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Lane County Makes Preparations for a Rough Fiscal Year



The Willamette Valley, with its widely varying topography, serves as a good analogy of the cyclical highs and lows of the Oregon economy, which is now mired in an unfortunate valley.

As is a familiar story across the state, Lane County is struggling to maintain services in the face of shrinking revenue and rising personnel costs.

Lane County faces difficult choices in the coming months as it drafts the budget for the 2003-04 fiscal year. Reduced appropriations to the county from the state (nearly \$10 million), the rising costs of the Public Employees Retirement System and medical benefits, and continued reductions in General Fund revenues have all contributed to a total budget reduction of over \$20 million.

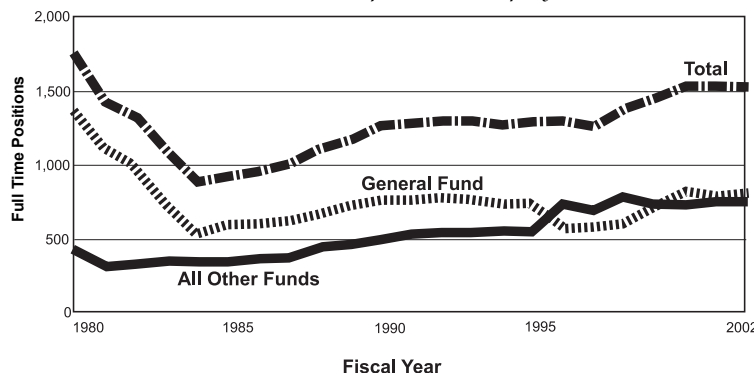
The looming budget crunch is the worst since the 1980s, when shortfalls forced a number of personnel and service cuts. Over a four-year period between 1980 and 1984, the county lost nearly half of its full-time equivalent positions (from 1,765 to 870). Lane County has yet to reach the 1980 level of staffing, even though it has seen its population increase from 275,226 in 1980 to an estimated 328,150 in 2002.

This time around, however, Lane County is going into these budget decisions with a clear plan.

“What is different about the deficit scenario, from other budget cutting years, is that the County did institute a Strategic Plan in 2001,” said Lane

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A Very Difficult Budget Season



by George Kloeppel

Such a pleasant time of the year... The days are getting longer; green growing things are popping up everywhere; runners and bikers and skaters are on the paths; the NBA has nearly given it up for awhile; our favorite baseball teams are optimistically setting forth on their 162-game journeys to disappointment; taxes are out of the way; and, oh yes, officials of state and local governments are complaining about the budget-setting process. Springtime in Oregon seems about normal.

But regarding that last item, the one about budgets, something *is* different this year. The moaning and groaning seems to have a different, more desperate, tone. Oh, the task of assigning dollars to meet the financial demands of government programs has never been

easy. Wants, needs, and desires swirl together and always seem

to exceed available resources. Choices must be made. Indeed, for both conservative and liberal decision-makers, budget priorities have to be assigned; and, as always, the voices seeking help and support are loud. Opinions about the best place to put the last tax dollar in the treasury vary from one elected official to another. Philosophical points will be argued and compromises made, as in every other year. But, still, something *is* different. Could it be...money?

Without engaging here in a pointless monologue about whether taxes are too

high or too low, or about the efficiency of government agencies in their use of public money, I think that it is fair to assert that the gap this year between perceived needs for baseline services and the revenues available to support those services is larger than in the past. This is certainly the dilemma confronting our representatives in the State Legislature. And, dependent to varying degrees on the benevolence of the state, local governments, including those that make up the education community, are faced with the need to make severe reductions.

The anticipated cuts in the services of counties, cities and schools have been well reported in the press. But, since this is an LCOG newsletter, let me clearly state that this is also not a happy budget season for this agency. The LCOG Budget Committee is conducting two meetings prior to submitting its recommendation to the Board of Directors. My proposal to the Committee sets forth a balanced budget for fiscal year 2003-04 in the amount of \$22,081,903—a reduction from the current year's (revised) budget of over \$4 million or approximately 15 percent. Such is the impact of the State's budgetary problem on an agency that relies heavily upon grants and contacts for its support. It should be noted that a portion of the anticipated reduction is actually accounted for by two non-recurring transactions in the current fiscal year. Nevertheless, a seven-digit reduction in revenue, coupled with rapidly escalating costs for employee retirement and health insurance benefits, cannot be

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“Our services will be constrained, as compared to those of the past, but they will be consistent with LCOG’s mission of delivering on the promise of enhancing the quality of life in the community through more efficient and effective government.”

