



LANE WORKFORCE EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING
Thursday, January 15, 2026
11:30am – 1:00pm
MINUTES

In Attendance: Billy Dover, Jeff Graham, Solomon Harris, Shondra Holliday, John Stapleton, Heather Buch, Lyndsie Leech, Dana Merryday, Michelle Webber
Staff: Ashley Espinoza, Tiffany Cink, Anne Nestell, Stephanie Lovell
Others: Nadia Costa, Troy Sherwood, Jarl Berg

APPROVALS

Recommendation	Motion	Seconded	Status
Approve Executive Board Meeting Minutes (September 18, 2025)	Shondra Holliday	John Stapleton	Approved

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Solomon Harris called the meeting to order.

II. PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comments were received.

III. CONSENT CALENDAR

Shondra Holliday moved to approve the September 18th, 2025, Executive Board meeting minutes. John Stapleton seconded, and the motion was approved.

IV. EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBER UPDATES

- Shondra Holliday
 - The Lane County Medical Society Foundation is a 501(c)(3) connected to the Lane County Medical Society and focuses on physician wellness, especially crisis support through confidential counseling and coaching. The Foundation has grown its network to 20 counseling and coaching providers and is working with healthcare organizations to make sure new physicians learn about these services during onboarding, so help is available before a crisis occurs.
 - Since transitioning into this role full-time, outreach and awareness have gained traction. The overall goal is to help physicians stay in the community by supporting their mental health, connection to Lane County, and work-life balance, reducing burnout, early retirement, and the risk of physician suicide.

- Jeff Graham
 - In December, Danone went through a voluntary recall tied to a supplier issue with cashews, where small foreign materials were not detected before reaching the plant. The issue was limited but led to a site visit on January 6 from the COO, VP of Quality, and Senior VP of Manufacturing. Overall, both the recall and the visit went about as well as could be expected.
 - Current efforts are focused on corrective actions, including evaluating new suppliers and exploring advanced detection technology beyond existing metal detection systems. In addition, the company is moving into new-year capital projects, including a follow-up factory authorization test in early February for an automated electronic palletizer. If successful, installation is tentatively planned for March.

- John Stapleton
 - The architecture, engineering, and construction (AEC) sector has slowed down as capital investments have cooled and long-term planning has become more uncertain. While the sector has historically been a strong workforce destination, current projections should be taken with caution, especially given ongoing data challenges. If there is not a turnaround, workforce reductions may be on the horizon, which would have a significant local impact.
 - Despite widespread discussion of housing shortages, sector analysis indicates the primary constraint is affordability rather than construction capacity. Builders can deliver housing, but demand remains flat due to limited buyers, creating challenges for workforce growth and retention. Housing affordability continues to be a major barrier, making it difficult to attract and retain workers locally.
 - On a positive note, youth workforce efforts remain strong. The current focus is on addressing critical data gaps, specifically, the lack of integrated systems to track outcomes across K-12, workforce programs, and real-time job openings. Work is underway with the University of Oregon to develop an AI-enabled, institutionally managed tool that can identify real-time job openings, align skills with training pathways, and support continuous improvement. This approach is particularly important for serving youth ages 16–17, who cannot access commercial job platforms. Grant funding is being pursued to support this work.

- Councilor Merryday
 - Cottage Grove has mostly completed its downtown redevelopment, and the main street is now fully open in both directions. Businesses are seeing more foot traffic again, and activity downtown is picking back up. The phased construction approach, done in close coordination with business owners, helped keep most shops open during the work, even though it extended the overall timeline.
 - With redevelopment complete, long-term commercial vacancies are now more visible. The City is looking at ways to encourage property owners to activate those spaces.
 - From a workforce and economic development perspective, the City will discontinue its investment in Rain Catalyst and redirect those funds toward hiring a full-time economic development professional. This effort will be further supported by resources from Cottage Grove's newly approved Urban Renewal District.

- Billy Dover
 - The transportation sector is staying busy, with a big focus on training and building a strong workforce pipeline. Work is underway with Lane Community College to explore launching a CDL (Commercial Driver License) school alongside the diesel technician program, with the potential to expand into high school CTE pathways. This is timely, as 13 diesel technician graduates this spring are interested in obtaining their CDL, highlighting the value of integrated training.
 - Efforts are also focused on increasing awareness of National Guard labor resources and training programs as a potential workforce solution.
 - CDL tuition assistance remains inconsistent across the system, though additional funding is anticipated beginning in July.
 - Nationally, the trucking industry is still facing some headwinds, including company closures and economic pressures that are likely to continue into 2026.
 - At the same time, federal regulators are putting more emphasis on training and safety standards. Oregon is well-positioned in this area, with strong training practices already in place, and ongoing efforts are focused on maintaining high safety and workforce quality standards.

- Councilor Webber
 - The City of Springfield will host its annual *State of the City* address on January 29 at the Wildish Theater. Doors open at 5:00 p.m., with the program beginning at 5:30 p.m. Everyone is welcome to attend and learn more about current priorities and initiatives.

