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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

February 3, 2026 [[meeting agenda](#); [webcast recording](#)]

In the **Public Comments** session, seven people spoke in support of placing the local option levy to fund 4-H and OSU Extension programs on the May 19 ballot.

Commissioners voted unanimously to place the 4-H and OSU Extension levy on the ballot and to ask staff to draft an explanatory statement for the measure and its effect. A short discussion ensued, including the question of the cost to include such a statement. The County pays nothing when placing information in the State Voters’ Pamphlet. Richard Riggs, Regional Director of OSU Extension Service, informed the Commissioners that the Extension Service accomplishes its work with a staff of only 16 paid employees, assisted by 450 volunteers.

Lane County Administrator Steve Mokrohisky announced the following:

- The **County Building Emergency Alert System** is operational.
- Approximately 90,000 Pacific Source members who were enrolled in the **Medicaid-funded Oregon Health Plan** in Lane County were switched to Trillium on February 1, 2026.
- **St. Vincent de Paul Egan Warming Centers** operated nightly from January 15-26 due to temperatures below 32 degrees. More supplies were needed, and the Oregon Department of Human Services stepped up with more funding to assist in the overnight emergency program.

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

In a report titled “The State of Our Mental State: Oregon and Lane County 2025,” HHS Director Eve Gray and Medical Director of Psychiatry Dr. David Rettew noted that Oregon has one of the highest rates of mental health problems in the U.S., even though it has some of the best access to mental health services. Dr. Rettew believes survey data is flawed and is working on a new, more reliable system. Commissioners recommended that a baseline for Lane County be established. Commissioner Loveall followed up by saying we should not “put all of our eggs in one basket” by depending solely on the Lane Stabilization Center.

At the afternoon session, the Commissioners passed a motion (3:2) to allocate up to \$500,000 in Transient Lodging Tax reserves to the Public Works Parks Division to repair and stabilize the Currin and Stewart Covered Bridges.

☀️ **Reported by: Judy Leahy**

February 10, 2026 [[meeting agenda](#);[webcast recording](#)]

The **Lane County Watershed Bill of Rights Ballot Measure 20-373** has qualified for the ballot. Its explanation will be in the State Voter’s Pamphlet. Steven Thiel, Assistant County Counsel, presented the process for creating a committee to write the explanatory statement, including the balance of proponents and opponents to the extent possible, and possibly one neutral statement. The process would be overseen by the Assistant County Counsel. The Board voted unanimously to accept the process.

Commissioner Trieger thanked County Counsel for delegating the process to the Counsel’s office due to its efficiency and because it kept the Board of Commissioners at arm’s length from the explanatory statement. She suggested that the Board consider repeating this process to deal with ballot measure explanatory statements in Lane County Code.

The Board unanimously renewed another year of the five-year services agreement between the County, ten rural communities, and the unincorporated Upper McKenzie Corridor. The County Community and Economic Development department recommended the approval of the next year of the service agreement with the McKenzie River Chamber of Commerce.

Samantha Roberts, Community & Economic Development Analyst for the County, described the process for this allocation of \$553,172 from the 2026 Rural Tourism Marketing Program. Funding comes from 10% of the Transient Lodging Tax and has as its goal attracting visitors to rural communities, increasing the length of their stays, and encouraging return visits. The marketing program focuses on county-wide visitation and includes marketing for local sports and outdoor recreation, Main Street events in communities like Cottage Grove and Coburg, physical improvements to business districts, and festival and event marketing and support in communities like Westfir, Junction City, and Oakridge. Because these funds are spent in communities which have fewer events to market than larger

communities, they tend to go further. Unincorporated communities don't have a city to distribute the funding to, so the five-year services agreement was created with the McKenzie River Chamber of Commerce for distribution of the fund.

The Board discussed a **request from Junction City for approval to amend the Metropolitan Plan**, an inter-jurisdictional arrangement between Eugene, Springfield, and Lane County, **to allow extension of wastewater services to Junction City**. The Board expressed its interest in receiving a plan to amend the Metropolitan Plan accompanied by feasibility and cost studies.

This is similar to an amendment in 2024 for extension of wastewater services to Creswell. Both cities have had Department of Environmental Quality violations. The inability of Junction City to resolve the water quality problems affects their ability to develop new housing. They have 500 units in the queue that can't move forward until this is resolved. Commissioner Farr spoke of the need for housing density within the Urban Growth Boundary, and the constraints that Junction City and Creswell are facing. County Administrator Mokrohisky reminded the Board that public utilities such as liquid and solid waste will need a county-wide response.