Board Profile: Bill Dwyer of Lane County

Lane County Commissioner **Bill Dwyer** is new to the LCOG Board, but his nearly four decades in Oregon have been full of public service at nearly every level. Bill's prior governmental service includes stints as Oregon State Senator (Dist. 21) and as State Representative (Dist. 42), and as assistant to Lane County Board of Commissioners, to name a few.

The ability to make a difference in people's lives with sound public policy is what Bill says he enjoys the most about his job as Commissioner. He has had plenty of opportunity to make that policy, serving in committees such as the Association of Oregon Counties Public Lands and Natural Resources Steering Committee, Council of Forest Trust Lands, Psychiatric Review Board, Mental Health Advisory Committee, Metropolitan Policy Committee, Legislative Committee, Policy & Procedures, Roads Advisory Committee, Vegetation

Management, Technology Management Team, and the Parks Advisory Committee.

When not taking in a committee meeting, Bill enjoys outdoor activities such as hunting, fishing, and camping. He has even written a national column as a kind of "Dear Abby" for the canine world, answering reader questions about dog behavior in a hunting magazine. Bill also is a member of the Willamette Valley Arms Collectors Association in Eugene.

The small orchard Bill enjoys at his home in the Thurston area, with its country atmosphere in the city, is a far cry from his youth in Philadelphia. Bill's education is local, as well, having studied Political Science at Lane Community College. He and his wife of 48 years have six children, five grandchildren, and a great-grandchild.



Bill Dwyer

From DIRECTOR'S DESK page 2

absorbed without genuine trauma to the system. Because LCOG is a labor-intensive organization, such trauma ultimately must be borne by the staff. As proposed, the new year's budget calls for a reduction of 27.4 full-time-equivalent (FTE) positions—the majority from the Senior and Disabled Services Division, which is particularly subject to the budgetary woes of the State of Oregon.

Lest there be any misunderstanding, let me say that the agency budget that will ultimately be approved by the LCOG

Board in June will provide the support and guidance for a productive year of service to our membership and to the citizens of this region. Our services will be constrained, as compared to those of the past, but they will be consistent with LCOG's mission of delivering on the promise of enhancing the quality of life in the community through more efficient and effective government. And, just as one season follows another, the challenges of this spring's budget process will be followed by better times. I believe that.

The *Regional Focus* is published by Lane Council of Governments on a quarterly basis.

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Visit LCOG on the web at
www.lcog.org

Vitality Walk/Run to Benefit Meals on Wheels

Sunday, June 22, 2003, will mark the 11th Annual Vitality Walk/Run. This exciting event, sponsored by the Downtown Athletic Club, is geared for the whole family and benefits the Meals on Wheels program.

Beginning at 1:00 p.m. in Eugene's Alton Baker Park, this event will focus on promoting fitness and health for all generations. Participants can join the two-mile walk or run, or the four-mile run. Ribbons will be awarded to the top three finishers in each of the 15 age group categories and participants of all ages will receive a commemorative T-shirt and a two-week guest pass to the Downtown Athletic Club!

All proceeds of the event will benefit the Meals on Wheels program in Lane County. This program, operated cooperatively by the Lane Council of Governments' Senior & Disabled Services and the American Red Cross, delivered more than 165,000 hot, nutritious meals to 1,500 homebound elderly people last year. Meals on Wheels volunteers

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Criminal History Clearance Program Works to Protect the Aged and Disabled

The Criminal History Clearance Program makes fitness determinations for the caregivers who are applying to work as Client Employed Providers (CEP) or in an Adult Foster Home (AFH), based on the criminal record statues adopted by Senior & Disabled Services. The driving purpose for the program is always the same: to protect the aged and disabled.

Criminal records checks must be completed on a yearly basis for all Client Employed Providers and all individuals living or working in an Adult Foster Home. From July 1, 2002 to the present, 2,416 criminal history checks have been conducted by the program, including 775 new criminal history checks for CEPs, 801 for Adult Foster Home caregivers, and 840 annual renewals.

