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“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.¹

The 🌞 Sunshine Report from the LWVLC Observer Corps:

Lane County Board of Commissioners

June 24, 2025: Commissioners unanimously voted to adopt the 2025-26 Lane County Budget. After a presentation and discussion of the 2025-27 Strategic Plan, it was also unanimously adopted.

All four speakers during the Public Comment addressed the issue of **Local Access Roads** in the River Road area, specifically asking Lane County government to pay for their maintenance and repairs.

[Our Observer noticed that “Transportation” was left off a list of three goals in the areas of focus for 2025-27. Whereas buildings, transportation, and information technology systems were named in the strategic plan, only two objectives followed: building infrastructure and cybersecurity & information technology. The Observer wondered whether it was inadvertently omitted or purposefully removed by the Commissioners.]

University of Oregon recognized Lane County with the Outstanding Community Partner Award for working with professors and students in the Planning, Public Policy and Management program’s Policy Lab. The lab offers hands-on experience to students in real world policy research and practical skills and insights into public administration and community issues. During the presentation it was noted that while other states have similar university programs linked with cities, UO’s is the only program known to pair university students with a county.

¹ [LWV Observing Your Government in Action](#)

Finally, of interest, it was announced that former Commissioner Rob Handy passed away on May 19, 2025.

July 8, 2025: At their afternoon session, Commissioners discussed whether to **extend the contract for River Road Navigation Center and postponed the decision until July 22**. The contract to staff the center expired June 30, 2025, and staff are concerned they may not be paid.

The Navigation Center is a shelter that serves individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness. Neighboring businesses and some residential neighbors who oppose continuing the Center cite an increase of unhoused or transient people and negative behaviors. Discussion followed on the need to educate the public and to work more closely with Lane Transit District and Eugene Police Department on areas outside of the Center's control. Although problems outside the Center and necessary action to alleviate them are unrelated to the approval of the contract itself, Commissioners agreed to commit to neighborhood education and increased jurisdictional and interagency cooperation and to postpone their decision until July 22 to give **Commissioner Ceniga, in particular, the opportunity to respond to constituents** in his district with evidence that the Navigation Center is achieving its goals. City HHS Director Eve Gray expressed her confidence that the contract would ultimately be approved, allaying the fears of staff working at the site who are working without a contract. Commissioner Loveall posited that the significant uptick in complaints around the Center haven't arisen because of the Center or the Railroad breaking up a major encampment in 2024, but are due to problems of absentee owners not taking responsibility for commercial property; to 2024 generally being a year in which businesses suffered economically; and to an increase in the number of homeless people (which is a citywide, statewide, and nationwide phenomenon).

In the Public Comments in the morning session, three employees and one neighborhood resident spoke in favor of continuing the Navigation Center contract.

Commissioners voted 5-0 to adopt Lane County FY25-26 to FY29-30 Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). Goals and needs are identified; budget or funding sources are not always attached. 71% of CIP funding is for the first year. Proposed appropriations for Roads and Bridges makes up half the budget, followed by Solid Waste, Facilities, and Parks. Laura St. in Springfield and Gilham Rd. in Eugene will receive jurisdictional transfer to the cities. The Commissioners also unanimously approved a contract with St. Vincent de Paul Society for medical respite housing for unhoused people upon their release from hospital care.

Public Works presented a First Reading to adopt new provisions related to the July 1, 2025, [Oregon Recycling Modernization Act](#) and accept funding toward organizing recycling system expansion countywide.

 **Reported by: Judy Leahy and Nancy Boffum**

Springfield City Council

June 23, 2025: Springfield City Council voted unanimously to send a **proposed increased fire levy** to the voters in November. Because the existing Fire and Life Safety Special Operating Levy, currently at \$0.38 per thousand, is not adequate to cover the cost of operating an engine crew at Station #3, the Springfield City Council had directed staff to pursue a full-cost recovery option. The **proposed rate of \$0.53 per thousand dollars** of assessed value of a home is designed to fully fund the engine crew and associated needs. Using Lane County's 2024-25 tax records, the median assessed value of a single-family home in Springfield is \$189,000. At the proposed levy rate, a household with this assessed value would pay approximately \$100 per year for fire and safety services.

June 30, 2025: Councillors discussed recent recommendations by the Fiscal Stability Task Force to address a budget shortfall. They were asked to address which recommendations they were interested in pursuing and in what relative priority. **Payroll tax (with guardrails) and library levy will be brought back for discussion in Fall** when the Council reconvenes. The public is encouraged to offer feedback on task force recommendations.

Among points in the discussion:

After having heard from many citizens, Councillor Kori Rodley does not wish to cut library hours. She is interested in hearing more about a library levy and is open to a payroll tax.

