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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

October 13, 2026 [[agenda and webcast recording](#)]

Commissioners voted to hold a public hearing on a proposal to allow more than one ambulance service provider to operate in the same area in order to enhance emergency response time in the Upper McKenzie Rural Fire Protection District. The Eugene Springfield Fire Department is currently the sole authorized ambulance service for this area, but the District has a donated ambulance and volunteer emergency medical technicians who could respond more quickly to a life-threatening emergency. The District will make its case at the November 3 public hearing.

County Administrator Steve Mokrohisky reported in advance of the November 3 election that Lane County has 283,321 registered voters. Ballots were scheduled to be mailed October 15. The County has received three additional ballot drop boxes from the Secretary of State’s office, which have been installed at the River Road, Mapleton, and McKenzie Fire District buildings. In addition, a new “Smart Box,” which can scan ballots through envelopes, has been installed at the Lane County Public Service Building, 125 E. 8th Ave. The County now has 25 drop boxes. County election officials recommend that voters mailing their ballots should do so at least seven days before Election Day.

Mokrohisky also announced that the Association of Oregon Counties will host its annual meeting in Eugene November 17-19. He will be participating on a panel discussing “Rethinking County Revenue.”

Among requests and announcements from Commissioners:

¹ LWV Observing Your Government in Action

- Patt Farr asked that the County consider a Board Order to proclaim a Transgender Day of Remembrance on November 20.
- Laurie Trieger requested that Commissioners read or reread an email from a resident describing how anti-Semitic flyers were being disseminated and how the Jewish organization Hillel on the University of Oregon campus has been targeted with anti-Semitic prejudice and hostility. She requested that the County's Rapid Response process regarding prejudice against people, including transgender and Jewish individuals, be reviewed for a possible update.
- David Loveall reported that the Springfield City Council has asked the County Board to host a public hearing on the conversion of McKenzie-Willamette Medical Center from a for-profit entity owned by the Tennessee-based Quorum Health Corporation to a nonprofit organization. That change has been conditionally approved by the Oregon Health Authority (OHA).
 - Commissioners had several questions about the proposal, including OHA's 60-day timeframe for review and the possible benefits and drawbacks of the proposal. Will the hospital facilities still be subject to property taxes? Could the hospital close if the conversion does not ultimately materialize? The immediate response was that the County is simply being asked to hold the public hearing, not to grapple with the questions and problems that might occur. The Board directed staff to prepare a Board Order for its October 20 meeting to schedule the hearing for November 3.

During Public Comments, a citizen took issue with the commissioners waiving rules regarding the McKenzie River Watershed area for one individual, Kathleen Jones McCann, at a prior meeting. The speaker alleged that Commissioners Farr, Ceniga, and Loveall, who voted to waive the rules, did so in response to donations given to them by the parties involved.

 **Reported by: Judy Leahy**

Lane Community College Board of Education

October 7, 2026 [\[webcast recording\]](#)

A proposal to limit the time speakers are allotted during the Public Comment period at meetings when more than 40 people sign up to address the Board drew opposition and was subsequently tabled for continued review.

During the Public Comment period, four students, four faculty members, and a former student said that the proposed 90-second limit would hamper freedom of speech. Several speakers also cited a lawsuit filed by a student and frequent critic of the Board who was expelled for an alleged threat. The judge in the ongoing litigation has ordered the student to be reinstated. Reports from the two LCC unions, Lane Community College Education Association (LCCEA) and Employees Federation, also cited those issues.

The LCCEA contract has been signed. The faculty union's report to the Board questioned the timeliness of posted reports on the Board website; noted that the LCCEA website now includes a link to the union's minutes and an information link to the current student lawsuit; and cited concerns about academic freedom, repression, and retaliation on faculty.

The Board authorized the exploration of bond options to fund LCC's Public Employees Retirement System costs.

Student government representatives said they are still filling positions and panels and raised concerns over advising and communication between the administration and students.

In other highlights of reports and action, LCC's Print/Graphic Department will remain open, the Trades program is seeing a resurgence, the Veterans Center has increased engagement and access, and 90 percent of the children served by the Child/Family Center are from the families of students.