Vicki Smith, Criminal Records Specialist at LCOG's Senior & Disabled Services Division, makes the initial determination of applicants' fitness for provider status, notifying applicants of the decision, and conducting hearings for applicants who appeal. Applicants who do not pass the initial fitness determination and who do not dispute the criminal record, may ask for a hearing to mitigate the information.

The mitigation process allows the individual an opportunity to discuss the circumstances surrounding the criminal and arrest history and subsequent events in the subject individual's life in an informal hearing setting. The nature of crime, number of offenses, and the passage of time since the conviction are all taken into account during the review. In some cases after mitigating information is provided, the decision of "unfit" may be changed to "fit" and the individual is allowed to work as a CEP or in an AFH.

Criminal Records Specialist position requires an advanced level of knowledge of the Oregon Administrative rules, regulations, and procedures related to the eligibility of in-home and adult foster home providers, including Law Enforcement Data Systems (LEDS) certification. The Oregon Judicial Information Network) and PC-AIRS are also used to gather relevant information.

Margaret Hogue is also LEDS certified and is Vicki's backup. For more information contact Becky Strickland, Program Supervisor at (541) 682-4454 or bstrickland@lane.cog.or.us.

Staff Profile: Vicki Smith, Criminal History Clearance Program

Vicki Smith has been with LCOG since April of 1999, when she was hired as the Criminal Records Specialist for Senior & Disabled Services. Vicki is responsible for running all criminal history inquiries for the agency.

Vicki works processing criminal history clearances for the Client Employed Provider and Adult Foster Home programs, and is certified to use Law Enforcement Data Systems by the State of Oregon. Her position also requires attending formal and informal hearings, writing letters, making phone calls, and doing a lot of decision-making.

Before joining LCOG, Vicki spent 10 years with the Springfield Police Department working as a record clerk and call-taker.

Vicki lives in the Thurston area with her husband, Jay, and grew up in the Pleasant Hill area. The couple has a combined family of six children and four grandchildren. Vicki has volunteered her free time over the past five years to coach a girl's basketball team, and also enjoys crafting, gardening, and other outdoor activities.

Vicki can be reached at (541) 682-4348 or vsmith@lane.cog.or.us.



Vicki Smith

The Demise of the Medically Needy Program

On January 31, 2003, because of persistent budget problems, the State of Oregon ended the Medically Needy Program. Prior to the program's end, it provided prescription, community-based mental health, and chemical dependency treatment coverage to about 810 Lane County residents. Qualifying individuals were senior citizens or adults with disabilities who had few assets (no more than \$2,000 for an individual and \$3,000 for a couple), but incomes that exceeded the federal SSI income standard of \$572/month for an individual and \$849/month for a couple. Many of these individuals have severe or life-threatening illnesses and monthly prescription expenses that exceed their total income. They were notified of the termination of their coverage in early January.

As these people learned what they were losing, many of them became desperate. S&DS workers and volunteers,

along with personnel from other organizations, met with as many of them as possible to help them locate pharmaceutical charity programs for as many medications as are available (not all drugs are available through these programs). Many were accepted into these programs, but not all. Since these programs only provide limited supplies, those who were accepted will need to reapply every two to three months.

The annual cost for the state to restore the Medically Needy program in Lane County for the 810 individuals who were terminated from service is approximately \$5 million, an amount which far outstrips the capacity of charitable programs and institutions. A legislative solution is needed to prevent further needless suffering and additional premature deaths.

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also provided an important safety check on the health and well-being of community neighbors.

Organizers encourage advanced registration: pre-registration is \$15.00 and day-of-event registration is \$20.00. Contact Paul at (541) 484-4011 for a registration form or more information.

LCOG Serves Telephone Needs of Lane County and Others

For more information, contact Dan Mulholland, at (541) 682-4422, or dmulholland@lane.cog.or.us

Lane County is one of the anchor members of the telephone consortium operated by the Lane Council of Governments. LCOG administers the County's telephone system and coordinates orders for other telecommunications services, such as data lines. The County's phone system utilizes NEC equipment, with seven interconnected systems providing uniform features such as caller identification, voice mail, and call-stacking systems.

