



Vol. I (10), Sept. 5, 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 Community College Board

**September 3, 2025:** Around **200 people** attended the board meeting, a sign of **widespread concern in the community about board members and the college**. The main focus of the meeting was the Board’s response to and discussion of steps to be taken regarding the independent investigation which substantiated 3 of the 4 complaints of racism and sexism – one against the entire board, excluding Julie Weismann, and three against former chair, Zach Mulholland - toward President Stephanie Bulger and a female student. The meeting began with Mulholland’s public apology to President Bulger, the student, his fellow board members and the LCC community. Board members Steve Mital, Austin Fohnagy and Kevin Alltucker gave apologies and “committed to do better.” Chairman Fohnagy also read a prepared apology from the board, which—because he sent it late—apparently had not been reviewed or read by at least three members of the board.

During the **Public Comments** period, a parade of local civic organizations, former administrators and community members expressed their support for President Bulger and most called for Mulholland to resign. Their comments stressed not only the personal harm to President Bulger and the institution as a whole, but also to the importance of the Board’s role to support and collaborate with the President moving forward. Ultimately, **the Board voted unanimously to censure Mulholland**, the strongest action it can take against one of its members. But Mulholland did not offer to resign.

**The full investigative report** will be posted on the LCC website shortly. It is well worth the read. Not only does it summarize interviews with each Board member, the President, staff and a student, it provides **background into some of the issues that have sowed distrust and deep divisions on the Board**. The tension and dysfunction

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

were on full display throughout the meeting, including a brief discussion of another contentious item on the agenda regarding **Board Policy 4350**. BP 4350 addresses, among other things, the authority of the Board to review and approve decisions related to cutting, pausing and adding academic programs at the college. The motion to reaffirm this policy as currently written was tabled for future discussion due to dissension by three board members on the vice chair's attempt to submit a revised motion to add clarifying language that essentially changed the board policy without going through the typical review process for changing adopted board policies.

Another issue not on the agenda, but raised forcefully during public comment, was the ongoing contract negotiations between the college and the LCCEA (Educators) and LCCEF (Classified staff) unions. Negotiations are ongoing and fraught. In July the Oregon Employment Relations Board ruled that LCC Administration violated labor laws when it **surveilled union emails and threatened faculty with legal action**. In a letter to the Board on July 26, LCCEA President Adrienne Mitchell, requested the Board provide direction to the Administration to "change course and make every effort to take a collaborative, productive approach to labor relations." The letter is posted on the Lane Community College Education Association website.

 **Reported by: Anne Delaney**

## **Lane County Board of Commissioners**

**August 26, 2025:** Commissioners heard a report on **Plans for the Lane County Event Center**. After an in-depth survey and discussions with stakeholders, and guided by the principle that the Center be a fiscally responsible community asset, there was strong support for an expanded convention area to attract more large shows and a feasibility study of the development of a hotel and a new multiuse facility. Complete plans can be found at [LECMasterplan.org](https://www.lccmasterplan.org).

The Lane Event Center is already heavily used, and for more than just the county fair. Annual use includes 145 days of events, heavy usage by youth volleyball and Kidsports, 100K visitors to the Ice Center, as well as 22 days using the Egan Warming Center and for banquets and celebrations. In the **Public Comments** period, several groups spoke in favor of the plans, including Webfoot Juniors, a youth volleyball program, and Travel Lane County, which spoke to the importance of supporting and growing winter tourism activities. Commissioners directed staff to take the next steps toward engaging a consultant to direct feasibility studies.

Commissioners voted to change benefits for county workforce from Pacific Source to National Cooperative RX. This discussion would not normally be given much space in this report, but there is much concern in the community and in the League about the cost of prescription drugs; learning of this cooperative may be of interest. National Cooperative RX is a large, member-owned, not-for-profit cooperative which, because of its size, has greater buying power than smaller pharmacy benefit managers. Further information can be found at [National CooperativeRx | Member-Owned Pharmacy Benefit Cooperative](https://www.nationalcooperativerx.org).

