



## League of Women Voters of Lane County

“Sunshine” or openness in government refers to access to public records and meetings. Regardless of what label an access law is given—“sunshine,” freedom of information, or transparency—the premise is that everyday people have the right to know what actions their government is taking.<sup>1</sup>

The ☀️ Sunshine Report from the LWVLC Observer Corps:

### **Lane County Board of Commissioners**

**Feb. 25, 2025:** During the Public Comment period of the **Board of County Commissioners** meeting, almost every comment focused on the request that the Commissioners make a formal statement of affirmation of Oregon’s Sanctuary policy for immigrants, and specific inclusion of trans/nonbinary/gender expansive people in the County policies of non-discrimination or diversity, equity and inclusion.

In spite of standing room only attendance and a comment by the Chair that this was the largest attendance he had ever seen at a Commission meeting, there was no subsequent Commissioner comment/response period.

☀️ **Reported by: Nancy Buffum**

**March 11, 2025:** Under future action the **Board of County Commissioners** discussed sanctuary for immigrants and equity in county practices. Staff offered to craft a statement (equivalent to a ‘resolution’ in other jurisdictions) to commit to laws and statutes that already exist.

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<sup>1</sup> [LWV Observing Your Government in Action](#)

**Public Comments** included concerns about

- rights of LGBTQ+ individuals;
- Christians and their rights;
- the County's sanctuary status for immigrants; and
- a request to support the McKenzie River area through the Rural Tourism Marketing Program (RTMP).

☀️ **Reported by: Judy Leahy**

**March 18, 2025:** Discussion during the Public Comment period of the **Board of County Commissioners** meeting included:

**The timing of Commissioners' response to public comments.** Commissioners normally made their response to public comments right after the public comment period ended while most speakers were still in the room. However, the agenda for the March 18th meetings moved Board comments to the afternoon meeting. Commissioner Trieger moved to have the Board respond immediately following public comments to allow speakers to hear from the Board without having to sit through unrelated discussions or return later in the day. The motion failed 3 to 2.

Subsequently, speakers spoke angrily about having to spend hours listening to commissioner business in order to hear their responses. [Note: I listened to the commissioners' responses in the afternoon. It was unfortunate that the speakers were unable to hear the responses because they were in general very thoughtful.]

Public comments were primarily focused on **local access roads in the River Road area, trans healthcare rights, and EWEB bills**. Local access roads (LARs) are not maintained by the city or the county so they become the responsibility of the homeowner. Speakers were asking for the roads to become the responsibility of either the city or county. Speakers concerned with trans health care rights were emphasizing that bodily autonomy for trans people was similar to the need for bodily autonomy for cisgender<sup>2</sup> women, for example. Concerns were expressed about estimation of bills by EWEB which were followed by excessively high bills as well as the unresponsiveness of EWEB to these concerns.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.healthline.com/health/cisgender-vs-straight> Cisgender is a term used to describe gender identity. As you grow up and learn about the **concept of gender**, you might **identify** as the gender you were assigned at birth or you might not. If you do identify with that gender, you're **cisgender**, or "cis."

Commissioners also discussed the **\$6M grant from Housing and Urban Development (HUD)** focusing on providing services for our homeless populations. Lane County has recently been among the first counties to receive HUD funding. The most recent grant was approved but is now frozen (only discovered when going into the grant portal). There is no information about when/if the funding will be released.

In a similar vein, HUD had approved a \$422,286,000 Community Development Block Grant – Disaster Recovery Funds to support statewide recovery from the 2020 Labor Day Fires to Oregon Housing and Community Services (OHCS). Lane County was to receive \$17.5M to help provide affordable housing options for renters who were displaced by the Holiday Farm Fire. If accepted, this funding will be used to develop rental housing and homeownership opportunities for low to moderate income wildfire survivors.

County staff asked for acceptance of this grant and recommended asking OHCS for cash advances rather than reimbursement for expenditures since the federal funding situation or getting a guarantee of reimbursement for expenses from OHCS is uncertain.

### **Action**

The Board accepted the agreement from HUD funding support for the homeless and the block grant for Labor Day & Holiday Fire recovery but were very cautious about the expenditure of those funds.