The main system is shared with the City of Eugene and others, which provides cost savings and such features as simplified dialing and call transfer between the agencies. The telephone system is used to automate call answering and distribute information to the public as declining budget revenues force the County to reduce support staff.

The County Administrator requested that current efforts be focused on cost reduction. Through auditing of phone bills and assertive action with telecommunications providers, Lane County has received more than \$50,000 in credits or cost reductions in the last six months. There are additional design changes under development that will further reduce ongoing costs. County telephone rates are the same in 2003 as they were in 1993.

LCOG staff also provides support to the Public Agency Network, which provides fiber-optic based high-speed computer links, covering the County's larger locations.

From LANE COUNTY page 1

County Administrator Bill VanVactor. "It has given the County more and better ways to approach the deficit than it has had before. Department directors, our elected officials, and the Budget Committee have used this framework to make some very hard decisions. Also on the positive side, our unions have helped with health contract negotiations, and we have gained some savings from PERS legislation. We hope that more significant PERS legislation will be forthcoming."

The Strategic Plan ranked services by priority level to ensure that the most critical County services would maintain an acceptable level of funding, even with the likelihood of drastically reduced revenues. Providing services to meet critical life and health safety needs is the top priority under the Plan.

Lane County is required by law to balance its budget, and each department has been forced to identify cost-cutting plans, including staff and service reductions, and reviewing the need to fill present job vacancies.

Eugene Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Comprehensive Plan

Lane Council of Government's history in parks, open space, and recreation planning dates back to 1970, when Howard Buford, LCOG's number one planner, wrote the first *Central Lane Regional Parks Plan*. The agency is now continuing its planning tradition by providing consulting services to the City of Eugene for the city's Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Comprehensive Plan update. Working closely with MIG Consulting firm, a citizen advisory committee, and city staff, LCOG is focused on providing much of the technical and mapping work. This work will help to determine the existing level of parks and recreation services, and to guide parks, recreation, and open space growth in the future. A database developed by LCOG also provides the city with a comprehensive and sophisticated inventory of all parks, recreation, and open space facilities and services.

Eugene Parks Planning has also asked LCOG to bring its natural resource expertise into the parks and open space planning process. The agency's ongoing work in the West Eugene Wetlands, the Metro Natural Resources Study,

and the Regional Parks and Open Space Study is helping to integrate how these programs fit within the context of the Eugene Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Comprehensive Plan.

Amazon Community Park offers a combination of open space, recreation, and natural area opportunities.



For more information, contact Denise Kalakay, LCOG at (541) 682-7415, or dkalakay@lane.cog.or.us

Rivers to Ridges Vision Gives Regional Perspective

For more information, contact Jeff Krueger, LCOG, at (541) 682-7415 or jkrueger@lane.cog.or.us.

The Rives to Ridges Vision parks and open space vision map has been developed over the past 18 months in collaboration with citizens, elected officials, and representatives from state, local, and federal agencies.

Parks and open space planning for the Eugene-Springfield Metropolitan Area has occurred primarily at a local level without the benefit of a broader regional perspective. Prior to the initiation of this visioning process, there was not a single vision for the metropolitan region as a whole. Lack of such a vision has resulted in lost funding opportunities and difficulties with local coordination.

In response to this need, on November 29, 2000, the Eugene and Springfield City Councils, the Lane County Board of Commissioners, and the Willamalane Park and Recreation District Board met jointly and agreed by unanimous consensus to proceed with, and jointly fund, a Metropolitan Regional Parks and Open Space Study. Funding was secured in July 2001, and LCOG has been managing this project, working closely with staff representatives from each of the four funding

partners. The Metropolitan Policy Committee (MPC) has provided policy direction throughout the project.

A working vision map has been developed over the past 18 months in collaboration with citizens, elected officials, and representatives from state, local, and federal agencies. The vision is intended to serve as a general framework to help guide the coordination of future park and open space planning and protection in our region. Because this vision is not a land-use plan, demonstrating widespread local support of the vision is extremely important as state, federal, and non-profit assistance will need to be sought in the future to implement the vision.

In addition to receiving endorsements from approximately 10 local interest groups, the Eugene City Council, Lane County Board of Commissioners, and Willamalane Parks and Recreation District Board have endorsed the vision, all by unanimous consent. The Springfield City Council will consider endorsing the vision at its May 5 work session.

