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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:

Eugene City Council

[April 15, 2026 \[meeting materials and webcast\]](#)

At the **work session on the city’s Vision Zero project**, so many questions came up that the council voted unanimously for another work session on the topic. Vision Zero is an effort to **eliminate fatal traffic crashes** through street improvements. Fatalities have increased both nationally and locally in recent years. In Eugene there were 14 fatal crashes in 2022, 14 fatal crashes in 2023, and 22 fatal crashes in 2024. In 2025, fatalities declined to 10 within the urban growth boundary. Safety funding comes from state and federal grants, and transportation safety bonds. Total spending 2020-2025 was \$27 million on projects like protected biking lanes, off-street shared use paths, flashing beacons to enhance crosswalks, and both street and path lighting, and speed humps. The city has nearly \$22 million in funding secured through 2028 with pending applications that may bring in more. The studies of high-crash intersections are guiding spending decisions but not all the data is in yet, prompting council members to ask for additional information about specific speeding hot spots, pedestrian behavior, intersections more prone to collisions, and which strategies have track records for reducing crashes. A second work session will be scheduled.

[Editors’ note: We mistakenly published a report from April 2025 in our April 17, 2026 issue. The above report is the correct one.]

[April 20, 2026 \[meeting materials and webcast\]](#)

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

Three public hearings were conducted on (1) user fees for hazardous substances; (2) new permitting requirements that require businesses to notify the City about State and federal permits that might also be needed; and (3) rezoning east of the University of Oregon, which drew the most comments.

No one testified regarding the **hazardous substance user fees ordinance** which sets the fee at \$75.22 per employee, capped at \$2,000 per facility, to fund the voter-approved Toxics Right to Know program.

The second hearing prompted support and opposition on an **ordinance requiring the city to notify the EPA, Oregon DEQ, and Lane Regional Air Protection Agency before issuing development permits** in the E2, I2, and I3 industrial zones. The version before the council ("Version 3") would also require applicants to attest whether they need air, land, or water permits from those agencies. Travis Knudsen of Lane Regional Air Protection Agency supported it as a workable coordination mechanism. A Bethel resident speaking for a community board urged adoption, noting the requirement would only affect 7–10 applications per year. Courtney Griesel, speaking for a coalition of business owners, took no formal position but warned that the cumulative pattern of recent policy moves was creating an uncertain investment climate. Planning Commissioner Tiffany Edwards explained that the commission had actually voted Version 3 down, preferring Version 4, because Version 3 captures far more businesses than the 7–10 estimate suggests – including restaurants, bars, dance studios, and martial arts schools doing routine tenant improvements or electrical work in those zones. Staff confirmed that applicants don't actually need to obtain permits or even hear back from the agencies; they just need to submit a form. Action is scheduled for June 8.

The East Campus area rezoning hearing drew the most comments, including neighbors who oppose new multistory housing. The University of Oregon wants the Council to amend the Fairmount/UO Special Area Study to permit residence halls as an outright use, raise the maximum building height from 45 to 85 feet, expand the residential transition area from 60 to 75 feet, and raise the height limit within that transition zone from 30 to 45 feet.

The University's representatives – Colin McArthur of Cameron McCarthy Landscape Planning and Aaron Olsen from UO Campus Planning – argued the changes are needed to build seven-story residence halls using cost-efficient construction, that the 2004 prohibition on dorms reflects circumstances that have changed, and that the East Campus area is well-suited to housing because of its proximity to academic buildings, transit, and Franklin Boulevard.

Fairmount neighborhood residents formed a visible bloc in the chambers with 28 signing up to speak. Their core arguments: the proposed 85-foot height limit eliminates three-quarters of the transition buffer the neighborhood negotiated 20 years ago; UO enrollment is flat (roughly the same as 10 years ago) and a demographic cliff is coming, so the housing need is overstated; private developers have already built abundant student

housing nearby and pay property taxes that the University doesn't; and traffic, parking, and livability impacts haven't been mitigated. Former planning commissioner John Barofsky urged denial so the parties could negotiate. David Wade noted the Planning Commission majority had voted yes while saying they didn't fully understand the proposal. Several speakers stressed they support more student housing — just not at this scale and not abutting single-family homes.

This is a quasi-judicial proceeding, meaning **the council must decide based on whether the application meets approval criteria, not on whether councilors like the project**. The council voted 8-0 to keep the record open for seven days for the applicant's final written argument only (no new evidence). Deliberations and possible action are scheduled for May 11.

April 22, 2026 [[meeting materials and webcast](#)]

At the Work Session, Councilors considered **the ways the city engages neighborhoods in broad planning efforts** with a specific look at recent engagement in the Bethel and University districts.

The **Bethel process drew the strongest engagement**, involving 230 residents at six community meetings, plus roughly 2,700 online interactions after a mailer went to more than 13,000 addresses. The community generated 75 priorities, later refined to 71. The following themes emerged:

- Safety — more police presence, traffic calming, better lighting
- Economic development
- Transforming vacant spaces into vibrant hubs
- Transportation that reduces car dependence
- Affordable housing including accessory dwellings, middle housing, transitional housing, and senior/low-income units
- Environmental stewardship
- Community events that build a neighborhood identity

Highway 99 came up at virtually every Bethel meeting, prompting staff to propose a separate citywide engagement to "reimagine Highway 99." This would coordinate with an existing 18-month corridor safety study (consultant already selected) and tie in to Vision Zero, urban forestry, housing incentives, and the first-mile/last-mile safety study starting in 2026.

