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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

July 22, 2025: Commissioners voted unanimously to award contracts for services to Equitable Social Solutions (ESS) for the River Avenue Navigation Center and to add Sheriff Patrols on Army Corps of Engineers property. They also discussed the increase in road accident fatalities throughout Lane County.

During the Public Comments period, 12 speakers voiced concerns about and/or opposition to the renewal of the contract with ESS for Navigation Center operations at the current North Eugene site, a \$3.9 million contract for one year ([see 7/8/2025 Lane Commissioners work session materials](#)). Very few members of the public had been present to hear Commissioners’ questions and responses from County HHS Director Eve Gray, Homelessness & Community Action Manager James Ewell, and Human Services Division Manager Kate Budd.

Commissioners and staff reiterated that the “Nav Center” has jurisdiction over their own site and its residents only. Issues with public safety outside the shelter and negative behavior of people on nearby streets and private property require cooperation with Eugene Police Department and local businesses and property owners.

Commissioner Buch responded to public comments that ESS is an out-of-state, for-profit entity with a larger budget than other shelter providers in Eugene. HHS does not have an equivalent to the Community Benefits Bidding Protocol for capital construction projects, which might make it possible for local service providers to take on this kind of contract.

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

HHS Director Gray offered to look into these issues and report back at a future work session.

Cooperation between the Lane County Sheriff Department and Army Corps of Engineers will protect nine Army Corps of Engineers project sites in rural Lane County. The County patrol officers will be able to respond to other emergency calls as well. Commissioners applauded the addition of a patrol person in rural areas.

An investigative team reported that the number of **fatalities and serious injury in automotive vehicle crashes** in Lane County has been rising precipitously since 2020. Speeding has increased, as has driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol. Public Works Transportation Planners, headed by Beck Taylor, are focusing on engineering solutions to help reduce vehicle speeds and improving design of high-crash intersections and locations. Staff mentioned that it is difficult to achieve behavior change to reduce DUIs and distracted driving.

[Our Observer noted that Commissioners repeatedly expressed interest in enforcement and signage to change behavior. Staff did not explain that research shows road design, not signage, determines vehicle speeds. Enforcement is not within Public Works' jurisdiction.]

July 22, 2025: At their afternoon session, Commissioners heard a presentation by HHS Director Eve Gray, who called Family and Child Health Services "the ICU in public health funding." HHS Family and Child Health Services improve outcomes for low income families with children using indicators such as improved child health, school success, decrease in interactions with the legal system, increased income, and decreased use of emergency services. Every \$1 spent on HHS Family and Child Health Services saves \$6.10 in future costs to the county.

Of the families served by HHS:

- 78% experience severe economic hardship
- the median income is \$9,000-\$12,000 per year
- 25% of parents were under age 20 at the time of enrollment
- 90% have a significant mental health concern
- 44% are either unhoused or experiencing housing instability
- 40% are experiencing substance use/misuse challenges

An HHS funding shortfall was caused by a last minute reduction in matching funds in the State of Oregon budget. Staff presented three options for continuation of the program:

1. Provide a one-time funding of \$392,216 to sustain all services and maintain staffing in Family and Child Health.
2. Maintain the full match of \$164,577 to Lane County and require staff cuts of 3-4 FTE and an elimination of services to 30 families.
3. Maintain the current budget, lose some matching funds, cut staff by 7-8 positions and eliminate services for 30% of clientele, up to 100 families.

The HHS Public Health Division recommends option #1. Commissioners directed staff to come back to the Board with information about where County funds would come from (reserves, general fund) for a one-time allocation.

In the afternoon session, Commissioners directed staff to prepare a Work Session on the practicalities of a local preference policy for HHS contracts; to organize a Work Session bringing together a group of shelter/homeless service providers to explore models of care commonalities, best practices and efficiencies; and to include Nav Center reports, containing both data and impact stories, in future quarterly reports to the Board on Shelter & Housing.

Finally, Commissioner Buch reported on a startup meeting and first efforts to make sense of the merged Springfield/Eugene Fire District.