☀️ **Reported by: JoAnn Atwell-Scrivner**

Springfield City Council

October 5, 2026 [[webcast recording](#)]

Transportation funds. Councilors agreed to spend \$300,000 on a study on how best to use the remaining \$9.8 million in HB 2017 state transportation funds. Three remaining intersection projects are the westbound and eastbound ramps on Highway 126 at 42nd Street and a project on Olympic Street. The money, allocated in 2017 and received in 2023, is accruing interest but loses value with each year of rising inflation. If this money is spent wisely, it will also help the city in future transportation project proposals.

Code violations. After an annual update on the city code enforcement office, staff sought Council direction regarding nuisance-lien recovery involving properties with dangerous amounts of trash, derelict buildings, and other hazards. Eleven properties are responsible for more than \$550,000 in court-imposed fines and abatement costs. More than 30 citations have been issued on the top three properties with little action by property owners. The Council directed staff to prioritize action by the size of outstanding balance of fines and then risk to the community.

October 12, 2026 [[webcast recording](#)]

Annexation of International Way property. The Council scheduled a final vote for November 2 on annexing the 17.99-acre parcel on International Way in North Springfield next to I-5, where PeaceHealth and Lane County plan to construct a stabilization center and psychiatric hospital. Councilors discussed three primary outstanding issues: transportation to and around the area, the fiscal impacts of providing police and fire resources to the site, and the project's fit within the parameters of campus industrial zoning.

Councilors talked through stated support for the annexation (Steve Moe, Kori Rodley, Mayor Sean VanGordon) and remaining questions about the project (Michelle Webber, Alan Stout, Andrew Buck, Jill Cuadros). Those issues included:

- Traffic patterns around the already congested I-5 and Beltline exchange. The offer by PeaceHealth to pay for a traffic study took on new importance, with funding for traffic solutions to be worked out later.
- The impact of new streets for emergency vehicles on neighboring properties. Neighbors will be invited to discussions about the Memorandum of Understanding between the City (as the provider of transportation and public services) and PeaceHealth, but they will not be parties to the agreement.
- The potential fiscal burden on Springfield Police. Rodley and Buck expressed their belief that, as Buck said, "Mental health facilities strengthen safety." Unlike emergency rooms, Buck said, PeaceHealth—using experience from the now-defunct Johnson Unit in Eugene—knows not to release unstable patients into the community. Assistant City Attorney Kraaz said the City believes the need for police resources will be lessened because the County will now care for people facing mental health crises.

It was clear the zoning battle had shifted when Kraaz made those comments. Because of the Supersiting Bill, the Council does not need to find that the facility meets campus industrial zoning. Instead, Councilors can focus on whether the agreement is “consistent with the scope” of the [Gateway Refinement Plan](#).

Benefits to the City include increased employment (more than 200 jobs) and the importance of the medical “character of the area” to the community. Though others seemed to be ready to vote, Webber and Stout asked that the vote be scheduled for the November meeting.

McKenzie-Willamette Medical Center. The Council voted to ask the Lane County Board to hold a public hearing and approve tax-exempt federal bonds for the hospital, now that the Oregon Health Authority has conditionally approved its conversion from a for-profit entity to a nonprofit health organization. Federal law requires a local authority to hold a hearing and authorize the bonds; since both the City of Springfield and Lane County are considered local authorities, Springfield has asked the County to step in.

☀️ **Reported by: Beatrice McKenzie**

Eugene City Council

[Editor’s note: To view Eugene City Council webcast recordings, click on the link, scroll down to the list of past meetings, and select the meeting date. The meeting begins at about the 7:25 minute mark, following a lengthy video intro.]

October 12, 2026 [\[meeting agenda; webcast recording\]](#)

What: Work session with update on current Eugene airport expansion projects and a financial feasibility study on the plan to add a new concourse. The Council also received a report from the Human Rights Commission.

Details: The City's multi-year plan to improve and grow airport capacity is well under way. The project is divided into two phases with funding for the first phase—\$209 million—either awarded or expected. Much of the work is completed, including runway improvement projects, a rental car return lot, restroom remodels, Concourse A expansion and jet bridge replacements. The second phase, adding a new concourse, will cost \$240 million, but the funding sources still need to be found. The airport is at capacity, and passenger demand outpaces the existing facility. Federal funding for the project is limited (it goes mostly to runways and taxiways) and other funding options include asking the state legislature for \$80 million to \$100 million in lottery-backed bonds. The airport can also borrow against its own future revenue.

