

## **Eugene Mayor's Youth Advisory Council Annual Report 2020-2021**

### Background

The Eugene Youth Advisory Council (EYAC) was created by Mayor Lucy Vinis in late 2020. Modeled after similar groups in Oregon and across the country, her intention was to create a mechanism for youth voices and perspectives to influence policy at the City of Eugene. In September 2020, staff in the City Manager's Office developed an application process and publicized the opportunity to local schools and other youth groups in the community. Applicants were required to be of high school age and attending school in Eugene to qualify. Far more applications were received than the 20 initial slots created, so staff and the Mayor worked to narrow the applicants to a group that reflected the diversity of the community on criteria including which school they attended, age, gender, ethnicity and life experience. The group convened for the first time in December 2020 and has been meeting virtually on a monthly basis since then.

### Governance/bylaw creation

We recently passed our bylaws. To write the bylaws, we created a Governance subcommittee which met weekly over the course of a few months (11 times in total). Through this process we met with and interviewed Youth Advisory Council members from other cities and consulted the bylaws of these groups and of City of Eugene committees.

Our mission is to provide service to Eugene and to narrow the divide between our youth and the local government while providing a voice for the youth. EYAC meets monthly with the Mayor, but we also hold subcommittee meetings more regularly. Our members can serve for the entirety of their high school careers, although this isn't required. Following the recommendations from other YACs, we have elected officers who help lead and run our council. EYAC is led by two Co-Chairs who help guide our meetings and organize our work. We also have a Secretary and a Community Ambassador. Officer terms last one year.

### Summary of issues important to the group

The issues of interest to our group include homelessness, youth engagement with government, racial equity, youth substance abuse, and education. We have discussed why we believe these are important, as well as what we wish to do about them.

Homelessness was easily the most common issue brought up. We want to focus on the issue as a whole, but also want to create projects specifically for helping homeless youth. We discussed ideas including creating more homeless shelters and designated campsites, as well as what COVID testing should look like within shelters. Homelessness is a giant, complex problem, especially in Eugene, which is why we are dedicated to help fix the problem, however possible.

Youth substance abuse was another topic that we talked in-depth about. Some of the more concrete ideas that we thought of are creating needle deposit sites and safe disposal sites for prescription drugs. We also wanted to create seminars through the Eugene Public Library to help educate people about substance abuse. We'd also like to create mental health resources specifically about substance abuse for youth, but this would require a lot of planning.

With racial equity, we had fewer concrete ideas. We know that we want to talk to various BIPOC Student Unions in Eugene to get ideas from more people who live with the issue. However, we know that we do want to look into educating people about the history and current context of racism in Eugene and Oregon as a whole.

Whatever we do about education and schooling in Eugene will likely be harder to accomplish as most issues, such as mental resources for students in schools, would need to go through the school district, not the City of Eugene. However, we can provide resources for families in need that relate directly to education. We also could create mental health resources outside of schools.

### Looking Ahead

EYAC also has some important upcoming projects and dates. We are going to be holding our first officer elections soon. With a few members graduating and moving on, we will be refilling these vacancies within the next few months. We are also planning to organize a group-wide volunteer project in the coming months to get to know our members better and do hands-on service in the community.

In the 2021/2022 term, we plan to focus both on service and working with our areas of interest, as outlined above. Following our interest in voicing the concerns of Eugene's youth, our Community Ambassador will be creating a virtual "suggestion box" where our peers can bring up concerns and ideas for projects. Other potential future projects include making a civic engagement opportunities document. This would be a list of the existing opportunities to participate within government (local, state, national) for Eugene youth. Many members of EYAC are passionate about government, but face the simple logistical problem of not being able to find many opportunities to get involved. Another future plan is to bring on leaders of local service efforts, members of local non-profits, and local government officials to interview them about the issues in our community and ways we can help.

### Attachments

- EYAC Member List
- EYAC Bylaws