### **Future Action**

Commissioners spoke of holding work sessions to get additional information on local access roads and on trans health issues.

☀️ **Reported by: Nancy Mills**

**April 1, 2025:** During the Public Comment period of the **Board of County Commissioners** meeting, there were three items worthy of note; (1) there was **no Comments or Remonstrance** on the agenda directly following the Public Comment period. Commissioner Trieger requested that item #10, Commissioner Business: Comments and Remonstrance be moved to item #6 so as to immediately follow the Public Comment period. This was voted down 3-1, with Commissioner Buch absent. During Agenda item #10 which took place in the afternoon session (viewed on webcast), Commissioner Farr stated that he opposed the earlier proposal because he believed it would be impossible to address all comments, and did not want to single out some comments for response and ignore others.

Public Comments addressed **remarks made online by Chairman Loveall**. Several speakers addressed the Chair directly regarding a statement he made online about one or more LGBTQ+ constituents who made public comments at previous meetings. At issue is the request by organizations and individuals that the Commissioners make a formal statement affirming their support for the LGBTQ+ community in the face of anti-trans rhetoric and threats from the federal administration. Speakers and others in attendance wore t-shirts bearing the quote from Commissioner Loveall on social media calling commenters "**god skewed and gender confused**".

In the afternoon session, Commissioners discussed the merit and feasibility of creating a new citizens' committee, a three-person **Land Management Audit Committee**. The matter was referred to staff to answer numerous questions.

Of the **Public Comments** made (34 or 35), all but three were centered on these two requests (1) that the County commissioners **defend healthcare for Trans individuals**. In essence to defend gender affirming care, and all other health care; and (2) that commissioners continue to **abide by the state of Oregon's Sanctuary Laws** when that topic comes to them for a vote. In their comments, person after person relayed the overall message that "When one of us is attacked, we are all attacked. Attacks on the marginalized are attacks on all of us. Protect the rights of all citizens, and of all individuals who reside in our country."

**Action Taken:** A contract was passed to St. Vincent DePaul Society to go forward with a "**Dusk to Dawn**" shelter on the same side of Hwy 99 as the current Service Station, thereby allowing overnight housing at virtually the same location as the daytime service area; and authorization for the County Administrator to sign agreements with the Eugene School District, the Bethel School District, and the City of Eugene to establish the **West Eugene Enterprise Zone School Support Fee Rate of 15%**, in accordance with state law. (Apparently, this Enterprise Zone has been very successful, bringing in several billion dollars to the community. Two popular breweries are part of this Zone).

**Action for the Future:** Staff hope to have the sanctuary wording prepared for the Commissioners to approve by April 22nd and the Public Safety Funding Task Force,

having worked on the issue for a year, hopes to bring a report to the Commissioners in May.

☀️ **Reported by: Nancy Buffum and Judy Leahy**

## **Eugene School District 4j**

**April 2, 2025:** In a special session, **Eugene 4J School District Board** unanimously approved the **hiring of Dr. Miriam Mickelson as Superintendent for 4J School District** and authorizing Judy Newman to negotiate with Dr. Mickelson on behalf of the Board. Delegating negotiation authority to Judy Newman will allow negotiations to move forward quickly, unencumbered by public meeting requirements that would apply if there were two or more Board members assigned, which would then be considered a sub-committee of the Board.

☀️ **Reported by: Lenice Shaw**

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The Observer Corps is a group of LWVLC members who pledge to regularly attend government meetings and report back to the Lane County League. We have Observers at the County Commissioners meetings, Eugene City Council, Eugene 4J School District, Springfield School District, and Lane Transit District. To keep you informed, we will distribute their reports by email once a month. This is the second set of monthly reports. When topics arise that require action or attendance by a larger number of us, LWVLC will send out an email "Call for Action".

If you are interested in joining the Observer Corps, please contact Terry Parker, Advocacy Chair ([action@lwvlc.com](mailto:action@lwvlc.com)) or Beatrice McKenzie ([beatricem@lwvlc.org](mailto:beatricem@lwvlc.org)). We hope to recruit one or two members for each government group. You can attend a meeting first before you pledge to go regularly.