The Board unanimously agreed to create a Safety Corridor Program for Lane County in response to information by Assistant County Counsel, Steven Thiel, and Senior Transportation Planner, Becky Taylor, about the success of pilot projects in Lane and Marion counties in reducing fatal crashes. The program began January 1, 2026 and requires the Board of Commissioners to establish objective criteria for designating a section of highway as a safety corridor and operational requirements.

February 18, 2026 [[meeting agenda;webcast](#)]

A special meeting was held to address independent findings of wrong-doing by Commissioner David Loveall to "consider the dismissal or disciplining of, or to hear complaints or charges brought against, a public officer, employee, staff member or individual agent who does not request an open hearing." Initially, the intent was to discuss the issue in executive session, but Commissioner Loveall requested an open hearing. He said there were ethics violations because he was not notified of the hearing ahead of time. He claimed factual errors in the report about the complaints in an independent employment investigation. In addition, because he had not been provided the investigation's full report, he could not respond to the allegations which didn't allow him adequate due process. Loveall's lawyer, Jill Gibson, stated that his constitutional rights, including his right to free speech, have been violated. She argued that the allegations were based on an incorrect belief that the County's administrative procedures manual applies to elected officials.

Commissioners and the county lawyers then went into Executive Session for 3 hours. It was not clear if Commissioner Loveall was present for any of that session. Commissioners returned with a motion to direct staff and attorneys to prepare a **statement of unity for those reporting discrimination and harassment** for adoption at the next scheduled Board

meeting and that **Commissioner Loveall issue an apology** that acknowledges the harms of people affected and the sustained allegations in the outside investigation. The motion to require an apology from Loveall passed (3:2) with Buch, Farr, and Trieger in support, and Ceniga and Loveall opposed.

Loveall stated that he felt that the Executive Session was misrepresented, understanding that it was about a legal memo that would not impose any disciplinary proceeding. Because he had assurances that disciplinary matters would not be discussed when he left the Executive Session, he claimed that the discussions violated ethics laws.

 **Reported by: Nancy Mills**

Eugene City Council

February 9, 2026 [[meeting agenda and webcast](#)]

At a work session, **Councilors reviewed a report from area business leaders asked to help develop a long-range financial stability plan for the city.** The 10-year proposal suggests the City begin by taking a deep dive to define and prioritize core services (with community input) and launch an economic development plan based on the city's competitive advantages and partnerships before they increase revenue through tax measures that place a burden across the community and not just on targeted groups. The 40-page final report can be found in [Appendix A of the City Council Agenda](#).

Councilors voted unanimously on a resolution declaring a humanitarian crisis resulting from federal immigration actions. The Council took the time to read the entire resolution before the public (about 50 people attended the meeting). Perhaps the most meaningful comment before the vote came from Councilor Mike Clark, who said: "There's quite a lot of people who do think about the world the way that I do and I want them to hear me say why I'm going to vote in favor of this. Maybe it can be persuasive to them. ... Many years ago, (former) Councilor Betty Taylor and I had an argument about what the purpose of government was and she said the purpose of government was to do together what we cannot do individually and I said, 'Nope, the Declaration of Independence is really clear. The purpose of government here in America is to protect individuals' civil rights. This resolution talks about what we'll do ... in order to defend people's rights."

The Council **approved the employment agreement for the new city manager**, Jenny Haruyama, who starts work on April 15. Her base salary is \$306,000. They also approved **a trip by Mayor Knudson to Eugene's sister city Kathmandu, Nepal** in February. The estimated cost is \$1,900, paid out of already designated council contingency funds.

Public comments: 43 people signed up to speak on the following topics: continued opposition to any kind of cameras that read license plates, regardless of the provider; continued opposition to construction of an Amazon warehouse; ongoing opposition to the presence of ICE and agents' abuse of protesters; concern that the City's plans to replace

Cahoots will not meet the former agency's high standards; improved street safety measures to protect bicyclists.

February 11, 2026 [[meeting agenda and webcast](#)]

In a Work Session, discussion concerned **the need to acquire additional development space in the Downtown Riverfront area**. Developer Atkins Dame proposed a property swap, trading Parcel 5, which they own, for a City Hall property known as Parcel 4A, both for \$31.09 per sq. foot. Two motions, one to sell and one to purchase, were presented and passed by the council.

Councilors considered **three proposals aimed at meeting Urban Growth Strategies and Oregon Housing Needs Assessment guidelines to develop new rental and home ownership housing units**. The tax exempt proposals targeted three income levels. Councilors passed a motion to direct the City Manager to schedule a public meeting on an ordinance implementing the proposed production incentives and to schedule a work session following the public hearing.

