March 2026 League of Women Voters Lincoln Lancaster County Observer Corps Report

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Lincoln City Council 3/2/26

Were there any items of concern in terms of open meetings and good government?
No. Councilman Weber was absent.

What were the main items of discussion at this meeting?
This was a super short meeting, like 20 minutes. Topic that took the most time was approving interlocal agreements with rural fire districts.

Observed by Katie Bradshaw

Lancaster County Board of Commissioners 3/3/26
No report

Planning Commission Lincoln / Lancaster County 3/4/26

Were there any items of concern in terms of open meetings and good government?
No. One commission member was absent: Cindy Ryman Yost.

What were the main items of discussion at this meeting?

One topic related to affordable housing took up most of the time. The Commission unanimously approved new, more lenient rules for ADUs (accessory dwelling units) and encouraged staff to bring back even less strict rules in the not too distant future.

The issue now moves to the City Council.

ADUs are smaller living units (800 square feet or less) on single family lots that are rented out or used by relatives (older parents, young adult children, caretakers etc.). They can be attached to the main house, sit atop a garage or in a separate building and must include a cooking area, bedroom and bath. Utilities must be shared with the main unit. And the property owner must live in one of the units.

Lincoln has been so restrictive that no ADU's have been built under these rules in the past decade, according to testimony. Currently only about 24% of single-family lots could qualify for an ADU. Under the new rules about 80% of the lots across Lincoln could qualify. But planning commission members are concerned that the rules are still too restrictive.

Two PUD's allow ADUs…Fallbrook and Village Garden. Both have more generous rules than the proposed new city rules.

The Country Club Neighborhood Association sent a letter opposing the proposed rules. Messiah Lutheran Church Pastor John Kunze asked that the South Street Rd. configuration be changed. (it was not.) AARP supported the rules as did retired development attorney Peter Katz. ADUs help improve density, take advantage of housing stock, provide affordable housing.

Observed by Nancy Rose

Lancaster County Board of Commissioners Staff Meeting 3/5/26
No report

Lancaster County Board of Commissioners Staff Meeting 3/12/26
Meeting cancelled

Lincoln City Council 3/13/26

Were there any items of concern in terms of open meetings and good government?
No

What were the main items of discussion at this meeting?

Zoning changes to 48th and Aylesworth previously approved by Planning Commission placed on file at the office of the City Clerk, this increased residential units available from 115 to 120 at this area. This was part of the Redevelopment Planned Use District.

Voted to approve several resolutions to change schedule for various groups of City employees. Also approved to amend paid parental leave policy to include fire and police trainees.

1st reading resolution on several items involving liquor licenses, engineering services for a traffic signal project and street improvement projects and building code related to private garages and carports.

One public comment from a man who was waiting for a building permit to build a 2nd apartment building. I did not catch the location but apparently he has built one building but is still waiting (for 3 months) for a permit to build a second.

Observed by Julia Metcalf

Lincoln City Council 3/16/26

Were there any items of concern in terms of open meetings and good government?
No. All Council members were present.

What were the main items of discussion at this meeting?

Mostly routine business, with all 7-0 vote tallies, including motion to accept report on claims against the City. One citizen's claim was separated out for additional review/consideration. Lengthly presentation--resulting in adoption--on Safe Streets Lincoln Action Plan - https://legistarweb-production.s3.amazonaws.com/uploads/attachment/pdf/3966135/Safe_Streets_Lincoln_VZAP_DRAFT_20260309_reduced_file.pdf

Observed by Judy Kelly

Lancaster County Board of Commissioners 3/17/26

Were there any items of concern in terms of open meetings and good government?
Commissioner Flowerday was about 10 minutes late but did not miss any voting items

What were the main items of discussion at this meeting?
Honored 2025 Department of Corrections Employee of the Year Award winner Chad Miller, several amendments to county contracts and several resolutions. Went into Executive session to cover Strategy Session Regarding Real Estate Transaction; Union Negotiations; Pending Litigation; and Legal Advice.

Observed by Jean McGuire

Lincoln/Lancaster County Planning Commission 3/18/26

Were there any items of concern in terms of open meetings and good government?
No

What were the main items of discussion at this meeting?

