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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

October 14, 2025: The Board unanimously **approved the allocation of \$5 million dollars to cover the funding gap in the county’s public safety program.** The shortfall is due to decreased state funding levels, specifically Grant-in-Aid. County Administrator Steve Mokrohisky recommended the allocation of \$4.99 million for the county to maintain a minimally functioning service level within Parole & Probation, the Sheriff’s Office, and community partners.

Tommy Gong, the new Lane County Clerk, was introduced to the Commissioners and gave the Board an update on the November 2025 election in Lane County. The County Clerk is responsible for conducting elections, recording real property, issuing marriage licenses and domestic partnership registrations, and coordinating the Property Values Appeal Board.

Commissioners voiced support for the **Urban Renewal project in Cottage Grove** because of the potential for future economic growth in Cottage Grove. The plan encompasses historic downtown Cottage Grove and adjacent commercial areas. It is anticipated to take thirty years of tax increment collections to implement. The maximum amount of indebtedness for the Plan is not to exceed \$65.4 million, and Lane County’s projected impact for the 30-year term is estimated to be \$6.3 million.

🌻 Reported by: Thomas Rigell

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

October 21, 2025: Public Comment primarily addressed three topics:

- Concerns about the contract signed by Sheriff Wilkerson to use Flock cameras in the rural areas of the county to augment the work of county deputies. At the end of the meeting, the Board discussed a work session to explore the issues further.
- The Extreme Risk Protection Order (ERPO), a court order to remove firearms from a person at risk of suicide or hurting another person. (Information can be found on the [Alliance for a Safe Oregon](#) website.) Commissioner Triege asked that the county explore with appropriate county offices their awareness and use of ERPO.
- Concerns about the rash of burglaries at Asian American homes and announcement of a public safety forum to speak to these concerns. Further updates can be found on the [Asian American Council of Oregon](#) website.

Commissioners heard a report by Travel Lane County (TLC) on a potential **indoor multiuse sports facility**. Although they took no formal action, Commissioners expressed support of such a facility and asked TLC to return with updated models in December.

The proposed facility intends to capture use by families who currently need to go to Salem or Medford for events like athletic tournaments (such as basketball and volleyball). The facility would be programmed for tournaments on the weekends, with weekday use by youth sports that are currently limited in practice areas. TLC envisions a public-private partnership involving state, county, and business support, similar to the “Podium” indoor sports facility in Spokane. The cost would be \$50 million plus land for a facility of the size under consideration. If an indoor track were added, the cost would increase by \$10-\$30 million. TLC is considering several possible models: new construction at the Lane Events Center, adaptive reuse of the former Royal Caribbean call center, and several sites in Cottage Grove. Their consultants estimate a cumulative \$91 million economic impact over the first five years with an annual \$527,875 generation of transient lodging tax.

Commissioners heard a report on the county’s decades-old **underfunded public safety** system. While expenses have increased, the structural problem is that funding for public safety relied on timber revenue taxes which allowed the property tax level to be set artificially low. The public safety tax rate is far lower than comparable counties. The Public Safety Funding task force report from June 2025 recommended four areas of focus:

- efficiencies and cost savings in current services
- a multi-layered solution, such as fee based strategies and a new taxing mechanism
- a payroll tax to keep pace with community growth compared to property taxes
- creation of a special district or districts to help fund services such as prosecution and jail operation

The workgroup will survey the public via a poll to assess the wider sentiment of the community and give direction to the Board. The poll should be operational in early November with results available by the end of the calendar year.

The Board informally voted to request funding from the Legislative Emergency Board after Steve Adams, Lane County Policy Director, spoke to a significant **reduction of emergency shelter support** from the state to counties during the current biennium. The current funding available, \$7.6 million, is half of the amount received last year. Lane County will join Multnomah, Benton, and Deschutes counties to request additional funds from the Legislative Emergency Board. Lane County has identified \$7 million of need, with \$3 million for shelter beds and the balance for supports to reduce the unhoused population.

😊 Reported by: Nancy Mills

October 28, 2025: During Public Comment, one voter from Eugene expressed her concerns about Sheriff Wilkerson's plans to install 22 Flock Safety license plate recognition cameras along Lane County roads. The speaker's primary concern was that much more information than license plate data will be captured by the Flock cameras and possibly shared with other agencies besides the Sheriff's department. Such sharing of information is regarded by some citizens as a violation of the individual's right to privacy under the Fourth Amendment. The speaker referenced a [Lookout article from October 17, 2025](#) for information about Sheriff Wilkerson's stance on Flock cameras and their current status.