February 17, 2026 [[meeting agenda and webcast](#)]

The City Council conducted **three public hearings** seeking testimony on a city zoning revision request and code changes.

1. The City is considering rezoning property along Coburg Road from Neighborhood Commercial C-1 to Community Commercial C-2. The change impacts three tax lots. No community members spoke at this hearing. The Council will vote on the zoning change at a March 9 meeting.
2. An amendment to the Eugene code that would **make the Eugene Municipal Court a court of record. Currently the court is not a court of record**, meaning that its proceedings are not preserved and the court's actions and decisions cannot be used in future legal matters. For example, a defendant convicted in municipal court who wants to appeal has to seek an entirely new trial in Lane County Circuit Court. The 2025 legislative session passed a law allowing defendants in misdemeanor cases to immediately transfer the case to a court of record. The council will vote on the code change at a February 23 meeting.
3. A deeply divided Planning Commission recommended on a 4:3 vote a code change **requiring the City to alert public health agencies prior to issuing building permits for new developments** in mixed-use employment (E-2), light-medium industrial (I-2), and heavy industrial (I-3) zones. The code change requires the City to provide notice to the federal Environmental Protection Agency, the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality, and the Lane Regional Air Protection Agency before approving any new development. Nine people spoke during the public hearing, with concerns divided between those who fear environmental pollution from new industries and those believing additional permitting makes Eugene less attractive to job-creating industries.

The back story is the ongoing ground pollution from J.H. Baxter's wood treatment plant in the Trainsong neighborhood that resulted from illegal processing of wastewater. Councilors will vote on whether to adopt the code change at a March 9 meeting.

 **Reported by: Rhonda Livesay and Susan Palmer**

Lane Community College Board

January 14, 2026

Ninety minutes of **Public Comment focused on support for LCCEA** in the stalled contract negotiations and the negative impact that the three-year mitigation plan to restore the College's reserve will have on students and programs. The mitigation approved by the Board in January calls for \$8 million in cuts over the next three years. A key development noted in the comments regarding LCCEA contract negotiations is that 90% of the faculty have attended "Strike School" in preparation for a possible faculty strike should the two mediation sessions scheduled in February not result in an agreement.

Consent Agenda items are not typically newsworthy. However, bundled within the consent agenda was the approval of a **new three-year contract for President Bulger**. The motion to approve the Consent Agenda passed 5-2. Trustees Fohnagy and Mulholland abstained from the vote out of their concern that their involvement in developing the new contract could be considered retaliatory, given findings that they engaged in discriminatory behavior towards President Bulger last year. They noted that they supported the Board's decision.

The key Action Item before the board was to decide **how to fill the projected \$800,000 shortfall in this year's budget**. Kara Flath, vice president of finance and operations, described two primary factors which contributed to the shortfall: a lower staff vacancy rate than was projected in the budget and unexpected maintenance costs at the Center Building at the main campus. Ultimately on a 5:2 vote, the Board decided to fill the gap through a combination of \$400,000 in spending cuts and taking \$400,000 from the Reserve Fund (the same Reserve Fund that needs to be rebuilt over the next three years). Trustee Mulholland requested staff bring proposed cuts before the board for discussion and approval.

A key **Discussion Item** was how the Board should respond to a letter received from all six of the Democratic Lane County elected officials noting their concern "regarding the ongoing inability of LCC and LCCEA to reach a contract agreement." In the letter they urged the College "to consider the economic realities facing its workforce" and for "both parties to negotiate in good faith and reach an agreement that reflects the dignity, safety, and economic security of LCC's workforce." The letter did not mention the strong likelihood that State funding for all community colleges across the state will be cut in the budget currently being developed in Salem. The Board agreed with Trustee Mulholland that the response to the letter should say that "the Board and its representatives continue

to negotiate in good faith” and to underscore the importance of funding for community colleges, which the state legislature determines.

☀️ **Reported by: Anne Delaney**

Springfield Public Schools Board of Education

February 9, 2026

[Observer Note: A number of events relevant to the Board’s governance of the Springfield Public Schools preceded this meeting: (a) recall petitions were initiated against the three board members who voted for midyear reductions to teaching staff (Nicole DeGraff, Ken Kohl, Heather Quaas-Ansa); (b) notification by Superintendent Todd Hamilton and Assistant Superintendent David Collins of their intent to sue three Board members (Ken Kohl, Jonathan Light, Amber Langworthy); (c) the resignation of Board Chair Heather Quaas-Annsa; and (d) the abrupt cancellation of two prior scheduled Board meetings.]