Two speakers in the **Public Comments** period reflected deep unhappiness with the behavior of Commissioner Loveall that resulted in a \$250,000 settlement to former Lane County Counsel Erin Pettigrew as well as associated court costs. For the record, it should be noted that, in the settlement with Ms. Pettigrew, neither side acknowledged fault.

☀️ **Reported by: Nancy Mills**

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

**August 25, 2025:** After holding an executive session that was closed to the public, the Board voted to **hire an independent investigator** to look into complaints filed by Superintendent Todd Hamilton, Assistant Superintendent David Collins, and HR Director Dustin Reese against School Board Chair Jonathan Light. The complaints centered on (1) the Chair contacted Oregon Department of Education (ODE) without the administration's knowledge or consent to inquire about the status of the investigation regarding non-compliance with instructional time of certain subjects and (2) the Chair failed to share information received from ODE with School District administrators.

To understand the decision made during the special meeting it is important to know the sequence of events that led to the present situation.

1. An elementary teacher was concerned that the amount of time allocated to teaching and assessing reading and math has caused the teaching of other subject areas to be out of compliance with ODE. The amount of teaching time available during the teaching week for other subjects such as science, social sciences (history, geography, and civics), art, health, technology, social-emotional skills has been greatly reduced. See ODE requirements and recommendations below.
  - Physical Education: required 150 minutes per week for entire year
  - Reading: 90 minutes per day for K-3; 60 minutes per day for 4-6
  - Math: recommends about 20-60 minutes per day
  - Science: required minimum 45 minutes per week for K-5
  - Social Studies: required 45 minutes per week for K-5
  - Music: no requirement but schools are encouraged to provide a well-rounded education which includes music
  - Health: 1020 hours annually for K-5; 1080 hours for Grade 6
  - Language Arts: required 900 hours per year for K-5; required 990 hours per year for Grade 6
  - Civics: required that civics education is integrated into curriculum, generally within social studies
2. The teacher asked district administration about these out-of-compliance concerns.
3. The district determined that the complaint was unsubstantiated.
4. The teacher then filed a complaint with the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) in June 2024 stating that Springfield Public Schools was not in compliance with instructional time requirements for elementary education.

5. ODE opened an investigation of SPS that is ongoing to this day, having extended the 90-day limit twice. Its report is due November 15.
6. Because of the length of this investigation, Board Chair Jonathan Light inquired of ODE about the status of the investigation.

At the special meeting the Board voted to hire an independent investigator to look into the three complaints by the superintendent, assistant superintendent, and HR director. The Board also voted for the superintendent to contact the Oregon School Board Association's attorney to seek clarification of the public meetings and records laws.

Our Observers note that the Springfield Education Association is still in negotiations for a teachers' contract. Included in the negotiations is a request to increase the amount of preparation time for elementary teachers.

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

### **Eugene 4J School Board**

**September 3, 2025:** The Board reviewed the draft 2025-26 Board Working Agreements/Norms that "provides a set of guidelines, shared understandings, and expectations of how they will work with each other, district staff, and the community. In agreeing to these norms, they also agree to hold each other accountable to follow them." This is an interesting document. It is a revision to the prior year document approved in the 7/3/24 meeting. There was discussion that this document should not include statutory responsibilities of Board members, as these are established elsewhere. However, the Board deferred addressing this due to other more pressing priorities. <https://meetings.boardbook.org/Public/Agenda/1549?meeting=701896>

In the Public Comment and Employee Group Representatives period, Lisa Jenkins-Easton, Director of the Eugene Chapter of the Oregon School Employees Association (OSEA), complained about the lack of progress on negotiations and significant inconsistency of benefits with licensed staff. She invited the Board to join **the Sept 8 5PM bargaining session.**

Staff from School Safety and Emergency Management presented the **Safe Routes to School Program.** Lots of students do not get to school on school buses. This program includes working with the city to enhance safety of roads and bike paths near schools. It also includes a significant **focus on bike safety.** For kids who don't know how to ride, they are taught. For those who don't have bikes, the district partners with non-profits to provide donated bikes. All middle school students are required to learn traffic safety for bikes and take up to 3 mile rides with the class. High school students are taught to use the **public bus system** and taken on trial rides.