😊 Reported by: Thomas Rigell

Lane Community College Board of Education

October 15, 2025: The work session, viewed on the college's YouTube channel as it was live streamed, focused on a required training session with Samantha Maldonado, CEO of Chaska Consulting, who facilitated a training on "Creating a Culture of Inclusion and Compliance: Board Roles, Responsibilities, and Boundaries." The training was attended by LCC President Dr. Stephanie Bulger, Student Body President Amelia Hampton, and all Board members except Steve Mital and Jesse Maldonado, whose absences were excused. At the end of the meeting, Board members were in good spirits and felt they had gained much from the training.

😊 Reported by: Morgan Vierheller

Springfield Public Schools (SPS) Board of Education

October 13, 2025: During the Public Comment period, concerns were expressed about the level of transparency of the district administrators in cutting teaching jobs without warning to the schools and parents affected, teachers feeling that teaching decisions are being made by administrators who have no teaching experience, lack of preparation time for elementary teachers, and teachers not feeling supported by their administrators.

A report on **SPS compliance with Div. 22 Assurances** is available on the school district website ([available here](#)), with a final report to be sent to the state by Nov. 15th. Assistant

Superintendent David Collins explained what the Division 22 Assurances are: standards that the Oregon legislature and State Board of Education have determined must be met to be a standard school district. Compliance with these rules ensures a baseline level of service across the state. The Oregon Department of Education works with districts who are not in compliance to work on a plan to become compliant. **SPS currently has two compliance waivers** in place: (1) Assessment of Essential Skills for Graduation and (2) Essential Skills Assessment for English Language Learners.

Sally Golden, a special education teacher from Springfield Public Schools, was recently selected as **Oregon's Teacher of the Year**. Congratulations to Sally!

SPS has a unique partnership with Willamalane Parks. Their collaborations include the OnePass summer program, middle school sports, after school youth care, and swimming lessons for fourth graders. From the last day of school in the spring to Labor Day students used their passes 79,940 times!

In response to the State's imposition of a ban on **student use of personal electronic devices** during the school day, to begin 1/1/26, SPS chose to implement their plan at the beginning of the current school year. Board discussion was brief and focused on the infrequent need to implement consequences for violations of the policy. Board members expressed interest in hearing from high school student representatives how the cell phone ban is going.

Springfield Education Association (SEA) and SPS began bargaining for a new contract in April 2025. Negotiations had stalled and on September 8, 2025, SEA and SPS entered mediation. Mediation meetings are not open to the public.

Board Chair Jonathan Light was asked why a **police officer has been in attendance** at the last few school Board meetings. His response was that some of the folks sitting around the Board table have felt a bit of concern for their safety. When pressed further, Chair Light said some Board members heard there might be some angry reactive citizens in attendance so, as a precaution, police have been brought in.

[Observer Comment: Science materials for SPS still have not been adopted, an ongoing issue spanning several years of SPS claiming it is still trying to interpret the 'new' standards. The Next Generation Science Standards were adopted nationally eleven years ago (with drafts of the standards going out to teachers and associations a couple years in advance). Further, in the world of education, textbook publishers get on the bandwagon even before official adoption of standards so they are ready to launch. For a deeper dive into this topic, read the [October 16, 2025 Lookout investigative article](#).]

October 27, 2025: The Board returned from the non-public Executive Session for a special meeting open to the public. Members approved an action item involving a complaint discussed in the Executive Session. A move to allow Board Chair Light to respond to the complaint passed 4-1, with Nicole DeGraff dissenting.

The Board heard a presentation on the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support (PBIS) program. The program's purpose is to improve school learning environments by supporting and availing students and families of resources for mental health, nutrition and food insecurity, transportation, and other needs to make sure that every student has the essentials for learning to take place. Following the PBIS presentation, the Board members rotated through short presentations and discussions by school principals concerning support services for mental health, family liaisons, and attendance for each of the three grade bands, K-5, 6-8, and 9-12.

[Observer Comment: [Lookout Eugene/Springfield](#) reported that a question has been raised about a possible violation of open meetings law of the Oct. 27 Special Meeting because of the "round robin" method of discussion regarding mental health, family liaisons and attendance. The public could not access all three groups at once either by watching online or being present at the meeting.]

November 3, 2025: The Board adjourned to Executive Session for nearly three hours to discuss the findings of an investigation (done by an independent investigator hired by the Board) into the three complaints previously made by the Superintendent Todd Hamilton, Assistant Superintendent David Collins, and Director of Human Resources Dustin Reese. A fourth complaint was filed by Chief of Operations Officer Brett Yancey against Vice Chair Ken Kohl. The complaints seem to stem from conduct regarding an ongoing Oregon Department of Education (ODE) investigation into a 2023 complaint made by a Springfield teacher about curriculum.