Following an Executive Session focused on labor negotiations, the Board began its public-facing meeting. Missing from the table were Superintendent Todd Hamilton, Assistant Superintendent David Collins, and Human Resources Director Dustin Reese, as well as Board Chair Heather Quaas-Annsa (who had resigned on February 5, 2026, citing threats to her personal safety, misinformation, and false narratives). In attendance were two police officers.

The Board **approved a two-year agreement for Springfield teachers.**

The Board filled the vacancy created by the resignation of Quaas-Annsa by approving **Jonathan Light as the Interim Board Chair.**

The Board moved to delegate authority to the Board Chair to negotiate and execute a **resignation agreement with Superintendent Todd Hamilton.**

Public comments continued to implore the Board and administration to work together to find ways to address the District’s issues including, among others, K-12 curriculum issues and unnecessary termination of teachers. Two students stepped up to address the Board about the impacts of losing their teachers midyear. **In a noteworthy change of policy**, the Board asked all presenters to provide a written copy of their remarks to the Board.]

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

Eugene 4J School Board

January 14, 2026 [[agenda and meeting materials](#); [webcast recording](#)]

Budget Cuts. As recounted in previous Sunshine Reports, the District is in the process of working through three phases to achieve \$30 Million in budget cuts. In this meeting,

Superintendent Mickelson reviewed the Phase I and II planned reductions outlined on January 7. After some clarifying questions and Board Member statements about the difficulty of the decisions involved, **the Board unanimously authorized Dr Mickelson to make up to 127 FTE reductions effective 6/30/26 in order to achieve the phase II savings. These reductions will comprise up to 55 Licensed FTE and 72 Classified FTE.**

[Observer Note: Additional details and coverage of these reductions is provided in this [Lookout Eugene Springfield article](#).]

One of the program cuts previously presented under Phase II involves elimination of the Eugene Online Academy (EOA) assistant principal position and the middle school EOA program. Two teachers from EOA explained that the impact of the EOA goes beyond the EOA full-time students, many of whom have special needs and cannot function in a regular school. Hundreds of students rely on EOA for flexible credit recovery and full credit coursework. Online sessions help when there is not enough room in high demand classes by managing scheduling conflicts and class sizes. It supports interventions for students who need additional support or intervention and those who need even more targeted support, helping to keep students on track to graduate as well as serving a disproportionate number of students with physical or mental disabilities.

Legislative Committee Report. In the past, this committee has provided proposed priorities for Board approval. Maya Rabasa reported that the committee's current priorities focus exclusively **on protecting school funding**. The committee doesn't expect the legislature to explore PERS so it has been dropped from the list. The focus is on (a) mitigating and preventing cuts to funding, (b) fighting to have no unfunded mandates, and (c) ensuring adequate funding of the 2025 Accountability Bill. The priorities were unanimously approved by the Board.

January 21, 2025 [[agenda and meeting materials](#); [webcast recording](#)]

Board member Jenny Jonak reported on the **District's lawsuit against the US Department of Education**. The letter and certification requirement they sent threatened the loss of federal funding if the district engaged in anything that could be considered Diversity Equity or Inclusion. Per Jonak, "the language was so vague that it raised serious questions about whether schools could teach history accurately, maintain student affinity groups, provide social-emotional learning, or comply with state-mandated requirements...The certification requirement would also have opened public schools up to False Claims Act liability, exposing the district to suits by private litigants. Defending those suits would have imposed massive costs ... The district could actually end up paying out more than it received from the federal government."

The district judge said the federal requirement was unconstitutional, vague, and therefore subject to arbitrary enforcement. Although the Trump administration initially appealed the decision **it has now withdrawn that appeal** so the District Court decision is final. The Eugene School District is the only district in the US to join the lawsuit. Per Jonak,

“Eugene 4J’s participation mattered, both in establishing, standing and bringing the lawsuit to a close....This was a collective effort, and it made a national difference.”

Dr. Mickelson presented the **proposed Phase III reductions totaling \$9.88MM** for the Board’s approval at the next Board meeting. She said these cuts will make the District sustainable in the long-term. They are needed because COVID relief dollars are fully expiring and there is a continuing enrollment decline (which drives state funding). Michelson also said that 4J is having to catch up because it did not reduce staffing for prior year enrollment drops. Per Mickelson, even with these changes, class sizes will remain reasonable and comparable to other districts.

