



Memorandum

Date: April 10, 2023
To: Mayor Vinis and City Council
From: Sara McKinney, 541-682-5042
Subject: Testimony Submitted

Attached is testimony submitted at the Public Forum on April 10, 2023. A copy of this material is also included with the meeting materials posted on the web at:

<https://eugene.ompnetwork.org/embed/sessions/266007/city-council-meeting-april-10-2023>

Monday, April 10, 2023
Mayor Lucy Vinus and City Council

We understand the Council's compromise solution for our new Eugene City Hall and this narrative is not to argue that action. Congratulations, at least we have a direction though it is different from of your recent and past deliberations and decisions. We understand this decision is just being expedient, but it is done, and now we collectively must achieve. It does preserve this important building and site as a public and community asset.

Rather tonight's testimony is to encourage you to provide a more inclusive, comprehensive and imaginative ingredient to the on-going "due diligence study" for the community's use of the former EWEB office building and adjacent sites. This building and important site requires a vision and a more inclusive responsible solution than a single purpose City Hall use. A solution that provides more than a visual City's presence and a solution for the City's current office needs.

The current "due diligence" direction as noted or understood is to spend as little money as possible, reuse the furniture and simply move in.

Current circumstances:

- The City has just spent a great deal of money to build a new riverfront park and the infrastructure to redevelop the adjacent land.
- The City has relieved the current housing developer from their commitment to providing commercial and retail along with the housing. The exception being a single restaurant site.
- The developer has changed their development from home ownership to rentals which changes the population of the development.
- There is no future discussion, planning or masterplanning to suggest how the adjacent land within the purchase with the EWEB building would or could be developed. The only identified use heard is a large parking lot or maybe a parking structure adjacent to the river.
- The City has given up on the previous building performance criteria it established as an example to the community for responsible buildings of and for the future. This is simply being expedient and not responsible.

Research, History and Observations:

- Today's "public buildings," with the necessary and security requirements are not friendly and inviting buildings and the public avoids going there. An open house or a special event might provide some reason to go there. I believe the most public contact will be with the EWEB rate payers portion of the building.
- Connecting with the River without anything to draw or interest the community will not occur unless we pursue other adjacent uses to participate with and "hang out". Unless one jogs, bicycles or walks their dog most of the community will not use the site unless activities are planned, not an impromptu event.
- The City has a performing arts center but does not have a visual nor cultural center. I and a group of 300 Eugene Citizens proposed to EWEB the purchase of their property for a Eugene Cultural Center. A cultural Center would be a 7 day a week regional draw along the river with connection using the Defazio bridge to the North Bank Park. In 1954 the City proposed a Cultural Center on the exact site where the EWEB building was eventually built. In 1976 and 1985 a Cultural Center was proposed in North Bank Park at what now is the Northside connection of the DeFazio bridge.

- Meeting with other proposers for the EWEB property, the Science Factory, representatives of the Lane County Historical Museum, possible Rivers Museum, other Community Arts and Cultural Organizations and adjacent property owners to understand their interest and support. We gathered over 300 support signatures in 1 1/2 weeks to support a seven day a week complex of adjacent to the River called the Eugene Cultural Center Neighborhood.

This exploration has generated a great deal of recent interest by existing and newly created organizations that will and can provide the necessary funding and leadership. This effort has provided the basis for a newly formed organization called "Vision Eugene" with a soon to launch website whose purpose is to support and inform those interested in this community's Cultural/Educational possibilities and our community's progress.

Request:

For the Mayor and Council to instruct the Manager and staff to include in the current "due diligence study" a site masterplan for the balance of the 4.4 acres that may also include a portion of the North Bank Park for other identified visual and cultural users for the Future Eugene Cultural Center Neighborhood with the City Hall as one occupant and the motivator of the entire complex or neighborhood.

This would include either the ground floor of the EWEB major building or the entire smaller and former assembly building to be given over as a public Visual Arts Center, and the formation of an urban neighborhood a place for the community to engage, hang out and provide a "pride of place" seven days a week.

This effort requires your leadership, vision, exploration and willingness to explore. If any of this testimony is relevant, then these ingredients must be a part of this "due diligence" study. This study or planning will provide the City with the necessary tools and a leadership role for the future, complete with a basis for phasing and funding opportunities.

If the mentioned portions of the EWEB building are reserved for the Hope Pressman or Maurie Jacobs Visual Arts Center, Vision Eugene would help to support the necessary funds to renovate the space and perhaps purchase and manage that share of the existing complex.

Sincerely,
Otto P. Poticha FAIA

Public Health Overlay Zone – Statement of Support Letter

Dear Eugene Mayor and City Council,

We, the Many Rivers Chapter of the Sierra Club, urge the Eugene City Council to create a Public Health Overlay Zone to protect public health in Eugene.

Many neighborhoods in West Eugene have long suffered from an inequitable pollution burden with >95% of all air toxics in Eugene emitted in the 97402 zip code in West Eugene. Furthermore, neighborhoods in the industrial area near Roosevelt Ave. experience higher levels of cancer and asthma than the rest of the city. Community-based health surveys conducted by Beyond Toxics suggest that asthma and cancer are significantly associated with proximity to the large number of industrial polluters located nearby. A 2018 report issued by the United States Small-Area Life Expectancy Estimates Project reported that life expectancy for residents in the census tract that includes Trainsong, among Eugene's poorest neighborhoods, is 70.2 years, compared to 87.9 years for those in the tract South of the University of Oregon in Eugene.

Residents and community organizations have tried to raise awareness about the environmental health discrepancies for decades. However, community concerns with polluter J.H. Baxter were ignored for years before soil testing showed extremely high levels of dioxins on the site and in residential soils. Facing increasing scrutiny from state regulatory agencies and increasing public pressure, the facility shut down in January 2022.

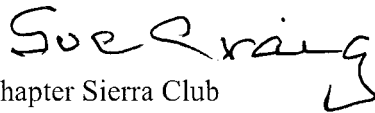
Our elected leaders can take action to end the historical pattern of approving zoning codes and land uses that place industrial polluters and homes adjacent. A Public Health Overlay Zone would create buffer zones between homes and polluting businesses and ban the worst polluting industries from city limits. It would also strengthen noise, vibration and odor rules, public meeting requirements, and other development standards.

A Public Health Overlay Zone would also help provide peace of mind for a community that has long suffered from higher pollution levels. Families should know that the value of their property will not suffer due to nearby sources of pollution and that new large polluters won't move into the area. Everyone in Eugene deserves to know that their families are safe to go outside, to take an evening walk, to eat vegetable from their own backyard gardens, and to recreate in their local parks.

We urge the Eugene City Council to create a Public Health Overlay Zone to protect West Eugene residents from new toxic polluters.

Thank you,

Many Rivers Chapter Sierra Club

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sue Raring". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style. The first name "Sue" is written in a larger, more prominent script, and "Raring" follows in a similar but slightly smaller script. The signature is positioned to the right of the typed name "Sue Raring".

