



Vol. I (33), September 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.¹

The ☀️ Sunshine Report from the LWVLC Observer Corps:

Lane County Board of Commissioners

August 25, 2026 [[meeting agenda](#); [morning webcast recording](#); [afternoon webcast recording](#)]

During the Employee Recognition portion of the morning meeting, Lane County Administrator Steve Mokrohisky recognized members of the Lane County Land Management Division’s Long Range Planning and Building program for ably administering the Firewise program. The Firewise grant program, begun in 2009, offered qualified homeowners in rural Lane County, located outside the Eugene-Springfield Urban Growth Boundary, financial assistance that enabled owners to make their homes more resistant to wildfire damage by upgrading exterior building materials, removal of brush near homes, and similar improvements. Due to cuts in federal funding, Firewise has now ended, but during its 16 years, the management team awarded 1,071 grants averaging \$4,616 per home, totaling almost \$5 million, to Lane County residents.

Mokrohisky recognized Kier Miller, Land Management Division Manager, and other members of the division at the meeting: Jared Bauder, Ben Zublin, Cammyrne Anderson, and Lindsey Eichner. Miller lauded the team’s outstanding work and credited the support of the Oregon Fire Marshall and the Oregon Department of Forestry-Eastern & Western Lane Districts for their roles supporting Firewise.

County staff also presented an overview of recently revised training materials designed to improve orientation for newly elected county commissioners, including a 220-page

¹ LWV Observing Your Government in Action

manual that explains the duties and responsibilities of elected officials and details policies, procedures, and rules of conduct for Lane County officials. The Board approved the documents, with Chair Ryan Ceniga summing up commissioners' positive reaction: "Amazing work!" Commissioner Trieger added, "As a commissioner who joined in the middle of COVID, this looks incredible. I would like to go through this, even all these years in, just for the benefit of it."

A final presentation at the meeting covered two potential economic development tools for rural Lane County: (1) A proposed Rural Renewable Energy Development (RRED) Zone, which would provide property tax exemption for renewable energy projects in rural areas, and (2) a proposed Goshen Area Enterprise Zone (previously part of Springfield Economic Zone) that will provide property tax exemptions on new business investments, including buildings, equipment, and machinery in more than 300 acres zoned for industrial development. Community and Economic Development Manager Jason Harris cited Governor Tina Kotek's "Oregon's Prosperity Roadmap," which calls for "coordinated and strategic action" by business, labor, and community stakeholders with the aim of growing jobs and reversing declining population trends.

 Reported by: Tom Rigell

September 1, 2026 [[meeting agenda](#); [webcast recording](#)]

The Lane County Community Needs Assessment presented to the Board identified assistance with affordable housing and childcare as top priorities for low-income households. Housing costs in Lane County are 21 percent higher than the national average, and 48.8 percent of households here are considered rent-burdened, as they spent more than 30 percent of their income toward housing. Childcare costs average more than \$18,000 annually per child, and availability is scarce, with three or more children for each childcare spot available.

The needs assessment survey is conducted every three years, as required for the Federal Community Service Block Grant program. The Poverty and Homelessness Board, composed equally of one-third elected leaders, community members, and people with lived experience of poverty and/or homelessness, administered the survey, which aims to identify needs and gaps in service so that solutions can be considered and implemented over the next three years.

The primary needs identified were for (1) rent and utility assistance and help identifying housing options, and (2) childcare and related programs, such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and free and reduced-cost lunch programs. Low-income respondents also reported a great need for mental health support. Commissioners voted unanimously to adopt the report.

The South Lincoln Ambulance served the Ambulance Service Area for northwest Lane County but discontinued service on July 1. Western Lane Fire and EMS Authority agreed to take over service temporarily. The Board approved modification of the Lane Code to allow the replacement by Western Lane Fire and EMS Authority.

With the termination of Lane County Counsel Rob Bovett, an interim appointment is needed to provide stability for the Office of Legal Counsel and the organizational capacity to ensure that the County continues to have appropriate legal leadership and access to timely legal advice until the position is filled. The Board appointed Deputy County Counsel Mallory Beebe as interim counsel.

During the Public Comment period, two River Road residents expressed concern about how the County notifies potential buyers that residences they are considering are on a local access road, which means that homeowners—not the County or City—are responsible for road maintenance. They asked that information on the county website be clearer and easier to find and that the County consider couching the information in terms of a warning to buyers.

The meeting included an announcement about a free celebration in Blue River on September 12 for survivors of the 2020 Holiday Farm Fire. The celebration will feature live music, a car show, and vendors. See the Blue River Bulletin Board on Facebook for details.

☀️ **Reported by: Nancy Mills**

Springfield School Board

August 24, 2026 [[webcast recording](#)]

Springfield School District administrators announced that the Dual Language Immersion Program will be pieced back together for the 2026-27 school year. Students, parents, teachers, and community members led the outcry when the program was shuttered in the spring, and school officials acknowledged the impact of their advocacy. A full-time teaching position will be restored at Springfield High School so that seniors in the program's first cohort can complete the final requirements and earn the Oregon State Seal of Biliteracy. These changes do not fully restore the program, which relied on an additional 2.5 staff positions before the cuts, but will allow 12th graders to complete their studies. A gap remains for middle school students; for the time-being, they will take a Spanish culture heritage course taught in Spanish rather than the full immersion experience.

Armando Garcia, Guy Lee Elementary assistant principal, has been named K-12 Dual Language Coordinator and will oversee the program in addition to his regular duties. Garcia and Taylor Madden, the District's equity and inclusion coordinator, have applied for a Pathways to Multilingualism grant from the Oregon Department of Education (ODE). The \$50,000 one-year grant cannot be used for salaries but would support expanding

programs and strengthening the existing K-12 pathway. The District held a meeting August 27 to update parents on the program.

