOMIZATION (with friendly amendment): PASSED 5:2**, Councilors Semple and Taylor opposed.

**VOTE ON ONCE PER MONTHLY SPEAKER LIMIT: FAILED 3:4**, Councilors Clark, Pryor and Zelenka in favor.

Assistant City Manager Kristie Hammit gave a brief report regarding a shooting earlier that day near Autzen Stadium.

The meeting adjourned at 1:32 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Beth Forrest  
City Recorder

*(Recorded by Cas Casados)*

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