

MINUTES

**Eugene City Council
Bascom-Tykeson Room
Eugene Public Library, 100 West 10th Avenue
Eugene, Oregon 97401**

**March 17, 2020
12:00 p.m.**

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

Mayor Vinis opened the March 17, 2020, meeting of the Eugene City Council.

City Manager Pro Tem Sarah Medary provided context about the public health emergency relating to COVID-19.

Fire Chief Chris Heppel updated council on the City's efforts to respond to the public health challenge. Declaring a state of emergency would enable access to more state and federal resources to support the community in navigating the crisis.

1. DISCUSSION: Declaration of a State of Emergency

City Attorney Kathryn Brotherton explained how a state of emergency could be declared and what such a declaration would authorize and require of the City Manager.

Council Discussion:

- Councilor Clark – asked for clarification of the reason the City Manager may declare a state of emergency as defined in the code; said he was inspired by ideas offered by former Governor Kitzhaber in a recent article about the State's response to COVID-19.
- Councilor Pryor – said a declaration of emergency was essential; encouraged the City Manager to communicate with council and the community as expeditiously as possible over the course of managing the crisis.
- Councilor Semple – noted she would like to talk about alternative emergency shelters, bathrooms, and food access later in the meeting.
- Councilor Syrett – asked staff to respond to small businesses' concerns, especially those of restaurants; asked about childcare support, more testing ability and priority testing.
- Councilor Taylor – expressed concern about the impacts of the crisis on people living paycheck to paycheck.
- Councilor Yeh – said many of her concerns had already been mentioned and addressed.
- Councilor Zelenka – thought a declaration of emergency was appropriate; clarified that not all powers available to the City Manager in a state of emergency would necessarily be used; highlighted how the communication process would work between council and the City Manager during the emergency; noted several operational concerns, including support for local businesses, shelter and sanitation for the unhoused, communications planning, and lack of available testing.

- Mayor Vinis – asked the City Manager to address people’s concerns about being able to pay rent.
- Councilor Syrett – agreed with Mayor Vinis and also wanted to know what could be done to keep local businesses from defaulting on their leases.
- Councilor Zelenka – asked questions about options for tenants and landlords; appreciated the efforts of local utilities to mitigate community concerns.
- Councilor Taylor – wanted to know what additional authority the City Manager has in an emergency.
- Councilor Semple – asked whether a curfew would be needed and how it may or may not apply to people who are unhoused.
- Councilor Clark – asked whether City Manager Pro Tem Sarah Medary anticipated the immediate use of any emergency authority she would be empowered with.

City Manager Pro-Tem Sarah Medary noted the City was in very close contact with Lane County as well as the City of Springfield. She answered councilors’ questions regarding evictions, rental assistance, economic recovery for the business community, how she would decide whether to utilize emergency powers, childcare, and shelter for the unhoused members of the community.

- Councilor Clark – asked whether restaurants would have the flexibility to use food carts if they have them.

Chief Heppel answered questions regarding testing availability and priority, alternative shelters for people who are unhoused, the collaborative efforts between local government entities, procurement and distribution of food, and communicating information to the community.

- Councilor Pryor – noted that the part of the incident command system included an economic team that is planning for both immediate and long-term needs of the business community.
- Councilor Zelenka – asked about specifics in terms of resources for local businesses and employees as well as what would be the City Manager’s process for invoking emergency powers, if necessary.

City Manager Medary explained the process for consulting the Mayor and a majority of councilors per the code requirements before invoking emergency powers; noted there would be a financial impact for the City as an organization.

- Councilor Clark – asked how staff was accounting for the long-term needs of the community in addition to the short-term.
- Councilor Semple – asked for more details about alternative shelters as well as the social and emotional needs of the community.
- Mayor Vinis – shared information about an informal support network in her neighborhood.
- Councilor Taylor – asked how staff would know when it was no longer an emergency; asked about using the community centers as shelters.
- Councilor Zelenka – expressed confidence in the intergovernmental collaboration.

- Councilor Pryor – noted the City Council would not—given the circumstances—have the level of clarity and certainty that would be most desirable and would have to put their faith in staff to consider what they have heard from council about its priorities.
- Councilor Evans – asked how long the City would have in terms of its reserves and resources.

MOTION and VOTE: Councilor Semple, seconded by Councilor Yeh, moved to support the City Manager Pro Tem declaring a state of emergency under Section 2.1055 of the Eugene Code within the city of Eugene due to the COVID-19 pandemic. **PASSED: 8:0.**

The meeting adjourned at 1:03 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Beth Forrest
City Recorder

(Recorded by Cas Casados)

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