

MINUTES

Eugene City Council Work Session Eugene, Oregon 97401

October 25, 2023
12:00 p.m.

Councilors Present: Emily Semple, Matt Keating, Alan Zelenka, Jennifer Yeh, Mike Clark, Greg Evans, Lyndsie Leech, and Randy Groves

Mayor Vinis opened the October 25, 2023, work session of the Eugene City Council in a virtual format.

1. ACTION: An Ordinance Concerning Low-Income Rental Housing Property Tax Exemption and Amending Sections 2.937, 2.938, 2.939 and 2.940 of the Eugene Code, 1971.

Assistant City Manager, Matt Rodrigues, provided background information about the Low-Income Rental Property Tax Exemption and Amending Sections 2.937, 2.938, 2.939 and 2.940 of the Eugene Code, 1971.

MOTION and VOTE: Councilor Groves, seconded by Councilor Keating, move to adopt the Ordinance Concerning Low-Income Rental Housing Property Tax Exemption and Amending Sections 2.937, 2.938, 2.939 and 2.940 of the Eugene Code, 1971, included as Attachment A to this Agenda Item Summary.

VOTE: PASSED 8:0

2. WORK SESSION: Presentation of Initiative Petition 2023-2 to Council

Assistant City Manager, Matt Rodrigues, gave a brief introduction to Petition 2023-2 and introduced City Recorder, Katie LaSala, who provided a presentation of initiative petition 2023-2 to Council.

Councilor Discussion:

- Councilor Groves – asked to confirm that if this passes, Eugene would have a different voting system than other non-Eugene related items on the ballot; is concerned this will add confusion for voters; believes that a change in the voting method should be for an entire area or not at all.
- Councilor Semple – asked if this voting method would apply to EWEB or national voting options; is not in favor of making a motion at this work session.
- Councilor Keating – supports expanding participation in elections; asked if this voting method would also alter the timeline for campaigning; asked staff to confirm that the May primary would occur in November; is concerned about financial impacts of this change; would like another work session scheduled to discuss options further; concerned about the confusion this method could cause for voters.

- Councilor Zelenka – is not in favor of this voting method; believes this will create confusion for voters; asked what the timeline for Council to take action would be; asked how the voters’ pamphlet would be impacted by this change; asked if the May voters’ pamphlet would still be produced; asked if the November voters’ pamphlet would include explanation of the new method; does not intend to support the change.
- Councilor Clark – stated he has spoken with the Score Then Automatic Runoff (STAR) Voting petitioners; is not in favor of the change in voting method; is concerned about the potential increase in negative campaigning.
- Councilor Leech – asked staff what alternative measures could be considered; noted that avoiding a separate runoff election may be beneficial; is concerned about having two separate methods of electing; would like another work session to learn more; stated that the costs could increase with this method; stated that runoffs provide a time for candidates to solidify their campaign and stance on issues.
- Councilor Yeh – asked what action Council needs to take to today; is in favor of doing nothing; is not opposed to further conversations on the subject.
- Councilor Semple – is concerned about negative campaigning; asked if candidates would still have to register in September; is concerned about the longer campaign timeline; would be more supportive if the County or the State were using the same method; not in favor of pursuing action at this time.
- Councilor Zelenka – is concerned about the negative campaigning impact; asked staff to explain how an automatic runoff process would work; asked the City Attorney to confirm that an alternative measure must propose substantive changes to the current system; asked how substantial the difference must be in a proposed alternative measure; would like to schedule another work session to discuss the topic; believes there is a benefit to Council taking a stance on this issue.
- Councilor Groves – explained the automatic runoff process; believes the Score Then Automatic Runoff (STAR) Voting process is confusing; will make a motion for another work session on this topic; is concerned about the limited amount of time that Council has available in their schedule to discuss the topic further.
- Councilor Keating – would like a motion made to include another work session before the February 21, 2024 deadline for action; believes that Council has a responsibility to the public to weigh-in on the topic; will look at other municipalities and their experiences with similar voting methods; is concerned about confusion that this method could create; asked staff for the vote result for the last time Score Then Automatic Runoff (STAR) voting was on the Lane County ballot.
- Councilor Evans – asked if this item got enough signatures to be on a Lane County ballot previously; stated that this method has discouraged voters from voting in other municipalities and has had a negative impact on underrepresented and underserved voters; would support another work session discussion on the topic.
- Councilor Clark – noted that the previous attempt to get this on the ballot for Eugene did not get enough qualified signatures; believes that the County’s method for qualifying signature by sampling created an error; believes that the petitioners have earned the right to be on the ballot; is opposed to this method for voting.
- Councilor Zelenka – is concerned that the complexity of the method will cause confusion; is not in favor of this method.

- Mayor Vinis – noted that the cost, complexity, and length of election campaigning would be a negative impact.

MOTION and VOTE: Councilor Groves, seconded by Councilor Keating, move to direct City Manager to schedule an additional work session for Council to discuss options in a period of time that allows for modifications or a second proposal.

VOTE: PASSED 7:1 (opposed by Councilor Semple)

Mayor Vinis adjourned the meeting at 12:43 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Katie LaSala
City Recorder

(Recorded by Sara McKinney)

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