☀️ **Reported by: Lenice Shaw**

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

**September 2, 2025:** Bonneville Power Administration **rate increases** will average 3.4% across all classes, 2.7% for residential customers, beginning in October 2025. This will make a **total increase of 10.4% for electric rates in 2025.**

An Intergovernmental Agreement is being renegotiated with the City of Eugene for their part in the **stormwater billing on EWEB bills**. [Readers will recall that the 18% increase in stormwater fees beginning August 1, 2025, is one way the City of Eugene used to partially close a funding gap.] The cost to the city will be increased significantly due to the increased percentage of the total bill, credit card fees, and customer service costs.

The Board authorized an extension of the power purchase agreement between EWEB and **Seneca Sustainable Energy** by a unanimous vote in spite of dissenting public testimony. The agreement is a short-term, market neutral (+/- 5%) contract extension until 12/2029. It allows the Seneca plant to continue operation and allows EWEB to sell excess power and renewable credits if the power is not needed.

Six of the seven persons providing **Public Testimony** opposed the renewal of the Seneca biofuels contract. Most of the testimony focused on two issues: the potential for additional CO<sub>2</sub> and particulates in the air and the fact that forest-based fuels are not renewable and potentially accelerate logging. One speaker advocated that a watchdog follow where the wood comes from. Another suggested an escape clause in the Seneca contract in case the State of Oregon reclassifies biofuel as non-renewable. One asked for a hearing and public comments on this topic before a decision is made. Several folks advocated for solar as a better, cleaner option.

The opposition to the Seneca contract seemed to take commissioners by surprise. Commissioner Carlson asked several clarifying questions about how much of EWEB's power would come from this plant (none in the 275 MW annual base load) and mentioned her constituents' concerns over air quality. Commissioner Morris was unfamiliar with the project. Commissioners Brown and Schlossberg were in favor and had no questions. Commissioner Brown mentioned that if EWEB did not continue buying this energy, EWEB would lose the ability to have a say in the future of the project. Three of the commissioners mentioned that the extension is only for three years.

GM Frank Lawson provided background for the measure and took most of the questions from the Board. He clarified that this project provides 19.8 MW of power annually, that the Lane Regional Air Protection Agency states the Seneca project has a favorable compliance record for air quality, and that the wood used in the project is not directly from the forest but is a by-product from mills that process logs. Lawson stressed several times that EWEB needs this in their energy portfolio to hedge power availability for emergency services or peak needs.

☀️ **Reported by: Jennifer Lippert**

## Oakridge City Council

**August 21, 2025:** A proposal to **hire the wife of the Fire Department Chief** in a temporary position drew no comments by city councillors. City Administrator James Cleavenger said the Oakridge Fire Department received a Wildfire Season Staffing Grant from the Oregon State Fire Marshal for \$35,000 to use through 10/31/2025. If the money is not used this year, there may not be funds in 2026. The proposal was to hire Christina Hollett, who meets eligibility requirements. Mayor Cutchen said according to the legal advisor, since Ms. Hollett will not be directly supervised by her husband, Fire Chief Scott Hollett, and since the position is temporary, this is a legal hire. The mayor said this could still present an appearance of impropriety. He asked if councillors had comments and, hearing none, left it up to the city administrator how he wanted to proceed.

Councillors passed unanimously a motion authorizing the city's Finance Director to transfer funds within the **Public Works** budget. The lift system at the Salmon Creek Wastewater Facility will be repaired and the Public Works Department will buy a vehicle.

 **Reported by: Leslie Heaton**

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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.