The University area (West University, South University, Fairmount, and Amazon neighborhoods) had lighter in-person turnout — 132 people across seven meetings — but **stronger online engagement**, with priorities nearly doubling from 31 to 61 after the mailer. The following themes emerged:

- Safe travel
- Safety (including social host ordinance enforcement and light pollution)
- Affordable housing

- Environmental protection
- Belonging

Staff committed to delivering an initial vetted list of community requests – sorted by what's already planned, what has funding gaps, and what has no current pathway – within three to four weeks. A more detailed action plan with timelines and budget implications would follow, though staff said the timing depends on Council direction and leadership capacity.

 Reported by: Susan Palmer

Springfield Public Schools Board of Education

April 27, 2026 ([video recording](#))

Approval of Agenda. Board Director De Graff requested the addition to the evening's agenda of a discussion item about a policy covering matters related to the removal of a Board member from Board leadership. The Interim Superintendent search update was moved up on the agenda to accommodate the online presence of the representative from Grundmeyer, the search firm.

Interim Superintendent Search Update. The Grundmeyer representative discussed the process and timeline for the upcoming national search for an Interim Superintendent. Besides the Board and administrators, it was suggested that there be a representative from parents, students, and teachers on the search committee. First screening will be held May 20; semi-final interviews will take place May 27th. Final interviews and selection of the new Interim superintendent are yet to be scheduled. This process will be repeated when the Board searches for a permanent Superintendent in a year or so.

Executive Session. The Board adjourned to Executive Session to review confidential attorney-client privileged information.

Action Item. A motion was made and seconded to take no further action on the Executive Session topic and to have Chair Jonathan Light draft a response to the complainant. During discussion, Director De Graff requested the Board view the draft response from the Chair and receive copies of all past letters drafted by the Chair. The motion to have Chair Light draft the response was passed with three in favor (Light, Kohl, Brew), one opposed (De Graff), and one abstention (Langworthy).

Discussion Items.

The Board discussed **prioritization of future Board topics.** Chair Light proposed adding potential topics to the list including community involvement, board development, board retreat, Hamlin Sports Complex, nutrition services, etc. The Board decided to revisit this list after the selection of the Interim Superintendent.

Board members discussed the policy about **Board member visits to schools**. It is apparently more difficult for some Board members to visit schools than others. Some Board members, including De Graff, noted they have had easy and frequent access to schools. Chairman Light reported having had an escort of five administrators on his visits. Director Langworthy has had repeated requests to visit schools either denied or squelched. Current policy states that any contact should go through the Superintendent. Chair Light suggested making the process easier by not having to go through the Superintendent to schedule a visit. Instead, the visit could be scheduled with the building Principal and a courtesy notice of the visit sent to the Superintendent.

Board discussion turned to Director De Graff's agenda item addition of a policy covering matters related to the removal of a Board member from Board leadership. De Graff distributed her draft of such a policy (disregarding a previous agreement to submit such written material to each Board member for review prior to the public meeting), a proposal that would prevent a Board member from assuming a leadership position on the Board after previously being removed from a leadership position. Director Kohl asked what problem the policy was attempting to address. De Graff referred to last fall's censorship and removal of Board leaders when Chair Heather Quaas-Annsa resigned and Director Light was voted in again as Chair. The intentions of the policy remained unclear. Acting Superintendent O'Mara suggested that all discussion of policy changes should be tabled until the new Superintendent is hired, so that all can be on the same page.

[Observer Note: Tension between Board members is still high. Director De Graff continues to quarrel with Chair Light and Vice Chair Langworthy. The contentiousness has cast a pall over the proceedings and causes the observer to question the effectiveness of a Board that continues to have infighting at the expense of getting the real work of the Board done.]

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

Oakridge City Council

April 16, 2026 [[meeting agenda and materials](#); [webcast](#)]

Mayor Cutchen shared that the airport runway needs repairs soon, as it is critical for firefighting and air ambulance services. He advocated funding during the Lane Area Commission Transportation (LaneACT) meetings. His efforts were successful with a resulting grant to support the runway project. A bid has been issued for the necessary work, and it is expected that construction will commence during the upcoming summer.

Mayor Cutchen emphasized the importance of Oakridge having active local representation at the Lane Area Commission on Transportation (LaneACT) meetings. He noted that it is crucial for other agencies to understand the unique needs and priorities of Oakridge, which can best be achieved through consistent participation by local officials. Following a brief discussion among Council members, it was determined that Guen

DiGiola, the Community Development Director and City Planner, will serve as the alternate representative for the Mayor at LaneACT meetings. This appointment ensures that Oakridge's interests will continue to be effectively communicated and advocated for during these important regional transportation discussions.

Dustin Rymph, the Fire Adaptive Program Coordinator for the Southern Willamette Forest Collaborative, provided a Firewise Update. He announced that he will be taking a new position with the Oregon State Fire Marshal. Over the past five years, Mr. Rymph has successfully obtained grant funding for Oakridge and Westfir. These funds were used to mitigate fire risks on over 600 acres of private land and have supported more than 150 community members who either lacked the financial resources or physical ability to carry out mitigation work themselves.

Dustin's recommendations for Oakridge and Westfir are as follows:

Vegetation Management: Residents are encouraged to clear vegetation at least five feet away from their homes to reduce fire risk.

Structure Placement: Sheds or other structures should be located at least twenty feet from a home. That will significantly decrease the risk of structural failure during a wildfire.

Community Responsibility: Mr. Rymph emphasized that being recognized as a Firewise community does not guarantee city-wide adaptation for wildfire survival. Each homeowner must take responsibility for mitigating fire risks on their property.

Policy and Code: He suggested that the city mandate codes requiring residents to clear hazardous vegetation from their property. Sarah Altemus-Pope, South Willamette Solutions Executive Director, reiterated the importance of the Council taking action to create codes specifically for wildfire protection.

 **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.