The complaints stated that Board Chair Jonathan Light and Vice Chair Kohl overstepped their authority by improperly contacting ODE directly (without following the protocol of going through the district administrators) to inquire about the status of the ongoing investigation of elementary curriculum compliance. Also the complaint claimed interference with an ongoing complaint process, failure to disclose relevant information, improper use of board title and district resources, and potential violation of public meetings laws. The complaint also alleged there were leaks to the public about these ongoing investigations that caused stress and undue complications for the district administrators.

The Board returned from the non-public Executive Session for a special meeting. The Board voted to accept the findings of the investigation and to formally censure Light and Kohl for their conduct and express their disapproval of their actions. The Board also voted to remove them from their leadership positions. It was noted that some of the issues in the complaints were substantiated and others were not. The public is not privy to all the findings of the investigation.

The Board elected Heather Ouaas-Annsa as the new Chair and Amber Langworthy as the new Vice-Chair.

[Observer Comment: The first three complaint letters have been made public but the fourth letter by Yancey against Kohl has not been made public. Who provided the independent investigator? Was the investigator the district's legal counsel as was suggested in the complaint filed by the Director of Human Resources? The investigator's affiliations or expertise have not been identified. Director Langworthy stated her concern that the investigation does not feel complete because it did not address the "why" of the matter. That indeed is a gaping hole.]

🌻 Reported by: Patty Sandoz and Kim Weston

Eugene School District 4J Board of Education

October 22, 2025: An "off and away" policy was passed to meet requirements of the State of Oregon prohibiting student use of personal electronic devices. The Board discussed the required **policy's unintentional impacts**: equity and the needs of undocumented students, working students, students who are parents, emergency situations (for example, middle school students may have their parents' numbers programmed into their phones but not have the numbers memorized). The district will continue to dialogue with the State and revise this policy administratively or, if necessary, at the Board level.

The Board discussed **budget deficits** extensively after a budget report by Director of financial services, Matt Brown. Enrollment decline, unfunded state mandates in paid leave and unemployment, the end of post-COVID funding, and staffing increases all contribute to 4J shortfalls. The Board is looking at ways to address a \$30 million deficit this year, after the 2024-25 \$20.7 million shortfall. The emphasis is on making cuts that do not directly affect the classrooms and preventing midyear layoffs. Savings this year will stave off cuts next year. The timeline calls for the Board to pass the 2026-27 budget in June.

Budget Committee membership is being finalized. The function of the committee is to consider budget options and alternatives and to make recommendations to the Superintendent. The Superintendent makes final administrative budget decisions, based on policy directives by the Board. The process for selecting a representative to the Budget Committee was as follows: Of the 40 applicants, six finalists were chosen by elimination rounds, with each board member voting for six individuals. The highest vote-garnering finalists will present in person to the Board on November 5, and one will be selected at that meeting. At that time, the Board will also approve a second member recommended by the Equity Committee.

Staff presented the 2024-25 **annual review of compliance** with State standards. 4J met a requirement of plans for 4 of 5 areas out of compliance. Unmet was Section 2 Assessments of Essential Skills. Three sections were waived and compliance will begin in 2027-28. One section, local performance assessment compliance will be extended to the end of this year, 2025-26.

[Note: The Superintendent was new in spring of 2025. The State Assessment covered a period preceding her term, and the corrective plan was devised during her first months.]

State assessments and requirements were revised by the legislature during the past year. There are unfunded mandates in the State requirements. The issues are largely about equity and standards set with the intention to serve historically underserved and under performing students.]

🌻 Reported by: Lenice Shaw

Springfield City Council

October 25, 2025: Once again, the **Flock Safety cameras** issue was the big discussion of the evening. The Chief of Police and her manager presented their point of view on the great value to the police of having 25 Flock Safety cameras on the main streets of Springfield. They were followed by a Flock representative who assured the Council that the Flock Safety Company would never abuse the agreed upon process of gathering, use, and storage of information. Several members of the public then spoke up about Flock's behavior in other cities, stating that the company could not be trusted as it had already been caught breaking agreed upon parameters. City Council members were well aware of the public's concern. Although two members wanted the cameras removed completely, the mayor and three other members opted for another meeting with more information gathering.

Other than that, the Council meeting was uneventful, questioning a new potential Council member and receiving more information on zoning in the new Glenwood project.

🌻 Reported by: Jen Allison-Keim

Oakridge City Council

October 16, 2025: Two main issues were Council approval of a request to use the community building at Green Water's Park from December through February for a **warming center** on freezing nights and the approval of **speed cameras on Highway 58**.

The WeRSharp program asked to use the Floyd Stalcup Community building at Green Water's Park from December through February for a **warming center** on freezing nights. City Administrator James Cleavenger said the issue is \$1,200 for insurance. The Director of WeRSharp thanked the Council for giving them two extra days last year, as that enabled them to get five homeless seniors into permanent housing and helped two other people. Mayor Cutchen asked about other funding sources, and the director mentioned donors and an upcoming fundraiser. The Council unanimously approved the funding and additional two days in December.

