



Vol. I (9), August 15, 2025

“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

**July 29, 2025:** Commissioners voted 4-1 to authorize the **purchase of property in Springfield** with the intent of developing the **Lane Stabilization Center**. Commissioners had recently heard in an update from the 2025 Legislative Session that the Center was fully funded for \$14.5 million. Although all of the Commissioners agreed the Center is necessary and the location is excellent, the City of Springfield had expressed concern that they were not involved in conversations about the property in their city. For this reason, Commissioner Loveall – who advocated for scheduling meetings with City of Springfield staff and City Council members and putting off the decision until August 26 – ended up voting against adoption of the measure.

During the Public Comments period, a representative of the local NAACP and several others expressed outrage at the Lane County Sheriff’s Mounted Posse regarding an **incident of racial profiling, assault, and civil rights violations** at the Lane County Fair in 2023. A lawsuit against Lane County and the Posse has been filed. Additionally, several speakers were angered by the sale of “Alligator Alcatraz” shirts at the Republican Booth at the Fair. The shirts depict a makeshift immigration detention facility widely criticized for inhumane detention conditions.

At least six individuals, all health care professionals in Lane County, spoke of the need to approve the purchase of land for the Lane Stabilization Center. They emphasized the need for the Center to be built on the property, which is very close to Peace Health’s River Bend Hospital, as quickly as possible.

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

Several individuals spoke for the need for the County to improve the **Legal Lot Verification Process**, including clarifying how to appeal decisions. Staff was prepared to address the issue in its Work Session in the afternoon, though no decisions were to be made.

Our Observer also attended an uplifting update on the **Lane County Deflection Program**, a community-based alternative to jail and prosecution mainly for possession of illegal drugs. [[This program was described by the previous Sheriff when he spoke to LWVLC in March 2024.](#)] Thanks to participation by nine of the eleven law enforcement agencies in the county and inclusion of other county and private resources, the Deflection Program has a success rate of 45%, much better than the 10-15% success rate of people that go through the Criminal Justice System. So far, 210 participants have gone through the program.

**August 12, 2025:** Commissioners approved an extension of the Lease Agreement with **Carry It Forward** (an agency that provides services for the unhoused in Eugene) for the property at 525 N. Highway 99. They also authorized the County Administrator to enter into an intergovernmental agreement to set the community service fee for Sierra Pacific Industries under the Strategic Investment Program.

Lane County Public Works updated Commissioners on the progress in Lane County Parks since the passing of the 2022 park levy ([view background and process details here](#)). The 5-year plan (2023-2028) brings \$31.4 million to improve county parks. The majority of the money so far has been spent on staffing, equipment, security, maintenance projects, and small construction. The following parks have seen improvements: Camp Lane, Orchard Point, and Mount Pisgah. In the near future there will be projects at Armitage Park (dog park and entry), Harbor Vista Campground (new restroom and shower), and the North Jetty parking area in Florence.

Absence of a Public Comments session shortened the meeting.

☀️ **Reported by: Judy Leahy**

## **Eugene 4J School Board**

**August 6, 2025:** Superintendent Dr. Miriam Mickelson discussed Governor Tina Kotek's new **cell phone ban**. The ban prohibits student use of cell phones and electronic devices during the school day. Exceptions exist for students with special needs. The district must have a written policy completed by 10/31/2025. The policy must be fully implemented by 1/1/2026. Dr. Mickelson will convene a policy work group as soon as the Oregon School Board Association provides a sample policy and the State Education Department provides rule-making guidance.

Revisions to the following policies were presented for approval at a future meeting:

- Paid Family and Medical Leave Insurance
- Family and Medical Leave
- Domestic Violence, Harassment, Sexual Assault, Bias, or Stalking Leave and Safety Accommodation
- 2 Sexual Harassment policies - one for students and one for staff
- Pregnant and/or Parenting Students
- District-Represented Group Travel (e.g. field trips)

 **Reported by: Lenice Shaw**

### **Springfield Public Schools (SPS) Board of Education**

**August 11, 2025:** The Board approved the Oregon School Employees Association contract.

In response to a question by a School Board member whether Springfield Public School teachers are leaving in greater numbers than before and whether exit interviews are conducted when teachers leave the district, an SPS administrator said that the number of teachers leaving has gone down in recent months and that exit interviews are conducted. The statement was met with skepticism.

than previously and that exit interviews are conducted. There was concern expressed, however, that the statement was inaccurate.

In the Community Comment period, a citizen expressed concern related to **instructional materials adoptions**. They asked what the instructional program was for science, social studies, the arts, and health education. They wondered what happens when a school is out of compliance with Oregon Department of Education mandates. One specific example was whether Native American curriculum is included in the K-6 offerings.

[In a discussion after the meeting, a School Board member told our Observer she would look into how concerns raised during the community comment period are communicated by the School Board to the public.]

 **Reported by: Patty Sandoz and Kim Weston**

### **Eugene Water and Electric (EWEB) Board**

**August 5, 2025:** At the Public Testimonies portion of the meeting, Tom Hutton of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) asked for an independent investigation of **EWEB's Human Resources Department**. He said EWEB management was not acting in good faith. Workers had been brought into an investigation and shop

stewards were not given the reasons beforehand. There were concerns of discrimination and retaliation against employees.

Karl Morganstern from the Upper Willamette Sewer and Water Conservation District (SWCD) asked the Board to extend special McKenzie area fire recovery funding that is slated to end in 2026. The SWCD wants to purchase the 289-acre Rice Farms property that is just upriver from EWEB's Hayden Bridge water intake on the McKenzie River. They are asking EWEB for a \$1 million investment for conservation stewardship at the site over the next 5 years. EWEB recommended offering in-kind professional services rather than funds. Although Commissioners were generally supportive of the project, there were concerns that staff do not know what the money would be used for. The EWEB General Manager was asked to work with SWCD to determine next steps.

The EWEB Board authorized the General Manager to negotiate with the City of Eugene to **take over maintenance and replacement of fire hydrants within the city**. The City asked EWEB to assume responsibility for approximately 4000 fire hydrants in the city and EWEB staff are supportive of the request. Although it will cost additional funds to maintain and replace old hydrants, EWEB will have control of the whole water distribution system and will not need to go to the City to coordinate when doing capital improvement projects and upgrades. The effort will cost \$1 million.

☀️ **Reported by: Jennifer Lippert**

### **Lane Transit District (LTD) Finance Committee**

**August 12, 2025:** The LTD general fund is in good shape and will end the budget year with a surplus. LTD operated within 92% of its budget this year. The Capital Projects Fund is also in surplus because LTD had budgeted for new buses and they are not yet on the road.

An update on **grants through federal, state and local government** showed that 15% of LTD revenue comes from grants, mainly to keep current buses on the road and to install new bus signs, shelters, etc. Regarding future grant funding, federal dollars are tied up in negotiations in the U.S. House and Senate. Oregon State dollars are also tied up until a Special Legislative Session called by Governor Kotek for late August decides on pressing transportation budget issues.

Finance Committee members felt that, given the possible emergencies that could arise from sudden changes in federal or state grant funding, the full board should begin receiving full financial reports at each meeting. Finance Committee members also recommended that the Finance Committee meet on an ad hoc basis.

☀️ **Reported by: Alice Davenport**

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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. 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.