



Vol. I (19), Feb. 5, 2026

“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

[January 27, 2026 \[meeting agendas/webcast recordings\]](#)

In a presentation on elections and the security of drop boxes, County Clerk Tommy Gong expressed **concern about the new USPS postmark changes** and suggested that **mailed ballots should be sent about seven days before an election** to ensure that they arrive on time at the Elections Office. (The old rule was that the postmark showed the date that the mail was dropped in a USPS box or handed to a clerk. The new rule is that the postmark will show the date the mail is first handled by an automated sorting machine at a processing center, which can be days later.) On the topic of ballots being sent to people who no longer live in the county or who have died, Mr. Gong reported that Inactive Voters are not sent ballots.

In a unanimous decision, Commissioners awarded a \$17 million contract amendment to Ameresco, Inc. for construction services to upgrade the **Public Service Building Central Plant**. All commissioners weighed in on the need for this upgrade and fully supported what they felt was a long overdue upgrade before a “catastrophe” occurred.

In a Work Session, Commissioners heard a report about the Travel Lane County Indoor Multi-Sport Facility Development. The discussion about the need for an indoor multi-use facility touched on the following:

- Attracting more winter overnight guests in area motels/hotels
- A facility able to accommodate basketball, volleyball, and pickleball courts, speakers, and trade shows

---

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

- A facility with tournament capacity (8 basketball courts, 16 volleyball courts)
- A facility with turf
- A facility with flex and team rooms
- Weekend tourism access
- Weekday community access

A long discussion ensued over ownership, operations, site selection, and funding. Sites being considered include the Lane Events Center and Royal Caribbean site. The need for a “Decision Grade Feasibility Process/Study” within the next six months was suggested. The County Administrator said this process could be done jointly by Lane County and Travel Lane County, estimating the cost to each entity for the study to be approximately \$225,000. The Commissioners unanimously agreed to proceed with the study. Travel Lane County and Lane County employees will provide updates to the Commissioners every six weeks.

 **Reported by: Judy Leahy**

## **Eugene City Council**

**January 21, 2026** [[meeting agenda and webcast recording](#)]

In a Work Session, Councilors discussed the **Proposed Wastewater Expansion to Goshen, Short Mountain and Creswell**. Goshen has 300 acres of industrial land that could be developed with this extension. Councilors want reassurance that the wastewater facility can handle the expansion with no additional costs to current ratepayers. Junction City is also considering joining the Metropolitan Wastewater Management Commission (which provides services to Eugene, Springfield and Lane County). More data was requested. Final deliberations and actions would take place in June-July. Councilors voted to allow updates to language in the Metro Plan Amendment that would allow sewers outside the Urban Growth Boundary with some exceptions.

**January 26, 2026** [[meeting agenda and webcast recording](#)]

In a Work Session, the Assistant City Manager updated the Council about **joint efforts with Springfield to create an intergovernmental entity to provide fire and emergency services** across both cities in a more seamless manner than the current merged system. Negotiations with Springfield to create a governance structure and align staffing and financial systems begin this month, with a progress update scheduled for April.

The council reviewed and adopted **position statements on state and federal legislation expected in the coming year**, based on priorities across a range of topics that include housing and homelessness, economic development, land use, public safety and transportation, natural resources, public health, and equity/inclusion.

Councilors **elected new officers** for the coming year, using a rotation strategy to avoid political considerations. This year's officers are President Lyndsie Leech and Vice

President Eliza Kashinsky. Leech replaces Greg Evans. Kashinsky replaces Leech. The council president conducts council meetings when the mayor is absent and functions as mayor when the mayor has been absent for 30 days or more, or is physically unable to function as mayor for 30 days or more.

The city **approved an additional 20-year property tax break for two low-income housing projects** in Eugene: one at 4103 W. 18th Ave. that provides 213 units and one at 265 W. Eighth Ave. that provides 102 low-income units. Their original 20-year property tax exemptions will be extended another 20 years. The property tax break program, created in 1990, provides support in the form of lower taxes for 44 housing developments providing 2,200 housing units. Criteria for the lower-tax designation: lower rents for people with incomes at or below 60 percent of the area median income. For a one-person household, that would be an income cap of \$37,449. For a household of four, it would be \$53,460.

