

WHITEAKER COMMUNITY COUNCIL

A CITY OF EUGENE NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

PO Box 11692, EUGENE OR 97440

WCC Meeting 3/10/21

Board Members: Chris Gadsby, Margaret Steinbrunn, Anand Holtham-Keeley, Angie Byers, Ian Winbrock, Johnny Skirving, Katie Guske, Andrew Price, Dilenia Cardona, Gail Caru-Vetter, Dan Grau, Bill Robohm,

General: Thea Lee, Emma Jones, Dunca Rhodes, Drew White, Stephen Fuller-Rowell, Sheryl Balthrop, Adora McDougal, Jennifer Hoover, Sam Hahn, JAlthouse, Chance, Dave McNeer, Amy Bradbury, Caitlin Woodyard, Chris Hardin, Ms. Paula Chavez, Dan R, Eli Verdana, Rene Kane, Sigh O’Nara, Iska Johnson, Margaret Mazzotta, Gina Tormohlen, Lefty, Ali Langley, Linda, Brad Foster, Fred Roellig, AJH, Chris Hardin, Jain Elliott, Emily Baran, Susan Detroy, Julie, Julie Ament, Warren Walsh, Andrew Heben, Jain Elliot, Keith Bucher, Julie Fendon

Guests: Chief Chris Skinner, EPD; Amber Freidman, Meals on Wheels/FFLC; Laurie Trieger, Lane Co Commissioner; City of Eugene Parks and Open Space Marketing and Outreach Manager Kelley Shadwick; Mayor Lucy Vinis; City Councilperson Clair Syrett; City of Eugene Public Works Department Public Affairs Manager Brian Richardson

7-7:05pm: Introductions

7:05 – 7:15pm / Public Comment

Lori Trieger introduced herself. She served as a former WCC Co-chair, and current Whiteaker County Commissioner.

Adora McDougal: Emergency Response and Recovery unit with 3 counties. Doing outreach for spots in which to do testing. Grant is geared towards marginalized community members. Also developing a resource list for unhouse community members. Working on collaborating with current individuals working with the unhoused in W/J.

Duncan Rhodes: Jefferson/Westside neighborhood. The J/W neighborhood would like to promote medium density housing along 6th/7th. Right now it’s zoned community commercial. If

we could get the areas rezoned we hope the city could build housing. Would like WCC help. Has EPD managed to gain any ground on response time, and response to illegal camping?

Chance: What can EPD do about the problems in W/J park. Our vehicles are broken into constantly, we've had to replace tires, items from the back of our vehicles. I agree that it would not be a bad idea to organize a nonviolent community watch. Bill, let's talk about this.

Bill Robohm: Is there anything in effect as far as a neighborhood watch?

Sheryl Balthrop, Eugene Mission: There are spaces available in the rescue center. Have invited people from W/J, but having difficulty getting people that want to take that step.

Sam Hahn: I have a business at 2nd and Taylor, and about half of the new staff is from Eugene.

7:15 – 7:25pm / WCC COVID-19 response

WCC at-large board member Margaret Steinbrunn / “All 4 One, One 4 All” - Procurement

WCC at-large board member Anand Holtham-Keeley / “All 4 One, One 4 All” – Communications

WCC Secretary Angie Byers / “All 4 One, One 4 All” - Distribution

WCC at-large board member Ian Winbrock / WCAT & City of Eugene Homeless Resource Center

Vaccine: We need help in running a vaccine clinic this Friday, 3/12.

WCC Chair Christopher Gadsby / Sanitary Housing: Ideally, there would be no sweeps, and laundry, shower and toileting facilities would be available. Would like to use the resource center to use it as a jumping off point to make a dent in the housing challenge.

7:25 – 7:45pm / WCC COVID-19 response next steps Q & A

Facilitated by WCC Chair Christopher Gadsby

Eli: Thanks to Ian and Walgreens for his space being used for vaccinating. I'm grateful for being able to use the property in such a great way.

Chance: What more can we do to make our community more up and coming?

