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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

September 15, 2026 [[full meeting agenda](#); [morning webcast recording](#)]

Lane County Administrator Steve Mokrohisky opened the Quarterly Progress Report on the Lane Stabilization Center by providing a high-level overview of the project for the Board. The concept of a local stabilization center dates back to a 2014 proposed solution to an existing “service gap” for those in mental health or substance abuse crisis who currently are directed to area hospital emergency rooms or to jail.

The new center would bring 275 jobs with an average annual pay of more than \$100,000 to Lane County, Mokrohisky said, and alluded to the ongoing property annexation process now before the Springfield City Council. He expressed hope that the process will be completed soon.

Eve Gray, Lane County Director of Health & Human Services, and Alicia Beymer, the chief administrative officer at PeaceHealth Sacred Heart Medical Center at River Bend, continued the presentation. Gray restated the urgent need for the “biggest behavioral health campus outside of the Portland area” and explained how this “campus of care” will better address the needs of Lane County families. Beymer said PeaceHealth has a pending submission of a Certificate of Need to the Oregon Health Authority for its planned 96-bed Timber Springs psychiatric hospital that will be part of the campus. The deadline for completing the hospital is March 2029.

¹ LWV Observing Your Government in Action

In addition to the Springfield property annexation process, Gray cited a need for revised regulations governing services provided for youth and adults at the same facility. David Ward, Manager of Capital Planning, gave an update on the finalization of the schematic design phase and start of plan development with TVA Architects and Pence Construction. There is a 12.7 percent discrepancy between the cost estimates of ACC Cost Consultants and Pence, but Ward said the estimates remain within the previous total cost estimate for the project. To date approximately \$12 million of the secured \$44 million fund has been expended.

The Board conducted a required public hearing to receive public comment regarding the results of a contract under the Federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funded Regional Housing Rehabilitation Loan Program (RHLP). Lane County received a \$500,000 CDBG award from Business Oregon to support owner-occupied housing rehabilitation through the RHLP, administered by St. Vincent de Paul Society of Lane County (SVdP). The project assisted 19 low- and moderate-income households, primarily in Oakridge, through \$281,000 in deferred rehabilitation loans and \$119,000 in grants. Administering the project cost approximately \$100,000.

Andy Clay, housing program manager with St. Vincent de Paul, described the nature of the rehabilitation efforts, which included new roofs, dry rot repairs, siding, accessibility improvements, weatherization, heating, and plumbing repairs. All of the Commissioners made appreciative comments. Commissioner David Loveall said, "Truly this program changed people's lives." And Commissioner Laurie Trieger added, "My only question is when is the next round, and how do we apply?"

 **Reported by: Tom Rigell**

Springfield City Council

September 8, 2026 [[meeting agenda](#); [webcast recording](#)]

In a nonbinding straw poll, Councilors voted 4-2 against annexation of the 17.99-acre plot in North Springfield near the Gateway exchange off I-5, owned by PeaceHealth and Lane County, and intended for a planned behavioral health center and psychiatric hospital. Annexation would require the City to extend services such as water, electricity, emergency services, and streets. The problem is that the area is zoned light campus industrial.

Assistant City Attorney Kristina Kraaz led discussions with the Council, offering a brief recap. Since the last meeting prior to summer recess on June 22, both parties had submitted their final arguments, and city staff had negotiated an annexation agreement to assist the Council in making a decision to approve or deny it. Kraaz reviewed criteria for approval, offering a hierarchy of requirements. She explained that House Bill 2005, the "Supersiting Bill" that is thought to force the City's hand toward accepting the development, does not apply until after the Council decides whether to annex the

property. That decision comes down to consistency with the Springfield Comprehensive Plan: If the annexation is consistent with the plan or if it could be, the Council should approve the agreement. If not, they should deny it.

Councilor Michelle Webber opposed the decision based on Springfield's zoning requirements. She was most concerned about creating isolated exceptions to the requirements. Councilors Jill Cuadros, Andrew Buck, and Alan Stout also voted against. Councilor Kori Rodley said she was not convinced the development would not fit under the Comprehensive Plan. Councilor Steve Moe strongly supported the project. Mayor Sean VanGordon also expressed his support, though he only votes in case of a tie.