Both the Vision Map and the Vision and Strategies document can be viewed on the LCOG web page at www.lcog.org/pubs.html.



Upper Willamette Groundwater Project Starts Work to Raise Pollution Awareness

LCOG is taking a multi-jurisdictional approach to generate land-use practice changes addressing non-point pollution sources that impact the area's groundwater quality. Through a grant from the Department of Environmental Quality, LCOG is kicking off the Upper Willamette Groundwater Project to work with public officials and agency staff to increase awareness of the problem and work toward a resolution.

A significant concern is that the large number of rural households using private wells may be inadvertently contaminating their own drinking water supply, creating a health risk for their families. Public drinking water systems are also vulnerable to nitrate contamination risks, either by drawing their water directly from the shallow aquifer or by interactions between the deeper and shallow aquifer.

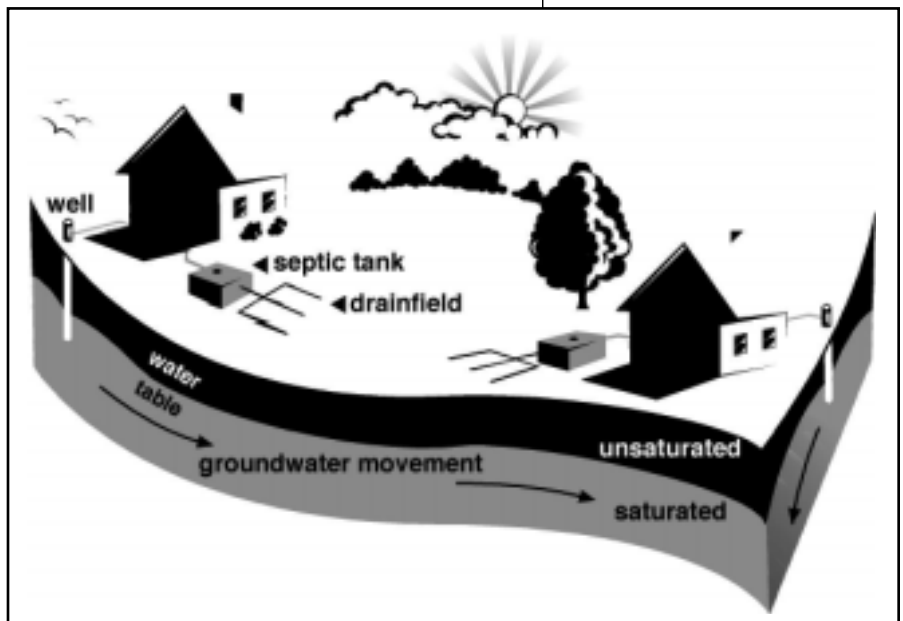
High nitrate concentration levels have been recorded in the shallow aquifers

of the Upper Willamette Valley, indicating impacts on groundwater from a variety of land uses. Water sampling over the past 10 years from OSU Extension and the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) has shown that numerous sites over a broad area have nitrate levels at or above 7 parts per million (ppm). Nitrate at 7 ppm is the "action level" for declaration of a Groundwater Management Area by the State of Oregon. The Coburg and Junction City areas have some of the highest recorded levels in the region.

The groundwater project draws upon the strength of a variety of partners including the DEQ, Oregon Department of Health and Human Services, OSU Extension Service, Oregon Department of Agriculture and planning staff from the counties and cities within the region.

For more information, contact Denise Kalakay, LCOG at (541) 682-7415, or dkalakay@lane.cog.or.us

Septic systems can contribute to nitrate contamination problems in groundwater.





Quick Facts About Lane County

Population:	322,959 (2000 Census)
County Seat:	Eugene
Established:	1851
Area:	4,620 square miles
Average Temperature:	January 40°, July 70°
Annual Precipitation:	46 inches
On the web:	www.co.lane.or.us
Principal industries:	Agriculture, higher education, technology, forest products, recreation, RV manufacturing, tourism

The following businesses have roots in Eugene:

- The National Academy of Artistic Gymnastics
- Nike
- Dow Corning Corporation (National Metallurgical Corporation)
- Stretch & Sew Inc.
- Stretch & Sew Inc.
- Spectra-Physics Laser Systems Division
- International King's Table
- Dutch Girl Ice Cream

LCOG Sponsors Training Session For Public Officials



An LCOG-sponsored Public Officials' Training Session was conducted by the agency's Legal Counsel, the Harrang Long Gary Rudnick law firm, on February 13 in the Eugene City Council Chambers. The event, a biennial tradition designed particularly to meet the needs of newly seated local elected officials, was attended by representatives of seven cities within the region.