7:45 – 8:25pm / Conversation with EPD Chief Skinner: Whiteaker public safety for everyone

City of Eugene Police Chief Chris Skinner

Facilitated by WCC Chair Christopher Gadsby

1. Currently, we are embarking on the process of reimagining how public safety works. There is an ad hoc committee that is digging into individual policies to make recommendations. 21st Century Policing, Campaign 0, and 8 Can't Wait lens. This will culminate in a report that will be available to the council in April. I anticipate there will be goals that will either be easy and short term to meet, will require a longer time commitment with requiring hiring or systems changes, or will result in legislation changes that will take the longest.
2. Concurrently at the state level, the legislature is working to overhaul policing. There are over 300 bills being tracked that have to do with policing. It appears that state and local information will be available around the same time.
3. January 1st, the city of Eugene began collecting payroll tax, will use a metric to shape the Community Safety Initiative. This will allow more metrics to uncover what marginalized community members need. This is unlike anything happening in Oregon, and will be transformation for our community. This revenue will be used to do really special things.
4. EPD is in the middle of budget season. We are looking at how we're going to make up lost revenue in the general fund. A large portion of our funding (parking fund down 90+%) has decreased during Covid-19, which has reduced the services we can provide. EPD has to cut 1.7million dollars in their budget.

WCC comes to the table with solutions, and doesn't only point out the problems. I appreciate that of this group.

Questions:

Jennifer Hoover: The campers that park in front of a home that are disruptive without regard for Covid expectations. *Chief:* Whiteaker and West Eugene are both similarly affected. There is a disconnect between city ordinances and CDC recommendations for not moving. Moved away from partnership with SVD, which was underperforming. Parking officers are working with campers to increase cleanliness standards. The city is working for tent camping, emergency shelters, and car camping spaces. There are park hosts employed by the city to keep distancing, keeping cleanliness, etc...

Duncan Rhodes: Has EPD managed to gain ground on response time since they don't respond to illegal camping? *Chief Skinner:* EPD has pulled back from illegal camping enforcement. It is my desire to stay out of illegal camping enforcement unless it's a legal and safety issue. I'm not sure the exact information, as I'd have to look that up, regarding response time.

Dave McNeer: I'd like to know what p-checks are, and if police are to bang on everyone's door. *Chief Skinner:* My guess is that code is a generic code, and I'm not sure what exactly it's in reference to. If it's not a crime in progress, or a safety issue, there is interest in creating a broader team to respond to those calls. We want to get someone that is not a police officer, but an official that can gain compliance or reduce behavior. I think you'll see EPD sworn staff, uniform and car, will become more laser-focused on what they respond to. The need is not always necessarily a cop responding, but someone that can actually do something about non-emergency, non-safety issues.

Sigh O'Nara: What is the best-case scenario for Eugene funding with the relief bill that just passed? Back to usual funding level? A bump in funding above the usual level for our short-term pandemic? *Chief Skinner:* The first thing to do is to pay the bills, such as lost revenue/truing our budget to 2020. The piece we don't know are the rules to spending the money. We know it'll be for lost revenue and for pandemic-related stuff. There may be space for creative uses. We've learned in W/J that people do well with management instead of a free-for-all. Let's get the services back, and what levels of creativity can we do around the pandemic, homeless, mental health, substance abuse. I can't drive crime down unless I can get people stabilized. We have people that are in survival behaviors.

Sam Hahn: I'm curious about what kind of cooperation you're getting from the county, such as use of the fairgrounds. *Chief Skinner:* We've seen more interconnectedness and collaboration with the county this year. In most counties, mental health services typically resides with the county. We're in a unique situation due to our size and number of people that need access, so we

get more involved than a lot of municipalities. Sorah Johnson implements the TAC report, and is a good liaison b/w the city and county. We're struggling with lack of finances, infrastructure, and pandemic. *Hahn*: How about the fairgrounds? *Chief Skinner*: There has been a lot of discussion around using the parking lot.

Councilperson Claire Syrett: (in chat) City and county staff are currently meeting to plan for where the folks camping in WJ can go when we are out from under the pandemic restrictions.

Commissioner Laurie Trieger: The county is working on setting up a microsite pallet site to house 6, and may be hosting a car camping area. When we are actively running the vaccination clinic, upwards of 4000 people, we need all of the entry and egress to run the clinic. We cannot do anything within the fences perimeter that are not county, but business property. We were able to secure 1 acre at the NW end to be developed into permanent supportive housing: "The Keystone" by Homes for Good with 15 units for housing families with children. There's a well there that is part of disaster planning as well, but it serves the community. We are working with Jeff Westside and Friendly neighbors.