The proposed reductions, to be voted on at the February 4 meeting, include the following:

- \$10.44M in additional school-based staff reductions comprising up to 95 licensed staff FTE (8.6%) and up to 15 classified staff FTE (1.7%).
- \$0.16M (net of one-time moving costs) for possible Co-location of Family School to Camas Ridge. Mickelson plans to change leadership so that both schools’ needs are balanced and she will create an implementation committee from both schools to work through the details.
- \$3.08M in staffing reductions if the District reduces the daily periods in middle schools from 7 to 6. In addition to the cost savings, this schedule would increase periods from 43 minutes each to 50 minutes, which is expected to improve instruction. Some teachers, parents, and board members Jonak, Rabasa, Thessen, Newman, and Di Liberto expressed concern that the schedule change will reduce access to arts and music electives.
- \$6.7 million in other school-based staffing reductions

[Observer Note: Additional details and coverage of these reductions are provided in this [Lookout Eugene Springfield article](#).]

Student representatives addressed the impact of the new school cell phone policy. The greatest pushback was against prohibited use during passing and lunch times.

February 4, 2026 [[agenda and meeting materials](#); [webcast recording](#)]

The Phase III Budget reductions of \$9.88 million were approved, finalizing the \$30 million cuts to the 2026/2027 fiscal year budget. As reported previously (see above), Phase III cuts cover school-based staffing reductions, the colocation of the Family School to Camas Ridge, changing Middle School Schedules from 7 periods to 6, and other staffing reductions.

[Observer Note: Additional details and coverage are provided in this [Lookout Eugene Springfield article](#).]

Judy Newman presented **research into possible alternative methods to elect board members.** The research was initiated in response to concerns from some in the community that the method of electing the Board is inequitable, because there is no

guarantee that Board members live throughout the district. Currently all people within the district vote for all Board positions and all positions are at-large. Two options were discussed:

1. Whether to require that candidates for part, or all, of the positions reside in specific zones that they represent.
2. Whether only voters that live in a specific zone can vote for the seats that are dedicated to that zone or whether all voters vote for all seats.

Judy also suggested that it would be good to consider ranked choice voting (RCV) for all at-large positions, but noted that RCV is not an option yet in Lane County.

Almost all Board members said they thought having members representing part of the district would lead to regional conflict rather than collaboration. Morgan Munro recommended that 4J work with the legislature to allow RCV, because, currently, the same 51% voters can pick all the board members. With RCV all voters' preferences would be reflected, even with an all "at-large" Board. Based on the discussion, the Board decided not to take additional steps to consider any changes to the election process at this time.

During **Public Comment**, Bob Fordham spoke about the **guest teacher contract**. He said that classified staff are getting 5% COLAs for 2025, 2026, and 2027. This mirrors the last contract for licensed staff and what Managers, Administrators, Professionals, and Supervisors got last year. Guest teachers have been bargaining for the last 10 months. The current offer is 0% for 2025, 4.3% for 2026, and 2% for 2027. When guest teachers are not available, those times are filled by licensed teachers at much higher cost, so guest teachers save the district money. He asked for a fair contract.

 **Reported by: Lenice Shaw**

Oakridge City Council

February 5, 2026 [[meeting agenda and materials](#); [webcast](#)]

Mayor Cutchen delivered the **State of the City address**, acknowledging the City Staff for their efforts and adaptation to new systems. While financial difficulties persist, he expressed satisfaction that Fire and EMS funding are now separated in the budget. Although the Willamette Activity Center lost its federal grant, reconstruction slowly continues. Access to healthcare remains a crucial concern for the Oakridge area. The City faces aging infrastructure, the wastewater treatment plant requires more than just maintenance, and repairs are necessary for the water system. Additionally, there are ongoing challenges with ODOT funding for local streets.

During **Public Comment**, several people requested clearer information about the Rural Tourism Marketing Program/Transient Room Tax grant selection process. One suggestion was that if the Council disagrees with the committee's recommendations, it should dissolve the committee and decide independently. Several comments addressed Save TV

Butte. Commissioner Buck will be at Sweet Vine from 2–4 p.m. on February 21; attendees were encouraged to ask her to oppose the quarry.

Joy Kingsberry reported her home was burglarized on November 25 and noted frequent drug dealing and robbery in Oakridge, with no police response. Another resident also observed drug activity nearby. Mayor Cutchen requested the City Administrator discuss the issue with the police chief.

 **Reported by: Leslie Heaton**

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, Springfield City Council, Eugene 4J School District, Springfield School District, Eugene Water and Electricity Board, and Lane Transit District. To keep you informed, we will distribute their reports by email twice 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, President (president@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.