In 2025 the airport served 1.8 million passengers. Even though the airport reached its gate capacity in 2021, enplanements—people boarding planes—have grown by almost 50 percent since then. The airport serves five counties: Lane, Linn, Lincoln, Benton, and Douglas, with some travelers coming from Coos County. The airport generates \$1.6 billion in regional economic activity annually and with full expansion could generate \$3.6 billion, according to a recent study. Currently, 10,000 jobs are tied to the airport. With expansion that number would grow to 23,000 jobs. State and local tax revenue from the airport is \$43 million annually and would grow to \$99 million with the expansion, according to figures based on a 2024 economic impact study.

Councilors expressed interest in seeing a hotel built near the airport and a partnership with Lane Transit District to have public transit to the airport. Councilor Randy Groves said the airport is critically important to the Eugene economy. Councilor Eliza Kashinsky sought clarity on the employment numbers. Airport Director Cathryn Stephens, who presented the report, said the employment data includes everyone working directly at the airport and all airline employees, including ground-handling companies.

Stephens said arranging funding, especially through the state legislature, will require the support of the counties and regional partners that benefit from their proximity to and use of the airport.

The Human Rights Commission Report described its involvement with many other groups throughout the City in its efforts to ensure everyone in Eugene is treated fairly. The commission recommended the City adopt nondiscrimination protections for people in polyamorous relationships or other nontypical family relationships. The report noted the distribution of \$50,000 the city provided for helping families financially harmed by ICE enforcement actions. The money went to four nonprofits: \$20,000 to Catholic Community Services, \$2,000 to The Oregon Aiga, \$23,000 to Plaza de Nuestra Comunidad, and \$5,000 to Grassroots Connect/OCAN.

Next steps: To secure competitive state lottery bonds, Eugene will need a coalition of regional partners who support the airport expansion. Once received, those bonds will allow the airport to preserve its own capacity to issue bonds to help pay for the second phase. City staff are preparing a request for state funds to present to the 2027 state legislature.

October 12, 2026 [[meeting agenda](#); [webcast recording](#)]

What: Council meeting in which Mayor Kaarin Knudson announced a special meeting on Wednesday, October 28, 2-3pm on elections integrity with Oregon Secretary of State Tobias Read, who will talk about systems in place locally and statewide to ensure safe and reliable outcomes. The meeting will include time for questions and answers.

The Council's only official business was a unanimous vote accepting previous meeting minutes, but there was an interesting response from the Council to community members who showed up for the Public Comments portion of the meeting. The Council typically doesn't respond directly to public comments at meetings.

Details: Richard Larosa called for community action against rape: "What do we do about the rapists among us? When do we make it a habit to confront men who believe they're entitled to women's bodies? What are we waiting for? We can't wait until a man decides to become a rapist. We have to get the message across to men while they're still figuring out how to be allies to women." He invited people who want to work with him on the issue to meet with him after the meeting. Councilor Matt Keating thanked him for bringing it up and said he was keenly interested in a pilot program and wanted to be a helpful partner.

John Alford, from Ward 4, expressed concern about his understanding of recent court rulings in Mississippi that found the Constitution doesn't guarantee a right to clean drinking water and also that citizens don't have a right to accurate information from public officials during a health crisis. He wanted to know whether Eugene has the ability to regulate how other government entities operate in the City and how they disclose information. Councilor Jennifer Yeh asked him to stay for a few minutes after the meeting to hear more about his concerns.

 **Reported by: Susan Palmer**

Springfield School Board

October 12, 2026 [[webcast recording](#)]

A general theme of the five reports shared at the Board's regular meeting by high school representatives was about a good start to the school year and increased attendance.

Three of the four speakers during Public Comments said the District still had not addressed publicly the elementary curricula issues stemming from the 2023 complaint filed with Oregon Department of Education. Incorporated in this central issue were related questions about standardized testing, learning gaps, lack of positivity about what

is being taught, and large class sizes. Another concern was based on the perceived discrimination, including funding, of how out-of-state student travel for non-sports groups is treated by the Board and administration compared to sports travel.

Willamalane and the City of Springfield together are developing and managing a native plant nursery to support both voluntary and mandatory stormwater infrastructure and restoration projects. Springfield students and teachers are invited to visit, volunteer, and integrate the nursery into their curriculum.