The two-hour session was led by Jerome Lidz, with participation from

Emily Jerome and Karla Alderman, all of the firm. Topics included an exploration of public officials' legal obligations associated with land use; personnel; public expenditures, meetings, records, and contracting; government ethics; and public sector liability. Participants were encouraged to ask questions of the attorneys and were provided with a 34-page guide to the topics covered. A second session is being planned for the benefit of local jurisdictions on the coast, to be held in Florence.

The Regional Solution for Data Access

RLID, the Regional Land Information Database, is the most complete collection of land and property information in Lane County, Oregon. A data warehouse of regional land information supports a growing number of web-based applications for viewing, querying, mapping, and reporting the information.

RLID is developed and managed by a consortium of agencies — Lane County, the cities of Eugene and Springfield, Eugene Water & Electric Board, and Lane Council of Governments — continuing a tradition of 30 years of regional cooperation and data sharing in Lane County.



www.rlid.org

RLID has Lane County covered

- Site address data
- Owner/taxpayer information
- Property values and taxes
- Sales history
- Residential building characteristics
- Land use/zoning
- Lane County deeds and records index
- City of Eugene building and land use permits
- City lien docket
- Aerial photography
- Tax maps, flood maps, plats and partitions
- 2000 census demographic profiles

RLID offers powerful tools

- Standard and custom property reporting
Example: comparable sales reports
- Property and detailed record searches
- Custom mapping & analysis
- Targeted mailing lists
- Tax and lien balance calculations
- Share maps & reports as PDF documents

Who subscribes to RLID

- Governments
- Schools
- Libraries
- Planners
- Engineers
- Utility districts
- Developers
- Attorneys
- Consultants
- Title companies
- Realtors
- Appraisers
- Mortgage companies
- Banks
- Tax services
- Property managers
- Medical centers
- Newspapers

Visit our website to learn more about RLID

www.rlid.org

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CALENDAR

May

6	5:00 p.m.	Meals on Wheels Fundraiser	McMenamins North Bank restaurant
8	11:30 a.m.	Metropolitan Policy Committee	LTD Board Room
9	1:30 p.m.	Disability Services Advisory Council	Ed Luczycki Conference Room
13	1:30 p.m.	Senior Services Advisory Council	Hilyard Community Center
14	5:30 p.m.	LCOG Budget Committee	LCOG 4 th Floor Small Conf. Room
14	6:30 p.m.	LCOG Executive Committee	LCOG 4 th Floor Small Conf. Room
19	11:30 a.m.	Lane Economic Committee	LCOG 4 th Floor Large Conf. Room
20	3:00 p.m.	PSCC Community Corrections Committee	Hult Plaza
22	3:00 p.m.	Public Safety Coordinating Council	Juvenile Justice Center
22	7:00 p.m.	LCOG Board	School District 52
27	10:00 a.m.	Special Transportation Advisory Committee	LTD Board Room
28	5:30 p.m.	Region 2050 Regional Policy Advisory Board	EWEB Training Room

June

5	7:00 p.m.	Boundary Commission	City of Eugene Council Chambers
10	1:30 p.m.	Senior Services Advisory Council	Hilyard Community Center
12	11:30 a.m.	Metropolitan Policy Committee	Springfield Library
12	1:30 p.m.	Transportation Planning Committee	Springfield City Hall
12	3:00 p.m.	Public Safety Coordinating Council	Juvenile Justice Center
13	1:30 p.m.	Disability Services Advisory Council	Ed Luczycki Conference Room
16	11:30 a.m.	Lane Economic Committee	LCOG 4 th Floor Large Conf. Room
19	5:30 p.m.	LCOG Executive Committee	LCOG 4 th Floor Small Conf. Room
19	5:30 p.m.	Region 2050 Regional Policy Advisory Board	EWEB Training Room
22	1:00 p.m.	Vitality Walk/Run	Alton Baker Park
26	7:00 p.m.	LCOG Board	Veneta