The city approved **giving city-owned property at 1091 Coburg Road to Cascade Housing Association for construction of 27 low-income housing units**. Some federal funds from Housing and Urban Development will be used for the project, but the agency must secure other financing before federal funds are released.

About 40 people showed up for **Public Comment** [[view webcast here](#)]. Most raised **objections to the Amazon warehouse** to be built near the airport, not only for environmental and traffic concerns but also because the company provides support to federal ICE agents. One speaker reminded Councilors of the massive Hyundai plant at the west end of town, which has stood vacant for the last 18 years after just a decade of operations, thanks to the rapidly changing computer chip environment. That speaker expects jobs at the Amazon facility to diminish as AI and robotics replace human employees. Other commenters expressed continued rejection of **license plate reading technology**, regardless of the manufacturer, and **frustration with the city police for failing to do more to block ICE activities** in Eugene.

**January 28, 2026** [[meeting agenda and webcast recording](#)]

In a work session, the Council voted to **advance a library levy to the May ballot that increases taxes**, opting for programming that includes maintaining and adding to Early Literacy Librarian, Youth Collections, Storytime to Go, and preschool, daycare, and kindergarten outreach. It will also provide a pilot program with two kiosks, one specifically in the Churchill neighborhood. This will be an increase from the current tax rate of \$0.17 (\$49/year) to \$0.19 (\$54/year).

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

**Springfield City Council**

**January 29, 2026**

In a **State of the City address by Mayor Sean VanGordon** at the Wildish Theater on Main Street in Springfield, VanGordon presented awards to active community participants. He then gave a speech on programs and progress on on-going projects and new plans for the future. The theater was filled to standing room only with engaged citizens.

**February 2, 2026** [[meeting agenda and materials](#)]

During the Business Meeting, the Council reviewed two issues:

1. Dealing with the \$4.5 million deficit. A task force is currently working on the 0.01% **shared payroll tax that will be paid by all Springfield City employees**. The goal is fairness and transparency for all those sharing the payroll tax.
2. The Housing and Design Initiative dealing with the **Booth-Kelly area** of Springfield and how to encourage commercial usage and accommodate housing needs in the same space in that area.

During the Regular Session, five members of the Eugene-Springfield Model Railroad Club spoke to the City Council about the importance of **restoring and preserving the old Springfield Railway Station and the Railroad Post Office (RPO)** rail car that is next to it. The Council agreed.

The City Council and Mayor honored schoolchildren who had competed in the design of bookmarks for year-long use at the Springfield City Library. There was a very jolly crowd of parents and students present and a good time was had by all.

 **Reported by: Jennifer Allison-Keim**

## **Springfield Public Schools Board of Education**

**January 26, 2025**

The Springfield Board of Education postponed its regular monthly special session with a notice posted that same day:

“The School Board Special Session originally scheduled for January 26 has been postponed to the first week of February. This allows time to coordinate training with the Oregon School Board Association to ensure agenda priorities are clearly aligned with board roles and responsibilities. The District website will be updated once the meeting details are finalized.”

The next Board Meeting is scheduled for February 9, 2026.

[Observer Note: The **Community Alliance of Public Education (CAPE)** held a forum on January 28, 2026, to allow the public to speak out and ask questions about what is currently happening in Springfield’s elementary schools. This forum came about because the Board interrupted Sarah Bosch while she was speaking during the Public Comment

period at the previous Board meeting. Content related to what was discussed during the forum (e.g., the fact that math and reading comprise 48% of a typical elementary student's week in Springfield Public Schools, administrative requirements restricting teachers' allocation of teaching time to other subjects) can be reviewed [here](#).]

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

## **Lane Transit District Board of Directors**

**January 21, 2025** [[agenda and meeting materials](#)]

The Board authorized the CEO to purchase 11 replacement diesel buses from Gillig LLC.