Kraaz will prepare a draft order to deny the annexation for next week's work session.

Three members of the public brought up issues in Public Comments: opposition to data centers inside Springfield city limits, a beautification project for Glenwood, and gratitude for the City's help bringing the Mormon temple project to fruition. In their response, Rodley and Buck enthusiastically supported a discussion about data centers, and Stout expressed interest in the beautification project.

In the preceding work session, Councilors were trained on the City's liability insurance coverage and best practices to reduce liability while carrying out public duties. Some highlights: Councilors have no liability insurance coverage against charges of libel (as one example) speaking to the press or a constituent from home, at the grocery store, or on social media. Charges of ethics violations can be defended against for up to \$25,000, but the City's insurance will only reimburse a councilor if they are proven not to have violated ethics codes. When carrying out city work, volunteers are covered by liability insurance as unpaid city employees.

Cuadros asked for an update on the August 2026 crash at 35th and Oregon. Three pedestrians were seriously injured when an SUV rolled on the sidewalk near the Bob Keefer Center off Main Street. After a meeting between city leaders and local residents, trees were trimmed, street signs improved, and cameras are now checking speed.

Finally, Councilors approved the collective bargaining agreement for 2026-2029 with Springfield Police Association.

September 14, 2026 [\[webcast recording\]](#)

In their second work session in two weeks, Councilors worked through their reservations and took steps toward approval of the annexation agreement for the planned behavioral health facility and hospital north of Springfield. Community and political support for the project was evident at this meeting (at which there was no public comment period). Councilors spoke of receiving 150 emails in support of the proposal and a letter from PeaceHealth. Additionally, PeaceHealth lawyers and administrators seemed to interact with Councilors from their seats in the front rows of the gallery while two Lane County commissioners (David Loveall and Laurie Trieger) and county staff kept a lower profile in back.

Assistant City Attorney Kraaz repeated the question at hand: Is annexation consistent with moving urbanizable land to urban uses as shown in the Springfield Comprehensive Plan? Councilors seemed reluctant to pick apart the language in the relevant code, repeatedly asking instead what the question was they were to vote on and whether it committed them to any particular future action. Movement toward approval came in the last few minutes of the hearing as Webber and Buck joined Rodley and Moe to what VanGordon called a "soft yes" on annexation, over Stout's and Cuadros's continued reservations.

At the next work session, the Council will discuss the annexation agreement and provision of city services—especially transportation and stormwater management—to the property.

☀️ **Reported by: Beatrice McKenzie**

Eugene City Council

September 9, 2026 [[agenda and webcast recording](#)]

What: Work session in which Councilors reviewed projects in the City's development pipeline, in both the housing and commercial/industrial realms.

Why: Elected officials have been deeply focused on increasing both a good supply of affordable housing and job growth while increasing city revenue to help resolve the budgeting challenges that have led to multi-million-dollar program cuts in recent years.

Details: Current projects either completed or close to completion include accessory dwelling units on a variety of lots, small-house developments known as middle housing cottage clusters, and apartment buildings. Commercial projects such as the new self-storage facility on Highway 99, the University of Oregon's new indoor practice facility, Zip-O-Log Mills' new corporate headquarters, and Eugene airport expansion all got a quick review.

A broad look at the permitting numbers comparing 2025 to year-to-date 2026:

	2025	2026 (through September)
Applications received:	7,267	5,074
Permits issued:	9,639	6,687
Inspections performed:	45,505	26,999
Projects completed:	7,598	4,903

Notes: The permit numbers obscure the size of projects. Each permit could be as small as a bathroom remodel or installing an electrical outlet to charge an EV or a multi-apartment structure.

Outcome: An information-only meeting. Councilors didn't vote.

September 14, 2026 [\[agenda and webcast recording\]](#)

What: Work session in which councilors reviewed urban growth strategies that will require city code amendments over the coming years.

Why: Recent state legislative decisions call for increased capacity and reduced barriers to housing and jobs in communities. Meeting state goals requires changes to city code.

Details: Staff presented four packages of proposed actions over the next four years. The code changes would permit micro housing and single-room occupancy projects, allow more tiny units on shared lots, with common buildings for kitchen, storage, laundry and daycare. Code changes would allow increased building heights and reduced setbacks.