The annual report by the Willamalane Summer Program covered the multifaceted offerings of summer camps, elementary and middle school sports, healthy activities, education, transportation, culture, and recreation. Participation this year increased dramatically over last year's successful program. The entirety of the annual summer program grew out of a single endeavor of offering a swim program to fourth graders 63 years ago.

Interim Superintendent Shawn Stover presented the Board's priorities for the school year:

- Elementary curriculum and assessment data
- Student behavior and discipline issues
- Staff and community involvement through surveys and focus groups
- Establishment of a facilities committee to explore issues including enrollment and land use possibilities

Stover also shared his activities related to his One-Year Action Plan:

- Meetings with parent and advocacy groups
- Continued school visits
- Continued meetings with elementary staff
- Attendance at home football, soccer, and volleyball games
- Attendance at school nights and PTA events
- Administration personnel shadowing a student (while dressed as a student!)

The Springfield Education Foundation receives \$1,000 from OnPoint Community Credit Union for every touchdown scored by the University of Oregon football team at Autzen Stadium, up to \$40,000, for this season.

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

Eugene Water and Electric Board of Commissioners

October 6, 2026 [[meeting agenda](#)]

EWEB staff briefed Commissioners on a strategy to finance needed capital improvements and updated estimates for average annual rate increases over the next ten years to 3.1 percent for electricity and 7.95 percent for water. Rate increases are primarily due to updated Bonneville Power Administration contract costs, decommissioning of the

Leaburg Dam, and construction of the new water treatment plant on the Willamette River. Details of the financial plans update may be reviewed [here](#).

Concerns over data centers and protections for endangered fish along the McKenzie River were again raised during the Public Comment period. A representative of Churchill Area Neighbors spoke out against data centers and asked that EWEB be transparent in any future dealings that may involve such projects. The conservation chair of McKenzie River Flyfishers urged the Board to make fish passage for Chinook salmon and bull trout at Trail Bridge Reservoir a priority. Commissioner Sonya Carlson said sinkholes in the reservoir must be dealt with before improvements can be implemented.

Alluding to investigations underway of embezzlement allegations at the McKenzie Watershed Alliance (MWA), Commissioner John Barofsky said the Alliance has been a good partner in [stream restoration projects](#) in the past. General Manager John Hairston noted that after EWEB obtains clean financial statements from the organization, the utility hopes to work with the MWA in the future.

The Board was updated on [Leaburg Dam removal](#). The priority for this project has been risk mitigation associated with the Leaburg Canal conveying tributary and stormwater flows as directed by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. Removal of powerhouse runners conveying canal flow during winter months will be completed this year. The second part of the project, reconnection of Johnson Creek to the McKenzie River and rerouting Cogswell Creek flows, is planned for 2027. Transportation planning with Lane County and the Oregon Department of Transportation and the determination of access to properties across the river once the dam is removed are ongoing, as is the strategic evaluation of what to do with the Walterville Canals.

 **Reported by: Jenny Lippert**

Oakridge City Council

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

Eleven people submitted letters or stated their support for the Salmon Creek Trestle project to rebuild the historic bridge for bike and foot traffic. Mayor Bryan Cutchen read a letter from Jeff Brink, owner of Brink's Forest Products, stating that Brink continues to support the Salmon Creek project even though the expansion of his wood-products business would make rail transportation from the Industrial Park more economically feasible.

Matt Burney suggested seeking grants to fund a new bridge while preserving the existing Salmon Bridge for pedestrians, since it is not safe for rail transportation that businesses in the Industrial Park might use.

Sabrina Ratkowski informed the Council that a public hearing before the Lane County Board of Commissioners on the Hazeldell Quarry application will take place at 1:30pm

October 20. She wanted to ensure that Councilors and the public are aware of the meeting.

Norine Marquardt said people affected by the recent fires had asked her to thank the fire and police departments, as well as the community, for their assistance.

The Council continued discussion regarding how and who should repair and own fire engine 1531. Fire Chief Hollett prefers to pay for the repairs and retain the engine. FEMA will soon accept grant applications, but Hollett said the City of Oakridge already received a FEMA grant for its current engine and would be unlikely to receive another.

Cutchen reviewed the fire budget and identified unused funds in several line items. He suggested using those funds now rather than reducing the contingency fund to zero. City Administrator James Cleavenger, Hollett, and Finance Director Melody Corneliu will identify other funding solutions.

☀️ **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.