In the Public Comment period, an Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) rep pointed to unspecified problems in the ongoing ATU discussions with LTD.

LTD has rolled out a trip planning app to help riders. (The app has been made transferable to other cities and transit districts.)

LTD is reaching out to school-age children to encourage bus use.

☀️ **Reported by: Alice Davenport**

## **Eugene Water and Electric Board**

**February 3, 2026** [[meeting agenda and materials](#)]

Because an overwhelming number of persons, 31, signed up to provide **Public Comments**, the Board opted to change the agenda and begin with public comment. However, commenters were given only 2 minutes apiece (normally 3) and comment time was capped at 1 hour.

A large group of folks in the audience **avored Lane County Measure 20-373, the Watersheds Bill of Rights**. [According to KLCC, the measure is meant to protect water quality and allow citizens to bring suit against polluters. If found liable the offending party would bear the costs of restoring the watershed.] The Board, led by Commissioner Barofsky, had proposed to vote on **Resolution 2607 which would have expressed opposition to the measure**. Nineteen individuals, including reps from Northwest Coalition for Alternatives to Pesticides (NCAP) and Protect Lane County Watersheds, expressed dismay and frustration with EWEB for their stance against what they perceived should have been an opportunity for collaboration as EWEB is seen as a protector of water quality. Most individuals expressed concern about aerial pesticides reaching water. Proponents of Measure 20-373 urged EWEB to publicly share reasons why they are

against the proposal, to engage the proponents in discussion to talk about EWEB's concerns, and to delay the vote.

Five individuals, including representatives from Climate Justice League, testified their **opposition to the UO-EWEB natural gas powered pilot project**. Several individuals expressed concern that a fossil-fuel powered project does not fit in with EWEB's stated goals of moving toward renewable energy and Eugene's climate commitments. Other concerns included health impacts from plant emissions.

**In the Commissioner Responses** period, Commissioners largely deferred comment on 20-373 until its time on the agenda, but Commissioner Schlossberger noted "uncertainty in the ballot measure," Commissioner Brown expressed frustration that the proponents did not come to EWEB before the ballot measure was written, and Commissioner Carlson noted that power needs cannot currently be met by renewable energy only.

Commissioners Barofsky and Brown stressed that the project with UO is a pilot for data to see if it is a viable option. Its use would be for peak times only; the intent is not to replace but to supplement renewables. If EWEB doesn't have this option, they could be forced to buy even dirtier power.

**During the Discussion on Resolution 2607: Eugene Water & Electric Board opposes Ballot Measure 20-373**, all Commissioners expressed support for the intent of the measure: to ensure clean water for the public. In their individual comments, Commissioners Barofsky, Morris, Schlossberg and Brown agreed that the measure is too broad and after having reviewed the language, EWEB's lawyers have warned that it would be possible for citizens to sue EWEB for some of their activities such as riparian restoration and dam removal. Commissioners are aware that the costs of lawyers' fees and delays to projects caused by lawsuits would fall on the shoulders of rate payers. Commissioner Carlson was the outlier. She met with proponents of the ballot measure and attended a neighborhood meeting on the topic. She wants more time for dialogue, specifically to discuss with Proponents how they can assure that legal action can't be taken toward EWEB, to review how similar initiatives in other places played out, and to make sure the measure won't inhibit EWEB work in the future. Commissioner Brown insisted all Commissioners be in attendance if there are additional meetings. The Commissioners voted to defer the vote until the March Board meeting.

**General Manager Selection:** Commissioners unanimously voted to offer the job to John Harriston, currently the CEO of Bonneville Power Authority (BPA). The vote was down to two candidates; the runner-up was not named.

**Issuance of Bonds:** Commissioners unanimously approved that EWEB request Eugene City Council to authorize issuance of the following bonds for operations and

refunding 2012 bonds: Resolution 2602: electric bonds in the amount of \$113,000,000 and 2603: water bonds, in one or more series, not to exceed \$218,000,000.

 Reported by: Jenny 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, 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](mailto:president@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.