- Councilor Leech
 - In December, the City of Eugene adopted a supplemental budget and is moving quickly to issue an RFP for a new crisis-response service (to replace the CAHOOTS crisis response service). The new program will focus on outreach and connecting people to services and is expected to launch soon through an expedited process.
 - The City has selected a new City Manager, Jenny Haruyama, currently Beaverton's City Manager. She brings strong experience navigating complex transitions and budget challenges and is well positioned to lead Eugene through upcoming economic and fiscal pressures.
 - The City has received draft recommendations from a cross-sector economic and sustainability advisory group focused on long-term planning and prioritization. The recommendations emphasize clarifying core services, improving strategic prioritization, and growing revenue through economic development rather than relying solely on new fees or taxes. This work will inform a broader retreat and the potential creation of a long-term economic development framework.
 - Early planning is underway for the Willamette Valley Innovation Corridor, a partnership concept with the University of Oregon and Oregon State University aimed at expanding high-quality, locally rooted job opportunities in science, engineering, and technology fields. This initiative presents strong alignment and collaboration opportunities with the workforce system.

- Commissioner Buch
 - The Lane County Board of Commissioners has begun its budget kickoff and is facing a projected \$2.9 million general fund budget gap. Current projections show revenues coming in at approximately 3.5%, while expenditures are about 5.5%, resulting in multiple structurally imbalanced funds.
 - The County’s general fund remains under significant pressure, with roughly 74% already allocated to public safety. The identified \$2.9 million gap does not include the potential loss of 10 full-time sheriff patrol positions previously supported with one-time funding. Given the limited flexibility of the general fund, across-the-board cuts would have substantial impacts on core services.
 - The County will be looking for public input as it goes through the budgeting process.

- Solomon Harris
 - The industry continues to experience a slower business cycle, with both large and small projects taking longer than expected to move forward. While there are early signs of renewed momentum, activity remains cautious. Overall, there is measured optimism that conditions will begin to improve as the year progresses.

V. 2024 – 2025 FINANCIAL AUDIT PRESENTATION

Nadia Costa from Jones & Roth presented the financial audit to Executive Board members. Per LWP By-Laws, LWP staff exited the meeting during the presentation.

Upon reconvening, the Executive Board expressed their appreciation for the LWP staff’s efforts in achieving a clean audit.

VI. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S REPORT

Ashley provided an update on several major areas of work underway at Lane Workforce Partnership, beginning with progress on the One-Stop Operator function. LWP is operating as the One-Stop Operator this program year and using the opportunity to strengthen coordination across all Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) partners at the WorkSource Center. A key focus has been the “business services reboot,” aimed at aligning how partners, including Oregon Employment Department, Vocational Rehabilitation, DHS, and others, engage with employers around talent matching, recruitment, training, career pathways, business retention and expansion, and layoff aversion. This work is intended to create a more consistent, reliable system for businesses and reduce confusion across partners, particularly as economic uncertainty increases.

Ashley also shared updates on legislative awareness efforts. Staff recently participated in legislative training to better understand the upcoming short session and how to effectively engage in education and awareness-building, while remaining neutral and outcome-focused. This knowledge helps staff track policy developments and remain informed partners without engaging in lobbying.

LWP was awarded a Higher Education Coordinating Commission grant focused on behavioral health apprenticeships. The grant will support the creation of a Joint Training Committee, the launch of a behavioral health pre-apprenticeship CTE program through Lane ESD, and the development of two new registered apprenticeship programs. Ashley noted both the importance and complexity of this work, highlighting challenges related to employer capacity, funding and wages, talent readiness, completion rates, and governance alignment. The effort is being pursued in close

partnership with Lane County Health and Human Services and the healthcare sector, with a strong emphasis on building realistic, stackable career pathways rather than a single narrow credential track.

Ashley also highlighted LWP's growing role in advancing work-based learning. LWP is helping bridge long-standing gaps between education, industry, and public systems by providing the flexibility needed to support hands-on projects that are often difficult for public agencies to administer. Constructing a Brighter Future was cited as a key example of this approach with over \$150,000 raised prior to the holidays, and multiple builds planned with Lane County schools and community partners. LWP's ability to function as a flexible public-private partner has unlocked resources and accelerated participation, contributing to rapid growth in student engagement and enrollment in related programs.

Ashley shared that she, Henry Fields, and Ryan Kounovsky will be presenting a "State of the Workforce" presentation to the Lane County Human Resources Association at the end of this month. A pre-session survey revealed gaps in employer practices, including limited automation in hiring processes and a lack of connection to the broader workforce ecosystem. There will be an activity as part of the presentation that focuses on the use of the "ABC jobs" framework: a job, a better job, and a career, to better understand employer needs and barriers, strengthen alignment with training programs, and ensure the workforce system is responding directly to the realities employers face.

VII. OTHER BUSINESS

Solomon provided an overview of the upcoming Executive Director performance review process for Ashley, noting that this is both an annual evaluation year and a contract renewal year. He walked the Executive Board through the proposed timeline and materials, including a process memo and the draft performance survey.

The evaluation will be launched this month, with the survey distributed electronically to collect feedback on Ashley's performance over the past year. Respondents will have approximately two weeks to complete the survey, and Ashley will also complete a self-evaluation. Anne and Solomon will receive the raw survey responses, with Anne responsible for compiling and summarizing the results for the Board Officers. The Officers will then meet to review the feedback, consider the self-evaluation, and develop recommendations related to performance, contract renewal, and salary. Solomon will meet with Ashley to share the feedback, after which final recommendations will be brought back to the Executive Board.

Board members were encouraged to review the survey questions and provide feedback or suggested edits prior to distribution. In addition, members were asked to suggest potential survey recipients beyond the standard list, particularly education and key program partners who work closely with LWP. A written input from Ashley's executive coach will also be incorporated into the evaluation materials.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Solomon Harris adjourned the meeting.