Councillor Alan Stout is opposed to a payroll tax unless the funds go to stabilizing the Fire Department. His priority is safety above anything else, although he recognizes the great value of the library. He asked about the options for fire governance, including an independent fire district (separating from Eugene).

Councillor Victoria Doyle opposes a payroll tax to fund the library since she talks to many people who never use it. She supports removing the library from the general fund. If the library were eliminated from the general fund, the \$2.3 million dollars saved almost completely eliminates the fiscal stability issues.

Mayor Sean VanGordon requested a focus on the issue of taxes. The goal is to stabilize revenue: Is an increase in the payroll tax the way to go or is there another option?

Councillor Beth Blackwell said she did not see the city meeting budget goals without the payroll tax, but she called for good parameters around the tax, limiting future increases.

Councillor Michelle Webber said she thinks the city needs a payroll tax. She is open to a library levy, too, but feels the voters will soon tire of levies. Public safety is her number one concern.

City Manager Nancy Newton noted that the Springfield Fire Department is consolidated with the Eugene Fire District and the city was waiting for Eugene to settle on its budget and service fees. Now that that has happened, Springfield is looking at the implications, including whether the two fire districts will split. It would only make sense if there was a great savings in cost for Springfield. She noted she has not yet discussed with the

firefighters' union leadership about desires for an independent fire district. Regarding Councillor Doyle's idea to remove the library from the General Fund, Newton noted that the task force had discussed that option, but they backed away from it because it did not solve the problem of the long-term structural imbalance in providing city services. She said that a benefit of a payroll tax is that it could (if the voters desired) increase over time whereas the property tax structure is broken and cannot.

Councillor Doyle said that she works in Eugene and so she pays the Eugene payroll tax. While it is minimal to the individual, she is concerned about its impact on businesses, which will have to pay the tax for every single employee. She said the Council would need to communicate clearly what people and businesses would be getting back from a payroll tax. Doyle and others discussed guardrails to ensure that a payroll tax would not be adjusted every few years. Stout noted that the payroll tax has a surprising amount of support from industries.

☀️ **Reported by: Callee Ackland**

Eugene Water & Electricity Board

June 23, 2025: The Board unanimously passed Resolution 2514 Restricting the Use of EWEB Billing and Collections. This resolution followed one from last month that rejected until June 30, 2029, the use of EWEB Billing and Collection Services for electricity, drinking water, and/or services required by City Charter or applicable law. Both resolutions are apparently related to the City of Eugene's plan to add an 18% hike in the stormwater fee beginning in August, 2025. The rationale for Resolution 2514 follows:

- Billing and collection of a non-utility fee would require a separate collection system and process to exclude the fee from the utility disconnection process for non-payment.
- Non-utility billing and collection would require significant IT and financial resources.
- Taking on a new fee would adversely affect the upgrading and modernization of the customer service and IT that EWEB is in the process of implementing over the next 4 years.

EWEB Management asked for Board permission to build a **2026 budget using the assumption that electric funding will increase by 3.5% and water by 6%.** Although a watershed recovery fee will end in 2026, the fact that a large fee hike is projected for 2027 (15% water, 5.5% electric) may make an additional hike for watershed recovery unpalatable.

☀️ **Reported by: Jennifer Lippert**

Lane Community College Board of Education

June 4, 2025: The main agenda items of the meeting were the discussion and approval of the 2025-26 General Fund budget, including a public hearing, approval of a positive evaluation of President Stephanie Bulger, and approval of resolutions to correct certain accounting procedures identified in the FY 2024 Audit by an outside accounting firm. The Board approved a General Fund budget of \$108.1 million, a 14% increase from 2023-24, on a 5-1 vote.

Students and faculty spoke up at the public hearing on the budget proposal and its **\$675,000 reduction in funding from the Student Programs and Services budget while increasing funds for new administrative positions.** Although it was not on the agenda, several speakers questioned the recent decision to cancel the stand-alone LPN program. The program is very popular and graduates fill a great need in the community. In the later budget discussion, LCC President Stephanie Bulger clarified that the **LPN program “pause”** is not a budget issue, but rather a result of program changes within the nursing curriculum. LPN faculty will be retained for an expansion of the nursing program, which will allow certification of LPNs as part of the RN program.

[Our Observer noted that LCC and UO have recently signed an agreement allowing students who plan to transfer to UO to have dual enrollment at the institutions, which gives them access to advisors at both institutions to facilitate the transfer of credits to UO. Apparently, this has been a significant challenge for transfer students. UO simply won't accept some general credits. The agreement is based on a similar arrangement between Linn Benton Community College and OSU.]