Ian Winbrock: Please share the vaccine link far and wide. What opportunities do you see for EPD and WCC to work together to receive recovery funding? *Chief Skinner*: I think about how EPD can be more interconnected with neighborhoods. We're building a police department to be more responsive to neighborhood needs. Our core mission is to answer those 911 calls. My hope is through the Community Safety Initiative is to start anchoring individuals to certain neighbors. They could be community services officers, not necessarily police officers.

WCC at Large Member Dilenia Cardona: My question is for businesses in the area. Panic buttons are pressed, and police do not show up. In Tampa, they will have off-duty sheriff's dept to fill in gaps. Are you looking into anything like that? *Chief Skinner*: There is a mutual-aid agreement with the sheriff's department, though they only have about 3 sheriffs on a day in the entire county. That will probably not happen in Lane County. The piece that we will try to do is to adjust staffing levels to match the call volume, and do good analytics to staff. The need has outpaced the supply. Specifically to the panic button question, we get disregarded a lot on those panic calls. *Cardona*: Local employees say that the calls are warranted, and disregarded by the panic button.

WCC at Large Member Dan Grau: What are your thoughts on a social worker/mental health worker being assigned to patrols? Are officers trained in mental health crisis interventions? I have seen this utilized effectively in other cities. *Skinner*: There is a baseline of training for

officers around mental health issues and crises intervention training in an attempt to diffuse those situations. Many jurisdictions have MHP's sitting in the passenger seat with officers, and are primary responders to mental health calls. We rely on our behavioral health first responders, CAHOOTS, so I've been focusing on expanding the footprint of CAHOOTS and increasing the wage for longevity. We've been working on professionalizing CAHOOTS, and increasing the budget. I'd like to elevate them and grow their capacity.

Chance: What would you feel about a WCC night patrol/public patrol? Would that be something you would endorse? *Skinner:* There are some really successful models, but it's not one of those things you throw together. You have interesting problems in the Whiteaker that could get dangerous quickly. It is helpful to look at models such as Citizens on Patrol, which we use with our volunteers. Our volunteers patrol the bike paths in this model. I would want to be thoughtful about how we do that, about I've seen it work in other communities.

8:25 – 8:55pm / Parks and Open Spaces Department: Washington Jefferson camp management

City of Eugene Public Works Department Public Affairs Manager Brian Richardson

City of Eugene Parks and Open Spaces Marketing and Outreach Manager Kelley Shadwick

Facilitated by WCC Chair Christopher Gadsby

City of Eugene Public Works Manager Brian Richardson: We have shifted our model into how we respond to the unhoused community. When Covid started to surge in the fall, we shifted our model into getting camps into compliance. We set up criteria for these camps to stay in place. 3 areas of focus for compliance: Parks, Right of Way (edge of sidewalk to edge of sidewalk), car camping. Our goal has been to see compliance, and those at W/J have been able to comply.

City of Eugene Parks and Open Space Marketing and Outreach Manager Kelly Shadwick: Community Engagement Manager. I am the manager of W/J right now. We have about 176 campers, and two camp hosts. We are working very hard to help people to comply. It's owned by ODOT, and allows people to stay in place for 10-19 days. We have a lot of services being delivered, as well as close to other services. We are doing our best to keep it healthy and safe for those that are living there. We need to create more space right now, as some are clustered. We understand this is not a long-term site for people to live. My current job is to make it work as best as I can. Our park hosts, Ian and Allen, remind people of the rules, connect them with social services, and appear to be happy with their work.

Questions:

WCC at Large Board Member Margaret Steinbrunn: How many parks are they sending too? What is the max capacity to maintain social distancing in the park? *Shadwick:* We want tents 12ft apart, but will allow family units to pod together. We are having problems with individual belongings taking up more space. We are working with them to pare down.

WCC Chairperson Chris Gadsby: Do you foresee this park being used in the future for housing? *Shadwick:* Because it's ODOT property, there are additional regulations. I'm not sure what the situation after COVID will look like.

Jeff Althouse: What other parks are housing folks? I'm impressed with how great and clean the park looks. I'm glad we have space for our unhoused neighbors. I believe we have to look back at the economic cycle and revenue. We have a great space where services can be delivered in a more centralized way. Producing tax payers is an important part of the cycle, and will allow people to climb up out of the situation they are in. I hope W/J park is a step along the way towards stability. *Shadwick:* Skinner Butte park has some that are staying in compliance.

