

MINUTES

**Eugene City Council
Harris Hall, 125 East 8th Avenue
Eugene, Oregon 97401**

**November 25, 2019
5:30 p.m.**

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

Mayor Vinis opened the November 25, 2019, work session of the Eugene City Council.

1. Committee Reports and Items of Interest

- Councilor Semple – noted that Robert Wilson passed away and recognized his contributions; spoke about the National League of Cities conference; talked about the homelessness programs offered in San Antonio, including Haven for Hope, and shared what she learned on her tour.
- Councilor Yeh – talked about the resolution calling for a statewide addiction recovery continuum of care scheduled on the 7:30 p.m. meeting agenda.
- Councilor Taylor – talked about the National League of Cities conference; said there would be an NLC task force that would be interviewing presidential candidates about important city topics.
- Councilor Evans – said he attended national board meetings at NLC and many focused on national infrastructure, including drone regulation; supported asking presidential candidates to address city topics.
- Councilor Taylor – noted there are two Oregon representatives on the NLC advisory council, including herself.
- City Manager Medary – gave an update around small cell and 5G technology; said the City has republished its guidelines and redone the web page for these technologies; said that there will be public notice given to houses within 250 feet of an approved site.
- Councilor Syrett – said she has recently noticed several brown boxes placed low on the poles in West Eugene and that there is an aesthetic aspect to that placement.
- Mayor Vinis – reported that a subcommittee of the Poverty and Homelessness Board did a study on health and providing healthcare to unhoused individuals that will inform the City's work around public safety and the TAC implementation.

2. WORK SESSION: Community Safety Initiative Update

Assistant City Manager Kristie Hammit, Police Chief Chris Skinner, and Finance Director Twylla Miller gave an update about the Community Safety Initiative, including bridge funding outcomes and payroll tax implementation.

Council Discussion:

- Councilor Syrett – thanked staff for the update on current activities and the financial plan into the future; said she's pleased to see that the 911 operators are fully staffed because this has been a chronic challenge; said some of the street crimes images in the presentation were from a house in her neighborhood that had chronic negative impacts on the neighbors and it was a relief to have that home attended to by the street crimes unit.
- Mayor Vinis – said the City's accomplishments with the first 8.6 million dollars are stunning and she appreciates the work done and the positive quality of life impacts it has had; thanked the

Finance team's knowledge on implementing the payroll tax, noting the work is complicated and important.

- Councilor Clark – asked for more information about why the Department of Revenue said they wouldn't collect the tax for the City; asked if staff was comfortable in saying the City will be able to keep up and manage collection data; asked staff to explain systems in place for businesses challenging applicability; asked for the target implementation date.
- Councilor Pryor – said he's sorry that DOR didn't have the time to work with the City, but the silver lining is that once the collection system is up and running, the City will be in control and managing it internally; talked about the importance of managing and collecting good data; said that collecting the payroll tax is a long-term solution but acute issues exist right now and it's important to not to lose momentum as the bridge funding ends and before collection of the tax begins; asked what resources or mechanisms council should consider to make sure momentum isn't lost.
- Councilor Zelenka – asked staff to explain the timeline and budget for using the Department of Revenue compared to internal collection; said he thinks it will ultimately be beneficial to be able to have control over the implementation within the City.
- Councilor Evans - asked what fund or funds potential loans would be borrowing from and what that would look like.
- Councilor Clark – asked if reference to a vendor meant software or implementation vendor; said Eugene is lucky to have many CPA firms in the community and asked what the interactions with them will be as far as training, resources, and implementation recommendations.
- Councilor Taylor – asked if small businesses were exempt from the payroll tax; asked if small businesses would have help figuring out how to deduct taxes from their employees' paychecks; asked if paychecks will have a line showing this payroll tax deduction; said she has concerns about low-income individuals being impacted, but acknowledged that council has decided to move forward with this tax.

3. WORK SESSION: Update from Municipal Court Presiding Judge

Presiding Judge Greg Gill gave an update about municipal court operations, including safety updates and community court.

Council Discussion:

- Councilor Clark – asked if there is access to enough jail beds in the current system; asked if community complaints are a result of inadequate resources to hold misdemeanor and violation offenses adequately accountable; shared his opinion that people are not held accountable very well and that council doesn't invest in the resources for the court's use to a degree that's appropriate; asked if people are ever restricted from certain areas during sentencing and how effective that is; asked if you can require someone to stay at a service provider, like a particular shelter or drug treatment as a condition of release; asked about community restoration and whether the City could work with a list of businesses owners who are interested in doing restoration in their facility.
- Councilor Pryor – said that restorative justice is great but complicated; talked about mechanisms that can be used to keep people in treatment; said that accountability can be achieved in a number of ways that doesn't always include a jail bed; talked about youth programs and accountability; asked if there is the ability to maintain momentum with the new payroll tax timeline and the funding mechanisms to bridge the temporary funding; said the municipal court sees the results of citations issued by EPD and asked if there were any trends or implications to show that EPD may be issuing any frivolous, discriminatory, or reactionary citations.
- Councilor Yeh – complimented Judge Gill for the depth of his knowledge and his ability to explain things well; said she sat in while he was in court and his instructions were clear, he

made sure the defendants understood the material their attorneys had explained to them, he was respectful, and had sincerely wished them a positive outcome; said she likes the tone he is setting for the municipal court.

- Councilor Zelenka – asked about pretrial vs. post-sentencing jail holds and why more jail beds might not help; asked how long someone would be held pretrial; said accountability for lower level crimes question comes up in the community frequently because many feel offending individuals are not begin held accountable because they don't go to jail; asked how council could help address this issue; said the municipal court is just one part of an overall system that is impacted significantly by inadequate resources for addiction and homelessness issues.
- Councilor Taylor – said she recently forwarded a list of questions to Judge Gill; asked if the municipal court can sentence people to mental institutions, if people get put in jail for parking tickets, if people could be put in jail for having an open container, and if there was a lot of time spent in court with neighborhood and domestic disputes; asked about barking dogs.
- Councilor Evans – said he's heard that the state hospitals are not accepting referrals from the courts because they say there is a capacity issue and too many people are being sent there; asked what happens to people who are released sooner than they should be from the state hospital.
- Councilor Clark – said he was trying to make the argument that the lack of jail beds is the most dysfunctional part of the dysfunctional system in the city; said he wanted to separate people's condition from behavior, noting that there is an epidemic of lawlessness in the community at a misdemeanor level and offenders are not being held accountable to the degree that a large chunk of the community wants; asked what is the most broken part of the system that council could address and make this better; asked about the effects on Eugene of the State's classification of drug possession charges as misdemeanors rather than felony offenses and what would occur if Oregon were like other states in that regard.

The meeting adjourned at 7:16 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Beth Forrest

Beth Forrest
City Recorder

(Recorded by Elena Domingo)

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