July 2, 2025: Newly-elected Lane Community College Board of Education Members, Jerry Rust, Jesse Maldonado, and Amelia Hampton (Student Representative, Non-voting), were welcomed and sworn in. They join returning Board Members Kevin Alltucker, Austin Fohnagy, Steve Mital, Zachary Mulholland, and Julie Weisman. The Board elected Austin Fohnagy as Chair and Jerry Rust as Vice Chair for the 2025-26 school year. The Board heard a 2025 Progress Report on Strategic Planning Goals. Most notable were a consistent increase in enrollment in the past nine terms including, for AY22 to 24, an increase for all demographic groups except International & Pacific Islander.

 **Reported by: Anne Delaney**

Springfield Public Schools

June 23, 2025: In a special meeting, the Springfield School Board heard overviews and data about two reading programs and a data literacy curriculum. Principals from Douglas Gardens Elementary, Maple Elementary, and Riverbend Elementary detailed the use of Wonders and Magnetic Reading Foundations at their schools. Scores from the beginning and end of the school year showed great improvement in reading proficiency. Megan Knight, principal at Riverbend, also presented on the math curriculum used there.

The number of high school graduates at Springfield high schools has improved over last year. At Springfield HS, 214 graduated (86%, up from 74.2% in 2024); at A-3 HS, 50 graduated (100%); at Thurston HS, 219 graduated (91%); and at Gateways HS, 55 graduated (62%). For the latter, when adding the number of GEDs earned, the rate rose to 74%.

July 1, 2025: Newly-elected Springfield School Board Members Heather Quaas-Annsa, Jonathan Light, and Amber Langworthy, were welcomed and sworn in for their four-year terms by Superintendent of Springfield Schools, Todd Hamilton. They join returning School Board Members Nicole DeGraff and Ken Kohl. The Board elected Jonathan Light as Chair and Ken Kohl as Vice Chair for the 2025-26 school year.

☀️ **Reported by: Kim Weston**

Coburg City Council

July 8, 2025: Dave Roth, of the Lane Transit District (LTD), presented a report to explain why LTD is unlikely to increase the transportation opportunities to and from Coburg and Eugene. Currently there is a single bus early in the morning and another in the evening, with about ten riders to and from Coburg. LTD does have a goal to increase route frequency in general and extend service to new high-density growth areas, but the lack of availability of bus drivers since COVID makes it doubtful that any changes will occur in the near future. LTD is working on a long-term, 20-year plan which requires more community input, additional buses and operators, and financing.

[The Observer found it interesting and informative that LTD started in 1970 with 18 buses and now has a fleet of 113 buses, including 58 hybrids.]

The Coburg City Council will recess in August. The next meeting will be September 9.

☀️ **Reported by: Michele Postal**

Oakridge City Council

June 19, 2025: In a vote of 4-3, the Council passed an **Ambulance Service Utility Fee of \$6 per month** to be added to the water bill beginning July 1, 2025. Although multiple councillors stated concerns that even \$6 a month could be difficult for some residents of Oakridge, Finance Director Melody Cornelius and Councillor Marty Scott said programs exist that can assist people in paying their utility bills. Scott offered to be contacted if citizens need help applying for assistance.

Mayor Cutchen proposed creating a General Fund Stabilization Policy and a General Fund Beginning Balance Reconciliation Policy because of a large deficit and a concern over the unallocated funds in the bank. The Council tabled the proposals after Finance Director Cornelius stated that no new policy is needed until after an ongoing audit is completed in August, 2025, and reviewed.

☀️ Reported by: Leslie Heaton

Lane Council of Governments (LCOG)

June 26, 2025: In their Annual Report, Senior and Disability Services (S&DS) highlighted two major new programs in 2024: Oregon Project Independence-Medicaid and expanded outreach efforts by a Trillium grant. S&DS had 264 volunteers who provided 23,705 service hours in the county, benefitting 4,682 consumers, most of whom have in-home services.

Connect Lane County presented a report about marketing existing/developing travel opportunities in the county, funded by Transient Lodging Tax revenues. Primarily between mid-April and mid-October, visitors spend around \$1 billion dollars annually in the county. The report focused on biking; how to highlight and connect all of the county's biking opportunities.

A presentation updated the Board on LCOG's broadband access. There is a digital divide in the county. The unserved and underserved were mapped. LCOG has partnered with Douglas Fast Net to secure \$8.5 million to serve 1900 households by 2026.

It was reported after a trip to Washington, DC, that federal grants had been suspended by the new administration though they had been previously awarded.

☀️ Reported by: Rhonda Livesay

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. 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) or Beatrice McKenzie (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.