In other business, Interim Superintendent Shawn Stover proposed hiring an outside collective bargaining professional to lead negotiations with the Springfield Education Association.

New immigration enforcement policy requirements

Dr. Stover presented information about the State's requirement that each school district in Oregon adopt policies related to immigration enforcement that are consistent with the [Oregon Attorney General's Model Public Schools Policy](#). The District must put these policies in place by September 30, 2026 and must do the following:

- Designate a primary and an alternative point of contact (liaison) in each school who will communicate with immigration enforcement authorities.
- Include requirements for notifying students, parents, staff, and community when federal immigration officials are confirmed to be on District property for enforcement purposes.
- Maintain confidentiality of all school records, including protected information for students, parents, employees, and volunteers.
- Provide training to all school employees to facilitate their compliance with these policies and to guide potential interactions with immigration enforcement authorities. For example:
 - The designated liaison shall not confirm whether a student, staff member, or volunteer is present, nor make that person available.
 - Staff may not interfere with lawful immigration enforcement actions but must immediately report to the designated liaison, if they observe illegal conduct or enforcement activities.
 - The designated liaison shall not allow access to non-public areas of the District's facilities or property nor sign documents presented by federal immigration authorities, nor give consent to any immigration enforcement action.
 - The designated liaison must document the request from federal immigration authorities to the fullest extent possible including: name and badge number; federal agency making the request; number of officers present; time, date, location, etc. (This is not a complete listing of the requirements.)
- Provide guidance on how to determine the validity of any judicial warrant, subpoena, or order, as well as how to respond if the federal request is not valid.
- Provide guidance on how to respond if federal immigration authorities show up at school-sponsored events open to the public or if they request to board a bus or other school transportation vehicle.

- Include the District's immigration enforcement policies in the student handbook and in culturally appropriate languages on the District's website.

Springfield Public Schools had already taken steps to prepare staff for possible interactions with federal agents: Last year, the district not only put together immigration enforcement protocols but acted on them. The current set of protocols are on the District's website. According to Dr. Stover, the District only needs to tweak things a little bit to align the current set of protocols with the Model Policy. Dr. Stover proposed that he be designated as "immigration liaison" with Dr. Brian Megert, Assistant Superintendent, as the back-up person.

[Observer Note: The preceding summary notes key points in Dr. Stover's presentation, but it inadequately conveys the totality of the Model Policy and its implementation or the challenges that schools are now facing in protecting the privacy rights of their children, families, employees, and volunteers. Readers may review the full Model Policy [here](#).]

District priorities for a new school year

Dr. Stover presented a list of priorities identified in the recent board retreat, including:

- Elementary curriculum
- Student/family surveys
- Student behavior
- Board meeting calendar
- Superintendent evaluation process
- Sites and facilities
- Legal counsel at board meetings
- Attendance issues
- Student support updates

The complete list can be found on the District website, along with additions and comments the Board made for each priority. The District plans to share test score information and curriculum information on the website for parents and the public. Stover said schools and curricula should reflect the community's values, and Director Brandt said teachers should be allowed to use their creativity in teaching the curriculum as long as they meet state standards.

Director Brew said the District should develop a one-page, easy-to-understand summary of behavior expectations set out in the Handbook of Students Rights and Responsibilities to share with parents and students. Brew suggested that the District conduct a staff morale survey, and Director Kohl noted that several staff surveys are available on the ODE website. Brew also suggested convening an ad hoc committee of local professionals to value 125 acres of school property and recommend whether to retain, sell, develop, or divide it for the good of the District. The idea will be revisited at a later date.

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

Oakridge City Council

August 20, 2026 [[meeting agenda](#); [webcast recording](#)]

The Council unanimously appointed Andrea Armstrong to the Rural Tourism Marketing Program and Transient Room Tax Committee (RTMP/TRT).

Councilors selected October 4, 8, and 21 as town hall dates to share information about the ambulance service levy resolution, which will appear on the November ballot. The first meeting will be held at City Hall at 6 p.m. If approved, the measure would begin July 1, 2027 to cover FY2027 and FY2028, set a levy rate of \$1.64 per \$1,000 of assessed property value, and replace the current \$17 monthly utility fee on water bills.

The following candidates are certified for the November 3rd election:

- For mayor, Bryan Cutchen (incumbent) and Shawn Wayne Goddard
- For city council, Thaddeus Carter and Dirk “Poncho” Tarman (incumbents), Jeffrey Crosby, Goat Crudup, Kim Fresenburg, and Bee Havior

City Administrator James Cleavenger said he would contact the League of Women Voters about organizing a public candidate forum.

In other business, Community Development Director Guen DiGioia presented information on a Community Development Block Grant application through Business Oregon for rural Oregon cities and counties. The funds would support continued improvements to the Willamette Activity Center, which Oakridge is working to develop as a resiliency hub. As part of the application process, the city must hold public hearings. One person spoke in favor of pursuing the grant and noted that Oakridge needs a laundromat.

The Council also unanimously approved two changes to the supplemental budget: (1) to transfer \$26,000 in the Wastewater Fund from the Contingency line to the Plant Improvements line to purchase a new pump; (2) to adjust the Oakridge Industrial Park Fund’s unappropriated ending balance due to surplus funds for the Kokanee Way utility improvements. The \$150,000 transfer does not change the Fund’s resources or requirements.

 **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.