MINUTES

Eugene City Council
Council Chamber—City Hall
777 Pearl Street—Eugene, Oregon

July 11, 2011
7:30 p.m.

COUNCILORS PRESENT: Betty Taylor, George Brown, Andrea Ortiz, George Poling, Mike Clark, Chris Pryor, Alan Zelenka, Pat Farr.

Her Honor Mayor Kitty Piercy called the July 11, 2011, regular meeting of the Eugene City Council to order.

1. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE AND READING OF THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

Those present recited the Pledge of Allegiance. Volunteers from the League of Women Voters offered a reading of the Declaration of Independence.

Mayor Piercy observed that the reading was special to her because her family was directly descended from Thomas Nelson, Jr., a co-signer of the declaration from Virginia.

2. PUBLIC FORUM

Mayor Piercy reviewed the rules of the Public Forum.

Kevin Prociw, 1030 Williams Street, acknowledged he had not followed the recent controversy surrounding the recital of the Pledge of Allegiance but suggested it was evidence the community was interested in speech issues. He offered the anti-war and anti-EMX signs posted in town as other evidence of that interest. He encouraged the council to consider such issues with care as he believed the community was making history.

Mr. Prociw advocated for a public vote on EmX. He suggested that such a vote was also a speech issue in its own way and that it was important the council demonstrate to the citizens that it trusted them to make the right choice. He also suggested that the lawsuit against the City over EmX could be ended if the council allowed a public vote.

Mark Callahan, 3621 Mahlon Street, expressed his belief that the councilors opposed to the recital of the Pledge of Allegiance had embarrassed the community. He averred that the community had been more inclusive in the past in spite of political differences. He believed that some councilors who spoke of the importance of inclusiveness chose only to be inclusive if a person thought like they do. Mr. Callahan believed the council should recite the pledge at more meetings. He anticipated that during his upcoming run for President of the United States that he would be asked about the council's action and asked how he could be expected to respond when asked about the council's limited inclusiveness. Mr. Callahan called for a volunteer to say the pledge during the Public Forum during his absence.

Nick Urhausen, 3058 Hawkins Lane, suggested it was both a privilege and a right for people to recite the Pledge of Allegiance. He would not compel anyone to say the pledge but he did not think people had the right not to hear it. It did not take long to say the pledge. Mr. Urhausen pointed out that Eugene was a political entity of the United States whether the community liked it or not. He found it hypocritical that the council had discussed the peace dividend it wished to receive from the same nation that some councilors were reluctant to say the Pledge of Allegiance to.

Mr. Urhausen recalled that the community had voted to fly the flag on Skinner Butte and suggested the council place a measure regarding the pledge on the ballot.

Al Rogers, 528 Kingswood Avenue, did not understand the council's decision to recite the Pledge of Allegiance at only four meetings. He said the pledge contained 31 words and it took only 12 seconds to say it. He expressed concern that those opposed to saying the pledge did not take time to learn the meaning behind the words of the pledge. Mr. Rogers suggested that residents' recognition of the contribution of veterans in combination with the pledge would help local veterans feel more appreciated.

Diane Thurlow, 217 Crest Drive, questioned how Councilor Taylor could compare the voluntary recital of the Pledge of Allegiance with the voluntary reading of the Communist Manifesto and how Councilor Brown could suggest that the pledge should only be said on residents' private property. She suggested that several councilors did not like what the country stood for and sought a "One World Order" where no country had more than any other country. That would require the United States to be destroyed. She maintained such individuals had hijacked the word "progressive" and were using it to justify tax increases and declines in education and moral values. Ms. Thurlow said such individuals discussed diversity but only tolerated those who shared their viewpoint. She asked what about the pledge was divisive. She suggested that the councilors involved were receiving a lot of quality from the nation they were reluctant to pledge allegiance to.

Ms. Thurlow maintained that Mayor Piercy was affiliated with the organization "Code Pink," an anti-Israeli organization that sponsored the two flotillas attempted to break Israeli's Gaza blockade, which was established to prevent arms smuggling. Code Pink worked hand in hand with former members of the Weather Underground on such missions. She characterized Mayor Piercy and other members of the council as enemies of the people and urged citizens to speak up and defend the pledge, the original Constitution, the Bill of Rights, the flag, and the values that had made the nation great.

Bob Macherione, 1994 Brewer Street, owner of a business at 6th Avenue and Lincoln Street, suggested that reciting the Pledge of Allegiance did not necessarily make one a good citizen of the community. He respected everyone's right to say the pledge or not. All were citizens of the same country and deserved the same level of respect.

Mr. Macherione said he had not personally expected to have his free speech threatened by anonymous complaints about Sign Code violations and had not expected personal attacks on his opinions from the acting head of Lane Transit District (LTD). He was a member of the public and a taxpayer and was trying to provide some information that he had been told was welcome. If his input to LTD was not valid he wondered whose input was valid. Mr. Macherione intended to return to his message, which was that LTD could give free student passes to everyone because it would not reduce the agency's cost not to do so. He said that LTD had a $36 million budget and lost $50,000 monthly, and for that amount was willing to throw 10 percent of its ridership off the bus. Mr. Macherione thought that was wrong. It was improper for a transit system that asserted its own progressiveness to stop that service.

Eugene Drix, 307-1/2 High Street, said he loved being in Eugene and being at council meetings. He expressed appreciation for the work of the council. Drix also expressed appreciation for the recent University of Oregon (UO) graduation ceremony and the efforts that went into making each graduate. Drix noted the UO's nanotechnology research efforts. He also enjoyed the recent Butte to Butte Race. Speaking of the future, Drix suggested it would include new tools, new traditions, new talismans, and new toys to help people meet future challenges. He encouraged people to rethink the obvious and said money was not the key to anything. He believed that more was not always more, democracy was not passive, volunteering was not obvious, ideas that were not yours were not wrong, and Drix was not just for kids, he was just a fun part of Eugene.

James Baptiste, a California resident who sometimes lived in Eugene, was proud to be present at the first meeting at which the council recited the Pledge of Allegiance and commended those who did so, although he observed that Councilor Brown had declined to participate. He did not know why and suggested that Councilor Brown needed to answer that for himself and for his constituents. He thought the pledge was important and while he did not object if Councilor Brown did not want to participate, he hoped he would reconsider.

Mayor Piercy closed the Public Forum. She thanked Mr. Drix for his spirit and for his support of her during the Butte to Butte Race.

Councilor Ortiz expressed her appreciation for the testimony offered during the Public Forum. She understood that some were challenged by the council's decisions but expressed her hope that residents could be respectful of all councilors' choices, which were based on their personal convictions and values. Councilor Ortiz believed the council's decision to institute the pledge was a step in the right direction and she looked forward to welcoming other organizations to join with the council when the pledge was recited.

3. CONSENT CALENDAR

A. Approval of City Council Minutes

- May 25, 2011, Work Session
- May 26, 2011, Joint Elected Officials

B. Approval of Tentative Working Agenda

Councilor Taylor, seconded by Councilor Brown, moved to adopt the Consent Calendar. Roll call vote: The motion passed unanimously, 8:0.

Mayor Piercy adjourned the meeting at 8:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Beth Forrest

Beth Forrest
City Recorder

(Recorded by Kimberly Young)