☀️ **Reported by: Nancy Boffum**

Eugene City Council

July 14, 2025: As part of a long term plan to stabilize the city budget, City Manager Sarah Medary proposed creating an ad hoc committee to study the budget and financial information and identify new or expanded revenue sources. City Councillors debated whether the committee should be led by the Council or by the City Manager. Some councillors (Zelenka, Leech, Keating) preferred a Council-led committee and others (Groves, Kashinsky, Evans, and Yeh) voiced support for a City Manager-led committee. Council President Evans spoke of the importance of having a “set of experts” address the City’s budgetary constraints and trusting the City Manager to assemble these experts. Following discussion, the Council voted 7-1, with Councillor Zelenka opposed, for a City Manager-led ad hoc committee.

In a discussion on the repeal of the Ordinance Establishing a Fire Service Fee, councillors debated repealing the referendum versus postponing the repeal. Councillor Zelenka called it “too confusing as a ballot measure” while Councillor Yeh suggested dropping the fight on this and moving on. Councillor Leech noted the expense of a ballot measure. There was general reluctance to postpone the repeal because “it kicks the can down the road.” Following discussion, the Council voted 7-1 (with Councillor Kashinsky opposed) to repeal the Eugene Fire Fee Ordinance. The repeal means the measure will not appear on the November ballot.

At the Public Comments session, more than 40 people addressed the Council about their concern over **Downtown Safety**. Many of them were owners and employees of downtown Eugene businesses who expressed growing concern about their safety and the safety of their clients, patients, and customers due to verbal abuse, physical threats and, in one case, physical assault, made by transients. Among those testifying were Kelly Sutherland, Executive Director of Relief Nursery; Ron Green, President & CEO of Oregon Pacific Bank; representatives of Summit Bank; the Shedd Institute; the Eugene Area Chamber of Commerce; and downtown Eugene workers. The Council also heard testimony from a

12-year-old girl who went to the Hult Center with her family. She said they were verbally harassed in explicit, crude terms by transients and encountered several more transients building fires and throwing glass bottles as they walked down Oak Alley to their car.

Several people expressed concerns about the installation of **Flock cameras**, suggesting that they invade privacy and may capture information beyond images of vehicles and license plates. Some said that this information was accessible by ICE and is “nullifying Eugene’s position as a sanctuary city.” They urged the City Council to have the City remove the cameras and encourage EPD to cooperate as little as possible with ICE.

Other commenters complained about Avelo Airlines’ presence (through December 1) at Eugene Airport. They noted the airline’s ICE-contracted business as well as EPD’s supporting role in local ICE raids and abductions. Some urged that the airline’s presence end sooner than December 1.

Council response was minimal, with Councillor Kashinsky saying she works downtown and understands the safety concerns but that there are “lots of complexities there...it’s not an easy thing to do,” and Councillor Keating praising the 12-year-old’s courage in speaking out.

☀️ **Reported by: Susan Fisher**

Eugene 4J School Board

July 9, 2025: In a special meeting, new and re-elected members (Ericka Thessen, Judy Newman, and Maya Rabasa) of the Eugene School Board took the oath of office for 7/1/25-6/30/29. The Board unanimously elected the previous Vice Chair, Tom Di Liberto, to be Chair and Ericka Thessen to be Vice Chair for the 25-26 School Year. Members also voted to designate Jenny Jonak to continue to be the media contact person regarding the school district’s federal litigation. (Note that Jenny Jonak is an attorney and experienced litigator.)

☀️ **Reported by: Lenice Shaw**

Oakridge City Council

July 17, 2025: By a vote of 6 ayes and 1 abstention, the Council authorized Mayor Cutchen to join an EPA Class Action Lawsuit because of the loss of a \$3.7 million grant for the Willamette Activity Center (WAC). That grant was awarded in 2024 through Lane County and United Way as a Community Change Grant that sought to designate and restructure the WAC building as one of six resiliency hubs in Lane County. Despite Congressional approval, the funding was withdrawn by the Trump Administration. There is no cost involved with this motion.

The Council voted unanimously to accept the lowest bid, \$1.12 million, from WeatherGuard, Inc., to re-roof the WAC. The work was funded by the Oregon legislature.

☀️ Reported by: Leslie Heaton