1. A special permit was requested to allow for the Blackhorn Reserve AG Community Unit Plan to allow five single family dwelling units on property located north of Branched Oak Road approximately one mile east of NW 140th St. Commission approved by unanimous vote.
2. The University Place Neighborhood Redevelopment plan was reviewed as to conformance with the Lancaster County Comprehensive Plan. Facade improvements to the buildings and additional parking for festivals, etc. was approved by the Commission.
3. A special permit was requested to allow for a healthcare Facility for up to 12 residents at 929 S. Cotner Boulevard. The applicant intends to build an addition to the existing family home at that address for a memory care facility. The business making the request is Legato Living, a franchise that specializes in residential living for individuals with dementia.

There was a large contingent of residents of the Piedmont neighborhood who objected to the request based on concerns about increased traffic and possible deterioration of the neighborhood. Concerns were raised about the future of the property if the franchisees decided to sell the property in the future, as well as the lack of timely notice to the neighbors about this request.

During the discussion, commission members pointed out that the role of the commission is to make sure zoning laws are met. Additional concerns stated by the neighbors may be raised again when the matter comes before the city council. Because the request complies with current zoning laws, it was approved with one vote against.

4. A request was made for reasonable accommodation under the Fair Housing Act and the Lincoln Municipal Code to the zoning code conditions for a Collaborative Living Facility to allow unrelated persons to reside together at 1035 S. 12th Street. This will be an Oxford House facility, where there are no staff persons and the residents, all recovering alcoholics, will self-govern the house. The request was approved.

Any general comments about the meeting?

As always the meeting was well organized and the commission members were attentive and engaged.

Observed by Janice Walker

Lancaster County Board of Commissioners Staff Meeting 3/19/26

Were there any items of concern in terms of open meetings and good government?
No. Four of the five commissioners were present with Rick Vest being absent.

What were the main items of discussion at this meeting?
The presentations included a legislative update from the board's lobbying firm, a report of investments (retirement funds) from last year with a hint of this year, a state inspection of the county noxious weed program that showed phragmites is still a major problem, particularly on unbuilt on city lots, plus appointments to some boards and an exec session (union negotiations, law suits and potential law suits.)

Observed by Nancy Rose

Lancaster County Board of Commissioners 3/20/26

Were there any items of concern in terms of open meetings and good government?
No. Commissioner Matt Schulte was absent.

What were the main items of discussion at this meeting?
25-minute meeting with very little discussion. No public comments.

Observed by
Judy Kelly

Lincoln Electric System 3/20/26

Were there any items of concern in terms of open meetings and good government?
No

What were the main items of discussion at this meeting?
https://www.les.com/sites/default/files/Board%20Meeting%20Items/2026/5A%20-%202026%20State%20Legislative%20Report.pdf
List of LES concerns/support/opposition of legislative bills (as of 3/230/2026)

Any general comments about the meeting?
smoothly run; clear information

Observed by Alyx Knight

Lincoln City Council 3/23/26

Were there any items of concern in terms of open meetings and good government?
No

What were the main items of discussion at this meeting?
3 interesting public hearings:

`Urban development testified about continuing contract with Haymarket to continue the Saturday Market

Application requested to change zoning to add residential property to be sold to Centerpoint to use as Adult Residential alcohol facility. Special permit done.

Lincoln City Planning Director David Cary testified about Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU's). This received a lot of positive testimony from 4 different speakers including the Homebuilders association. There was some discussion about allowing investors to put "park RV's" on the lots. Currently at least one of the units must be owner occupied. Planning commissioner states would be supportive of modular homes but did not want to change permit at this time. He stated he would be willing to look at success of current plan to see how it is accepted by community. The council members seemed to agree. This is the 2nd reading on these ordinance change requests.

One of the testifiers on the ADU"s was a man who lived in the Near South Neighborhood. He and his wife are trying to buy an older home with a carriage house over the garage that they want to convert for his mother in law. There is something in the permit that would allow them to do this on the current lot size that the property sits on. The changes would affect R-1 through R-4 zones which the planning commissioner states would be all over the city, not just in one place. But the changes would not supersede neighborhood HOA's and the height of the ADU could not be higher than the original dwelling and the style would need to be similar for aesthetics.

