



Vol. I (21), March 6, 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.¹

The ☀️ Sunshine Report from the LWVLC Observer Corps:

Eugene City Council

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

In a Work Session, Councilors reviewed various operating agreements and most were passed without issue. Two were discussed in detail and rejected.

The motion to **allow people to make public comments virtually rather than limiting comments to those physically attending meetings** failed by a 2-5 vote (Councilor Evans was absent). Councilors noted that community members are able to write the council and have their comments placed in the record. Moreover, imposters have been known to “zoom bomb” meetings.

After more than a year’s worth of discussion and public comment, by a 2-5 vote the Council **rejected a law that would make it illegal for people in a car in a driving lane, to transfer money or food, or anything really, to people on the street.**

The Council voted to reprioritize the order of speakers during Public Comments. Boards, community groups, neighborhood associations, and first-time speakers will be heard first.

February 23, 2026 [[meeting agenda and webcast recording](#)]

In a Work Session, Councilors reviewed a report by the **Human Rights Commission (HRC) on its progress on a work plan that covers 2024 through 2026 fiscal years.** Commission Chair Silky Booker noted that the HRC can’t be effective if it’s treated as an advisory body rather than a partner. The Council’s recent vote declaring a human rights emergency

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

(because of federal ICE activities) happened with no consultation with the HRC. Councilors and HRC members agreed that the work plan—which lists 43 items—should be narrowed, while they also acknowledged that human rights work doesn't lend itself to simple checklists. The Commission needs flexibility to respond to needs as they arise.

The Council also **reviewed a proposal to create a home energy score that would be disclosed whenever a home is listed for sale.** This falls under its goals to decarbonize existing buildings by 2045. The score, developed by the U.S. Department of Energy, rates a home's energy efficiency on a 1-to-10 scale and costs roughly \$150-\$250. Four Oregon cities already require it: Portland, Bend, Hillsboro, and Milwaukie.

Research suggests minimal impact on sale prices and no impact on mortgage lending. About 65% of Eugene's homes were built before modern energy efficiency standards. The value of the scoring strategy is that the information helps homeowners who want to make improvements and may not be aware of available incentives. Staff will provide additional information and a drafted ordinance on March 9.

Councilor Alan Zelenka announced he would not seek a sixth term, having represented Ward 3 for 15 years. He'll stay on the Council through 2026.

The Council **voted unanimously to make Eugene's Municipal Court a court of record,** which means the court will maintain formal transcripts of proceedings, allowing appeals courts to review the record directly.

Public Comment: Anger over the construction of an Amazon distribution center in Eugene continues to dominate public concern. Air pollution, damage to wetlands, traffic safety, and loss of union jobs dominated the discussion. At least one speaker noted violations of city code regarding traffic impact analysis requirements, which weren't done for the project, may be grounds for restarting the permit process. Other topics included stronger city action against ICE, and a better alternative crisis response proposal, one more like the city CAHOOTS program.

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

Springfield City Council

February 17, 2026

The Council reviewed progress by the Housing and Design Initiative work group (tasked to update Springfield's Development Code in relation to increasing housing for Springfield residents), in four areas:

1. Allow mixed-use housing development in more locations.
2. Provide more flexibility for size and location of commercial space in mixed-use developments.

3. Allow multiple unit stand-alone residential development in more locations.
4. Encourage high-density housing.

The Council approved of certain aspects of this planning initiative and suggested solutions to problems that encouraged further progress.

March 2, 2026

The Springfield City Council Business Meeting focused mainly on updates from the **Gateway Transportation Planning** group. In 2016, the Urban Growth Boundary Expansion opened up the North Gateway land for commercial development. Now the Council needs to figure out how to accommodate all of the anticipated traffic added to an already **very congested traffic area** (including on-ramps to both the Beltline and I-5). The Council offered suggestions to continue moving the process forward, keeping in mind that federal funding for these kinds of projects is very scarce at this time. A couple of Councilors reminded everyone that there were also other parts of Springfield that had transportation issues that would need attention in the future.

 Reported by: Jen Allison-Keim

Springfield Public Schools Board of Education

February 20, 2026

The purpose of this Special Meeting, called subsequent to the resignation of Superintendent Todd Hamilton (effective on February 28, 2026) was to interview candidates for the position of Acting Superintendent. The position will be short term, March 2 through June 30, 2026, to bridge the gap until an interim Superintendent can be hired. The interim Superintendent will serve from July 1, 2026 through June 30, 2027, during which time a search for a permanent Superintendent will occur.