The Council approved the initial step of having a Meta Traffic Services agreement contract for installing **speed cameras on Highway 58** making Oakridge one of Oregon's smaller cities to do so. Revenue from speeding tickets would partly benefit the city. MetaTraffic will supply data on the number of speeding vehicles, accidents caused by speeding, and the number of citizen complaints about speeding. Mayor Cutchen asked about staff

involvement, cameras in residential areas, and required training. City Administrator Cleavenger explained that police can represent the city for a contested ticket. Police Chief Martin informed the council they do not have to do anything if cameras are placed in a residential area or school zone. Scott and Ethan Fugue from MetaTraffic both provided information. They would have MetaTraffic's attorney help the local judge if necessary. Scott Fugue said that only 1% of the violations get contested and less than 1% of the 1% ever get to a judge. The motion passed with six yes votes and one abstention.

🌻 Reported by: Leslie Heaton

Eugene City Council

October 27, 2025: After vigorous discussion in a Work Session about whether to invite public comment on a law to make it **illegal to hand money or food to people from a car in a travel lane**, before voting on it, the council deadlocked. Mike Clark, Randy Groves, Greg Evans, and Matt Keating voted for a public comment and Eliza Kashinsky, Jennifer Yeh, Lyndsie Leech and Alan Zelenka voted against it. Mayor Kaarin Knudsen broke the tie, supporting a public comment on the proposed law. Such laws are on the books in Springfield and Medford, but drivers are rarely ticketed. There's no data indicating whether these laws reduce vehicle-pedestrian accidents or lead to fewer people soliciting money on street corners. If the law passes, people can still park their cars and hand anything to anyone soliciting help.

At the City Council meeting that followed, councillors unanimously adopted two proposals: (1) to update Eugene code to permit low-income rental cooperatives to be eligible for **property tax exemptions**, and (2) to approve such an exemption for Lucy Apartments, a future development located at 860 Hunsaker Lane that will include 36 low-income units.

At the Public Comment section of the meeting, more than 30 people spoke to councillors on three topics:

1. **Continued concern over the Flock Security cameras.** Most speakers approved the Councils' decision to shut off the cameras, but now want the contract cancelled and the cameras taken down.
2. **Low-income housing advocates requested the city amend regulations to allow tenants in an affordable housing project the right of first refusal if the property goes on sale**, allowing tenants to form associations that would give them the opportunity to buy the properties. The State already has such a law on the books for mobile home parks, according to one of the speakers.
3. Concerns were raised about the contractors who build affordable housing units, such as the Lucy Apartments. **Members of the local carpenters union charged that some construction firms engage in wage theft and immigrant labor abuse and wanted the city to consider putting safeguards in place.**

[Observer comment: I loved this public comment session. Often when dozens show up, there is one topic on their minds and they are often angry and accusatory. In this session it was much more collegial. Also, informative: the anti-camera advocates expressed interest in the proposed measure allowing tenants the opportunity to buy housing. And the regular commenter who wants Eugene to do more to create a dark-sky initiative also drew support from others who spoke on different topics. It seemed to me to represent the epitome of grass-roots democracy.]

🌻 Reported by: Susan Palmer

Eugene Water & Electricity Board

November 4, 2025: Credits exist in the amount of \$280 annually for customers who are experiencing difficulty paying because of the **government closure**.

Proposed Rate Increases for 2026: Electric rates +7.1%; Water rates +5.1%

The General Manager shared that EWEB is in negotiations with Lane Electric Cooperative over a **potential transfer of electric distribution assets and operating rights in the McKenzie Valley**. EWEB and Lane Electric expect to reach a preliminary agreement by December 2025, with a target transfer date of May 1, 2026. The transfer will affect 3000-3300 customers. Customers from upriver have shown broad support. Lane Electric is a rural provider and this arrangement will allow for upriver residents to have direct representation and voting rights for the utility. Benefits to EWEB will be reduced cost for tree trimming, reduced travel upriver, and reduced emissions. No layoffs are expected at EWEB. Lane Electric and EWEB currently have comparable rates.

The Upper Willamette Soil and Water Conservation District asked EWEB to pledge \$1 million over 5-7 years to help with **restoration of the Rice Farm site**, a property in the lower McKenzie River area it will acquire that is close to EWEB's drinking water intake on the McKenzie River. By a vote of 4-1, the Board chose to provide in-kind and monetary support for the project. EWEB is interested in helping with riparian/floodplain restoration, weed control, and wetland enhancement.

🌻 Reported by: Jennifer Lippert

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.