Councilperson Clair Syrett: I wanted to offer that, while I do appreciate the need to find safe places to be (expanding rest stop programs, and other ways to) I did send a message to Public Works regarding W/J as a particulars station. Are there parks designated as a metro park in addition to W/J? *Shadwick:* It just started happening in W/J due to location and services. *Syrett:* That just happened versus was planned is my point. The communication I sent stated that this park is a neighborhood park surrounded by residents and businesses. It is not like Alton Baker with a river on one side and a large road on the other. This is a low-middle income neighborhood that was split by the 105 bridge, and is now being treated inequitably again through having Whiteaker take on the brunt of housing unhoused individuals.

WCC at Large Board Member Ian Winbrock: We are the poorest neighborhood, and we have been historically marginalized. We were not consulted about the homeless resource center, the W/J unhoused park, and the rest stop. We are a solutions oriented organization. There has been an historic ask for forgiveness versus permission. We have a model, sanitary housing, and we just need permission. I am asking that the city work with us. Our housed and unhoused neighbors are being forced into something untenable.

WCC Chairperson Chris Gadsby: We need to be brought to the table, and we are willing to work with anyone.

WCC AT Large Board Member Anand Holtham-Keathley: Eventually the CDC will stop recommending shelter in place is lifted. What's the plan when that happens? We need housing before that happens. Are there any other parks that have cover? What else can we do that can provide cover? *Brian Richardson:* The criteria that we've set up, as I don't tell people where to go, the cover is ideal. The criteria is temporary. I don't know long-term solutions. As the pandemic continues to evolve, we'll evolve with it. People are camping successfully around the city. *Shadwick:* Camping predominantly takes place in our lowest income neighborhoods.

Sheryl Balthrop: I second Ian and Counselor Syrett's comments. What's happening to them long-term? What happens when the resources stop? Is there any way out, wraparound services, transformational pieces. We are hearing folks coming into the area that say there is no information about what happens next. We need a much broader picture about what's next. We don't want W/J to turn into skid row. *Richardson:* We are trying to work together to set up the things that work, microsites, car camp, information from the TAC report. It's a conversation that we have with services providers.

Sam Hahn: Brian, you didn't answer Anand's question. What is the plan when the CDC revisions restrictions? *Richardson:* Homeless policy team is actively looking for new sites. I and the city do not have a plan in this moment.

WCC Treasurer Katie Guske: We cannot just send people away at the end of this pandemic.

Sigh O'Nara: Wasn't sure what "TAC" was. In case anyone else curious:

https://lanecounty.org/government/county_departments/health_and_human_services/human_services_division/public_shelter_feasibility_study

Mayor Vinis: The city council has a work session in April where staff will present essential data on services, camp sites, costs, etc... We're all realizing that where we are now is not sustainable, and that we have to transition post-Covid. We are looking at more investment in outreach both from public safety and social work. We are looking to work better with our providers, including the grassroots efforts. How do we marshal all of the experience gained in this pandemic. Are

there policies the county should consider adjusting? Finding sites has not been easy, but it is interesting looking at the W/J camp vs. Chambers and 13th.

Sam Hahn: I cannot accept the ‘we’ll figure it out’. It’s inevitable that this will get worse, so we cannot hide behind “Covid” for getting solutions. Years ago we were faced with similar issues, and there was a level of statu quo that was generating compassion fatigue. You have a partner that is different than those in the past with the WCC. You should engage them.

Councilperson Claire Syrett: (in chat) Regarding the question of what will happen after Covid restrictions are lifted city and county staff are meeting to try and figure that out now - looking for other places for these people to be.

City of Eugene Parks and Open Spaces Marketing and Outreach Manager Kelly Shadwick: (in chat)I would suggest inviting Peter Chavanne or someone from the City Manager's office to this meeting when talking about homelessness.

8:55 – 9:00pm / Future agenda topics

WCC Chair Christopher Gadsby

Share the vaccination survey for those that meet the criteria.

No more sweeps, the county and the city need to communicate more, and bring issues to us instead of asking for forgiveness. Everyone deserves the compassion we have for them.