Board member Nicole DeGraff had questions about who recommended each candidate, stating that the entire process was not transparent enough. She failed to listen to a voice message left by Chair Light and refused to open an email by Chair Light explaining the process of selecting these three candidates prior to this meeting, believing that to open these communications would be to violate the open meetings laws. This did not make sense to the other Board Members. There was much tension in the room. Chair Light commented that they had different understandings of the open meeting laws.

The Board finally agreed upon asking questions of each candidate for thirty minutes. The three candidates were:

1. Brian Megert, Director of Special Programs for the Springfield School District. His name was put forth by Dustin Reese, Director of Human Resources for SPS.

2. Ame Beard, Principal of the District's Academy of Arts and Academics (A3). Her name was put forth by a former staff member of A3, Andy Hawk, who is now at Eugene District 4J.
3. Jodi O'Mara, former Superintendent of Mapleton School District. Her name was put forth by COSA (Coalition of Oregon School Administrators) via Rebecca Jacobson, attorney for the Springfield Board of Education.

After the question period for each candidate, the Board briefly discussed each candidate. Ken Kohl made a motion to hire Jodi O'Mara, seconded by Nicole DeGraf. The vote was 2-2, with Light and Langworthy voting no. Amber Langworthy made a motion to hire Ame Beard. The vote was 2-2, with Kohl and DeGraff voting no. Chair Light observed that if the Board could not come to an agreement, the Lane Education Service District may be able to step in and perform the duties of the Superintendent for the short term. Nicole Degraff liked that idea, but Ken Kohl suggested that a decision be postponed until the next meeting to allow more time to consider each candidate. During the meeting, DeGraff had twice commented that "this Board cannot be trusted" and, after 2 hours and 17 minutes, picked up her things and left the meeting.

Chair Light outlined the timeline for filling the Superintendent role:

- March - hire a search firm to find candidates for an interim Superintendent
- April - develop criteria for applications
- May - review applications and interview candidates
- June - hold discussions and make hiring decision
- July 1 - have Interim in place
- August - begin the process to hire a permanent Superintendent

The Board will schedule an extra meeting in March to fill the vacancy on the Board so that the new Board member can be a part of this process.

February 23, 2026

The Board of Directors **unanimously approved Jody O'Mara as Acting Superintendent** from March 2, 2026, to June 30, 2026. The Board unanimously approved a motion for the Board Chair to negotiate her contract.

The Board unanimously voted to approve the resignation agreement with the current Superintendent, Todd Hamilton, who will depart February 28, 2026.

Tension ensued during discussion of the timeline for reviewing and interviewing a Position 2 replacement, as well as during the discussion regarding an upcoming Board training.

The March 2 Board meeting will begin at 5:30 pm, rather than 7:00 pm.

 Reported by: Patty Sandoz and Kim Weston

Eugene 4J School Board

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

The Board received an **update on Eugene School District 4J's Community of Care System**. Mental health support needs in 4J are extremely high. Oregon is consistently at the bottom of youth mental health in the nation and **Lane County is among the highest counties in the nation for youth suicide rates**. Unfortunately, needs outweigh resources. Current challenges include budget cuts at partner organizations, increased acuity of mental health crises in the community, and increased poverty, food insecurity and homelessness.

4J's Community of Care System comprises 4J Community of Care staff, staff throughout the District, and local community partners including mental health providers and other existing community organizations. Three focal areas include the following:

- Family/Student Support. Specialists provide wraparound services.
- Rapid Access Network. Online platform provides staff real-time connection to resources. The system alerts providers and the provider who can meet the need responds.
- The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. This is a federal law that provides students who are experiencing homelessness the same access to education that other students experience. Support includes food at school, transportation to school, and the right to remain at the school where they were enrolled when they became homeless. They receive school supplies and extracurricular fees, system navigation support (SNAP, OHP, FAFSA), and connections to community resources (shelter, housing, food, clothing, hygiene products etc.)

Subsequent discussion indicated Spanish language services are available from two staff who are fluent Spanish speakers. Internal mental health and counselors are funded by the District and community mental health providers bill Oregon Health Plan directly. Grant funding has dried up from the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Between 700-750 students per year in the 4J District are experiencing homelessness. [Observer note: This is about 4.5% of the approximately 16,000 students enrolled in the District.]