Outcome: A public hearing on the proposed changes is set for October 19. The Council could vote on them as soon as November 23. The Council must take action before the end of the year. Councilors will begin considering the second of the four packages of changes in October.

September 14, 2026 [\[agenda and webcast recording\]](#)

What: Council Meeting. During Public Comments, 72 people signed up to speak to the Council, the vast majority concerned with data centers being permitted in Eugene. Speakers weren't just individuals. Several neighborhood association leaders also raised objections to the excessive energy and water usage and impact on EWEB rates.

Why: In early September, the City rejected a permit application to convert the old Hynix factory into a data center, but the possibility created a lot of community concern. Councilors plan a work session on data centers on December 14. Mayor Kaarin Knudson noted that data centers aren't currently allowed in Eugene code in any of the City's zones and that any other permit requests would similarly be rejected.

Details: Among the dozens of community members who spoke against data centers was a resident from Ward 7 who cited news reports of big corporations building data centers in other states without regard for state and local regulations, resulting in the use of dozens of unpermitted gas generators on site, unapproved construction, and noise ordinance violations—all of which carry environmental and health risks.

Outcome: Councilors will discuss data centers at the December 14 meeting.

☀️ **Reported by:** Susan Palmer

Springfield School Board

September 14, 2026 [\[webcast recording\]](#)

The Board was asked to approve evaluation of the alternate education programs in which students are enrolled, but Director Ken Kohl raised concerns about not being provided with supporting evidence regarding those evaluations. Interim Superintendent Shawn

Stover recommended conditional approval of the programs pending follow-up with the new Lane Educational School District superintendent. Director Bob Brew asked that the Board have the necessary information to act on such issues in the future.

Along the same lines, the Board was asked to approve 13 sets of minutes for work sessions, regular meetings, organizational meetings, special meetings, and business meetings dating back to April 13—without the opportunity to review them before the meeting. Nine sets of minutes were approved and four sets were pulled for corrections.

A progress report on building repairs noted that trusses at Walterville Elementary School were in worse shape than anticipated and would require a more expensive epoxy, entailing a \$150,000 change order. Currently, students are allowed to eat in the cafeteria with the flawed trusses, but not to play in that area.

Kohl requested clarification on some of the numbers in the \$3.7 million resolution authorizing financing structural repairs in several buildings, and Stover said he will meet with district staff to clear up those discrepancies.

During the first reading of the proposed policy on dealing with immigration enforcement agents on school property (see the [9/4/26 Observer Corp Sunshine Report](#)), the Board decided to gather more input from the Latino community before taking further action. The Board also identified the need to develop artificial intelligence and digital response policies.

Public Comments

- Springfield Education Association (SEA) Vice President Ryan Herlands spoke of the mixed morale among the District's teachers. While there are many new certified staff members, existing employees are still grieving colleagues lost to last year's cuts. A request was made that a dedicated portion of Board meetings be given to the SEA to speak rather than the limited three-minute comment period.
- Cheyenne McDaniel, a parent of an autistic child, spoke angrily about a recent occurrence when her child ran away from a teacher and nearly reached a busy road. McDaniel said staffing cuts might have left the district with insufficient staff to supervise students.
- Springfield graduate Johannes Tadeo urged the Board to expand bilingual programs and emphasized the value of these programs for cross-cultural understanding.
- Former Board Director Nicole De Graff, joining virtually, identified herself as a representative of Springfield Community for Good Governance. She notified the Board that the Oregon Government Ethics Commission voted at its September 11 meeting to proceed with a second investigation into the Board superintendent selection process. The Commission is responding to a complaint on whether the Board satisfied the prerequisites for conducting the interim superintendent process in executive session last winter. De Graff also requested that the Board establish and explain the permanent superintendent search process and selection criteria publicly, with an opportunity for public input.

 Reported by: Patty Sandoz and Kim Weston

Eugene Water and Electric Board of Commissioners

September 8, 2026 [\[meeting agenda\]](#)

Concerns about the impact of data centers on utility costs and the quality of life in Eugene dominated the Public Comment period—and may be on the Board’s agenda in the future. Among the six people who addressed the Board on this issue, the potential for increased water and electric rates for residential customers and the management of finite resources were common concerns.