Observed by Julia Metcalf

Lancaster County Board of Commissioners 3/24/26

Were there any items of concern in terms of open meetings and good government?
No

What were the main items of discussion at this meeting?
Brief 10 minute meeting of administrative functions. Commissioner Matt Schulte voted against reappointment of a long time Board of Health member, Jacquelyn Miller because of her participation in Covid related decisions which he believes were too drastic.

Observed by Nancy Rose

Lincoln Board of Education 3/24/26

Were there any items of concern in terms of open meetings and good government?
No

What were the main items of discussion at this meeting?
J.J. Toczek was awarded the Nebraska State Activities Association Distinguished Service Award,. Results were shared on the Annual Goal and Priority: Staff Wellbeing and Outcomes - Vacancies, Recruitment, and Retention. Student Calendar for 2027-2028 was passed, Budget Calendar for 2026-2027 was passed. June will be heavily focused on Budget meetings. Citizens can follow the budget process online by typing in "Budget" on the LPS website. Nebraska Legislative bills currently being considered of concern/interest to the board are LB1219 - hard cap of 2% - comment was, it will not work for Nebraska schools, LB803, LB1050, and LB714.

Any general comments about the meeting?

Observed by

Lancaster County Board of Commissioners Staff Meeting 3/26/26

Were there any items of concern in terms of open meetings and good government?
Johnson not present, Flowerday late

What were the main items of discussion at this meeting?
Kissel, Kohout, ES Associates LLC covered several bills that are still circulating at the Legislature. I was handed a copy of their 25 page report, but they went through it very quickly so it was hard to follow. Headline - budget is the preeminent issue.

Quarterly Planning update by David Cary, Director of Lincoln-Lancaster County Planning and Development Services. Mr Cary shared that there were no further appeals on the Battery Energy Storage Systems, the Comprehensive Plan and Long Range Transportation plan update

work continues (public meeting on May 19 on online engagement available), there is continued discussion on the Branched Oak Observatory, and they are tracking the potential data center project.

Beverly Hoagland, Chief Probation Officer gave a quarterly Juvenile probation update.

There was a discussion on Sheriff's Captain adjustments - vote probably at next County Commissioners meeting.

Reviewed the Visitors Improvement Fund 2026 Requests. The budget is $12M with requests for $32.5M.

There will be a Village meeting on June 11. Not sure what it is, but I will ask. There are several conferences the week of July 14-20 that the commissioners may be attending, We will need to watch the schedule in case there is not a quorum for any scheduled meetings during that time.

Observed by Jean McGuire

Lincoln City Council 3/30/26

Were there any items of concern in terms of open meetings and good government?
No

What were the main items of discussion at this meeting?

All Public Hearing - Consent Agenda items passed 7-0. Including reports of city officers, petitions and communications, voting on consensus items, public hearing (liquor resolutions), public hearing resolutions (ordinances 2nd reading and related resolutions), (ordinances - 3rd reading and related resolutions...including public market contract ...city and Haymarket Development Corporation, application of Centerpointe to change zoning designations, request of Planning and Development Services to revise conditions for Accessory Dwelling Units in the R-1 through R-4 districts;

Under public comments: Concerns expressed by one citizen...Wilderness Crossing cement culverts inadequately built and questions re: flooding for that area.

Any general comments about the meeting?
Council members courteous and respectful toward all speakers, meeting ran smoothly and on time, all council members on time and ready to participate.

Observed by Carole Curry

Lancaster County Board of Commissioners 3/31/26

Were there any items of concern in terms of open meetings and good government?

Members Christa Yoakum and Sean Flowerday were not present. Rick Vest commented that Sean Flowerday was at the legislature this morning. The meeting lasted all of 10 minutes so I believe that action items had been discussed previously.

What were the main items of discussion at this meeting?

All items on the agenda were approved by the three members present. Significant items perhaps for the League were the approval of Wellpath for medical care services for the Department of Corrections and the Mental Health Association of Nebraska to provide peer-guided personal well-being and relapse prevention classes for inmates in the custody of the Department of Corrections (adding one Helping Women Recover class per week and increasing the compensation rate for all classes provided to $85 per hour).

Any general comments about the meeting?

The meeting was over in 10 minutes. The agenda wasn't long and most items seemed to have been previously discussed in a working meeting of the commissioners.

Observed by Carole Curry