The Board received an update on **Senate Bill 141, Oregon's Statewide Accountability Framework** that the district must implement by the end of the 2026/2027 school year. During the Employee Group Comments, Scott Mayers, Cochair of the Association of Managers, Administrators, Professionals and Supervisors stated that this is an unfunded mandate that requires gathering data that is timely and actionable, for which the Senate Bill provides no support. He noted the following issues:

- The Smarter Balanced Summative Assessment is currently administered once per year and can take up to 2 weeks away from instructional time. Results are not available until the following fall.

- In 2024, due to Oregon’s opt-out option, only 84% of students participated in 8th grade math tests, lower than the 95% threshold needed for a reliable data set; so, the schools are being graded on incomplete information.
- Because the assessments are only in English, districts that serve a large number of multi-lingual learners face even more pronounced limitations.
- The test does not measure progress and unintentionally discourages serving the students who need help the most.

 Reported by: Lenice Shaw

Eugene Water & Electric Board

March 3, 2026 [[meeting agenda](#)]

In the Public Comment session, over a dozen speakers, many wearing t-shirts with “Protect Lane County Watersheds”, testified **in support of Ballot Measure 20-373, the Watershed Bill of Rights.**

- Speakers pointed out that the ballot measure is supposed to be overarching so that it can respond to current threats to watersheds such as pollution from aerial herbicide application and future threats such as water polluted by data centers. “Overly vague” language and language conflicting with existing laws will be tested in court, which interprets rights all the time. Under the measure, litigants can be held accountable for frivolous lawsuits.
- One speaker said EWEB seemed to be reaching for a reason to oppose this proposal, as the wording in their resolution opposing the proposal is unclear. EWEB did not identify exactly which projects would be at risk for litigation from this ballot measure, a request that was made of the Board in February.
- Accusations were made that the Board member who brought the proposal forward, John Barofsky, had recently received campaign contributions for an upcoming City Council race from Giustina Land and Timber Co. and other timber corporations, some of which are members of Protect our County PAC, who are against the watershed ballot measure.
- Several speakers called for Barofsky’s recusal on the vote and called into question his transparency to other Board members.
- One speaker asked EWEB to vote neutral on the Ballot Measure.
- While mainly there to thank outgoing GM Frank Larson for his support of watershed projects in the Upper McKenzie Watershed, Executive Director of McKenzie River Trust, Joe Moll, mentioned **the Trust will be hosting an open forum on Ballot Measure 20-373 on Tuesday April 7**, location TBA.

In response to these comments, several Commissioners mentioned that they support the concept around Ballot Measure 20-373, and if proponents were to come back and work with EWEB and other folks who do watershed work, they would certainly be in favor of such a measure.

However, despite arguments from ratepayers, **the Commissioners voted unanimously in favor of the resolution to oppose Ballot Measure 20-373**, deferring to EWEB’s legal council in their comments. The lawyers seemed to have advised them that legal challenges could shut down their environmental work and cause delays on new projects. Commissioner Barofsky had offered to recuse himself but none of the other Board members responded to his offer. President Brown stated “uncertainty and ambiguity creates risk” and “our actions are in the best interest of the ratepayers” intimating that the cost of lawsuits would be borne by ratepayers.

 **Reported by: Leslie Heaton**

Lane Transit District

March 3, 2026

This Strategic Planning session included LTD updates, a report on the Fixed Route Bus Stop ADA Assessment, and an update of progress on the LTD Coordinated Plan.

Updates:

- Some federal money is coming through for projects, e.g. transit, mobility process, bike share study, transit signal priority projects for the EmX system, and fare system upgrades.
- LTD is funding the River Road corridor planning projects. A consultant will be announced soon.
- The “Safe Streets for All” project is selecting a consultant now.
- The microtransit project for the Bethel area, aka “Attain Program,” will look for a consultant.
- ODOT is funding a large portion of the Long Range Mobility Plan.

Reports:

Fixed Route Bus Stop Assessment. LTD has almost completed an evaluation of approximately 1000 bus stops for ADA compliance. It is developing guidelines for upgrading projects, i.e., what is high or medium priority to upgrade. The idea is that in the very long term, all stops will be ADA compliant.

LTD Coordinated Plan Progress Update. LTD is considering the needs of vulnerable groups, including older adults and disabled persons. Many planned projects will be funded by the Statewide Transit Improvement Fund. The challenge is to provide services to all Lane County residents, not just those in population centers.

 **Reported by: Alice Davenport**

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.