One speaker asked for three commitments:

1. Don’t work with companies requiring NDAs in order to do business.
2. Enact a permanent ban or three-year moratorium on working with data centers in the Eugene area.
3. Work with the City of Eugene to create rules and expectations for companies proposing energy-intensive uses in E1 or industrial zoning areas.

Commissioner Tim Morris suggested that the Board hold a conversation about how EWEB should respond to questions about the impact of data centers on power and water generation and rates.

Also during Public Comments, one person noted that fish passage for salmon and bull trout has not been completed despite being in process as part of relicensing Tribridge Reservoir for many years. Another member of the public encouraged EWEB to expand assistance to low-income ratepayers and to increase incentives for energy efficiency.

The Board reviewed a report on public hearings on two landscape options around the two new College Hill water tanks. Residents were evenly divided between maintaining a hardscape (a concrete slab for roller sport recreation) and creating a naturescape. A contractor hired to compare those options found that the hardscape would exacerbate long-term stormwater runoff, create a heat island effect, and cost six times more than the chosen naturescape option. EWEB plans to engage the public on the plants, screening for neighboring properties, and recreation areas this fall.

A legislative update focused on bills concerning water rights transfers. EWEB needs to use the transfer process to add a new point of diversion to match the intake for its Willamette Water Treatment Plant. EWEB and other drinking water providers have an essential need for any 2027 legislation on water right transfers to include a municipal water right exemption.

GM John Hairston introduced the topic of Strategic Plan Development in 2027, because the current strategic plan will sunset in 2028. EWEB plans to hire a consultant late in 2026 to start the process of development and outreach to the community in 2027.

 **Reported by: Jenny Lippert**

Oakridge City Council

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

An annexation resolution and potential residential development near the Oakridge Airport were among topics of discussion. Two properties proposed for annexation, at 48521 E First Street and 48117 E Second Street, are within the urban growth boundary and connected to city water. Guen DiGioia, Community Development Director and City Planner, expressed concern that one property is zoned forest but within the city boundary, and one property is missing the legal description, which must be confirmed and added before the resolution can be adopted.

Mayor Bryan Cutchen reported that action by the Lane County Board of Commissioners repealing a flora-and-fauna requirement on August 25 would allow permitting to proceed for residential construction on three lots near the Oakridge Airport. Cutchen said the City has no current interest in appealing the ruling but would become involved if permitting begins because of airport safety concerns. He noted that approving construction there could set a precedent for further development and expected the community organization that filed the original appeal to appeal again.

In other business, the Council unanimously approved reserving \$10,000 of the remaining \$37,000 in FY 2026–27 funding for the Rural Tourism Marketing Program and Transient Room Tax Committee (RTMP/TRT) for future projects. New rules exclude groups funded in each of the past three years. Discussion focused on the set-aside and heritage-group requests. Councilor Marty Scott favored funding several events as community events, while Councilor Kelly Brewer sought a clearer definition. Councilor Thaddeus Carter said the committee would review the remaining annual budget, define eligible events, and develop a budget at its next meeting.

The Council also authorized an easement amendment related to the expansion of an AT&T cell tower, which increases the lease contribution to the City from \$20,000 to \$30,000 within three years. AT&T is pursuing FCC and other necessary approvals for the project.

The Council added a \$30 permit fee for a 72-hour mobile food cart to the City's fee schedule. City Administrator James Cleavenger had proposed a \$50 permit fee, but at Brewer's request, the Council unanimously reduced that amount.

In the public comment period, mayoral candidate Sean Goddard advocated street-level government, addressing the opioid crisis, supporting logging and infrastructure, and

creating an emergency tree buffer around Oakridge. He also discussed small-town challenges and the Endangered Species Act. Tina Fairfield proposed a Leavenworth-style sister-city program to generate revenue. Cutchen invited her to present the idea to the Oakridge Development Committee.

Upcoming meeting dates: Public information meetings on the Ambulance Service Levy (Measure 20-387) are October 4, 8, and 21 at 6 pm. Cleavenger is developing neutral FAQs to provide to city residents. A forum for the eight candidates for the Oakridge City Council will be at 6 pm October 7 in the Oakridge High School auditorium.

☀️ **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, Oakridge City Council, Lane Community College Board, Springfield School District, and Eugene Water and Electricity Board. 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.