

MINUTES

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

**March 13, 2019
12:00 p.m.**

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

Councilors Absent: Betty Taylor, Greg Evans

Mayor Vinis opened the March 13, 2019, Work Session of the Eugene City Council.

1. WORK SESSION: Renter Protections

Grants Manager, Stephanie Jennings gave a council follow-up staff presentation about the experience of Eugene renters and local current rental market issues related to affordability, availability, access, quality, and stability. Ms. Jennings also provided an update on proposed state legislation related to rental protections.

Council Discussion

- Councilor Clark - requested data to reflect number of single adults vs. multiple adults in single-family housing, remarking that there are more single adults living in single-family housing in Eugene compared to other communities in Oregon; suggested there is a discrepancy between the model for which single-family homes were built and who currently lives in single-family homes; raised concern that council's decisions make more homes more expensive to rent.
- Councilor Syrett - appreciated the use of the word "home" rather than "unit" as an example of the disparity in attitudes regarding home ownership and rent; stated the need for accurate vacancy rates to understand rental conditions in Eugene; supported exploring in greater detail application fees and the use of a smart phone app that could house a universal application and fee; remarked that conditional to passing a Construction Excise Tax (CET), the city should look at creating a revolving loan fund to support first and last month payments and security deposits, strengthening protection preventing retaliation, monthly fees for pets rather than blanket security deposits, landlords to provide rights and responsibilities prior to renting, and to look into strategic collaborations with local agencies to support those with disabilities and the unhoused in the community.
- Councilor Pryor - remarked that while the study contains a self-selection bias, shading the results being discussed, the feedback is direct, informative, and of value; remarked that this is an indicator that the council should remain engaged with the topic; suggested that while initial council engagement may raise rents, council-supported financial supports will ultimately reduce these costs.
- Councilor Zelenka - questioned why Eugene's rental population is so much higher (as compared to national rental figures) and suggested that more data in comparison to similarly sized communities in college towns would be helpful; questioned the accuracy of reported rental rates to actual rental stock and lamented the high rates of renter displacement due to increased rental costs; noted the intersection of housing availability, affordability, and displacement as something he'd like to discuss more in the next work

session; reiterated the remarks from councilors about high cost of application fees and the use of a universal application, highlighting an existing application called One App Oregon and commented on the lack of standards regarding security deposits within Eugene rental housing code.

- Councilor Semple - reiterated previous councilor comments regarding multiple application fees, renter projections from retaliation, security deposits, animal fees, etc.
- Mayor Vinis - asked if month-to-month rentals were considered in listening sessions, especially in relation to the potential effects of proposed state legislation; questioned if a tool like Housing Navigators would be helpful for renters.
- Councilor Clark – requested a definitive number of renters in Eugene and a definitive number of what kinds of homes they live in; asked for a definitive understanding of the types of homes that exist within the city (single family vs. duplex vs. multiple family, for example), and suggested that historical data collection has not been accurate to this end; encouraged assisting renters in becoming homeowners to open the rental market and create stability for those becoming homeowners; referred to Springfield’s revolving loan fund to assist with down payments as a possible support.
- Councilor Zelenka - suggested the number of rent-burdened is ultimately the crisis and questioned the plausibility of a resolution process addressing security deposits in the rental housing code; suggested ways to increase education for renters about renter resources; asserted support for use of CET to provide City-funded financial supports; wondered what was to come out of the survey and listening sessions and asked to integrate renter perspectives and potential actions out of renter protection efforts with Housing Tools and Strategies process.
- Councilor Yeh - requested staff come back with actions council can consider for both renters with urgent needs and renters with long-term but important needs; wondered what council can do create stability for renters and potential homeowners; thanked committee members for their work.
- Councilor Clark - reiterated the need for more homeowners, the City’s role in creating financial resources for homeownership, and asked if there are similar strategies the council can engage.

2. WORK SESSION: Housing Tools and Strategies

Economic Development Planner Anne Fifield, Community Development Director Michael Kinnison, and Metro Community Planning Manager Terri Harding provided a summary of information regarding the potential actions that were identified in the Housing Tools and Strategies workgroup, an update on the body of work currently underway, and where staff will focus on the next phase of work.

Council Discussion

- Mayor Vinis - noted her appreciation for the presentation.
- Councilor Clark - agreed with staff comments and suggested there is a lack of affordability for a diversity of homes, and disparate types of housed populations to the model for which homes were locally built;. Councilor Clark questioned if it is best to construct homes to how households organize as Eugene may differ in how “household” is defined from other communities.
- Councilor Pryor - questioned if the City can reduce costs associated with building affordable homes; commented on prior attempts to do so, noting that these fixes are not easy; requested attempts to do so be intentional, sincere, and authentic; stated that he does not want the issue to be ignored because it’s complicated.
- Councilor Zelenka - noted appreciation for ever-improving format of items and acknowledged depth of problem which has developed over decades; said this issue is a

crisis for which the City meets immediate needs and addresses long term needs; noted the issue of affordability is a market failure and policy issue, requiring government assistance, and noted this is the reason he favors a one percent construction excise tax to address short-term fixes; mentioned the need for greater renter perspectives in Housing Tools and Strategies and that the City could bring together work with Renter Protections and next steps to fill in gaps of Housing Tools and Strategies.

- Councilor Syrett - used a car market analogy to address home building market failures in meeting housing needs; noted the need for the City to assist renters and homeowners with available choices for housing that works for their circumstance where market cannot provide those same choices.
- Councilor Yeh - wondered if Planning and Development has capacity to do all this work and asked what resources are needed to get work done.
- Councilor Semple - noted excitement around aligning zoning and comprehensive plans, suggesting this will be helpful to building the right buildings for the right people in the right places; wondered how the City can develop SROs to serve the unhoused and supported auxiliary dwelling unit development and pre-approved plans; reiterated support for financial assistance with down payments, foreclosure support, security deposits, etc.; wondered how the private sector can support this work, and who else to ask to support financial needs.
- Councilor Clark - disagreed with Councilor Zelenka's assessment of the issue being a market failure and suggested building homes needs to be less expensive; suggested the City needs to specify what kind of housing is for built for certain types of incomes (single income household vs. multiple income households).
- Councilor Zelenka - supported market failure theory and ways to address the strategies needed to address that failure; questioned how to eliminate building costs and suggested that there is no meaningful way to do so, which is why financial supports to the renter/homeowner from the city are so important; requested a filter for impacts related to categories that are "in-progress" or "recommendations and suggested "level of support" not appropriately named and should be renamed "source".
- Councilor Pryor - suggested not all barriers to building are cost-related.
- Mayor Vinis - spoke about Peter Keys experience at the University of Oregon; suggested utilizing census data to evaluate intersections of data mentioned by Councilor Clark as well as other designs.

The meeting adjourned at 1:44 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,


Samantha Roberts
Deputy City Recorder