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

Lincoln City Council 8/3/26

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?

Meeting was 17 minutes long. The only ordinance on which council members spoke was a Planned Unit Development amendment at N 84th and Adams to add an apartment complex in lieu of commercial development - Washington and Bowers spoke in appreciation of the residents who engaged in the process to ensure all questions were answered.

Observed by Katie Bradshaw

Lincoln City Council Public Budget Hearing 20206-2028 8/3/26

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?

John Carlson from the Mayor's Office gave a presentation on the budget that took about 45 minutes. The first part highlighted the city's strengths in statistics: decline in crime, cardiac incident survival rate, high number of residential building permits, Lincoln's listing on national "best" lists.

The city's budget continues to increase, up 4.6% in the first year and 5.7% in the second year. Main reasons for the increase are public safety personnel (some of which were previously paid through federal grants that are ending), library debt service for the new central library, and inflation. Council-member-requested changes to the mayor's budget included funds for: NE police station security, aquatics facilities assessment and Repair & Replacement Contingency Fund, sidewalk improvements for bridge at Adams and I-80, update of the Air Park/NW 48th Street Community sub area plan, and a neighborhood farmers market pilot program.

Lincoln's budget comes from about about 1/3 from property tax, 1/3 from sales tax (which is pretty steady given the diversity of Lincoln's economy), and 1/3 from other sources. John Carlson spoke of several proposed fee and rate increases, including ambulance service increases to fund an additional ambulance team and 5% increases to water and wastewater fees.

I was only able to stay until 5 p.m. Up to that point, 22 people spoke on the city budget, all in favor of some element of spending. About another dozen people were in line waiting to speak when I left. Speakers included representatives from Lincoln Littles, Lancaster County Planning Commission, Centerpointe, AARP, Golf Advisory Committee, Belmont Community Center, Star Tran Advisory Board, Lincoln City Libraries board, Hoppe Development (they have built affordable housing with city credits), F Street Recreation Center, and Wachiska Audubon.

A few people spoke in favor of city programs from which they'd benefited, including a low-income heat pump program and Aging Partners. Several people spoke in favor of funding for Meadowlane Pool and the Tax Credit Alliance of Nebraska, which both had add-on requests to the city budget that were defeated in 3-3 votes at the July 20 meeting.

Any general comments about the meeting?

It was interesting to hear the justifications for the budget from staff and to hear the stories of city programs and the citizens who interact with them.

Observed by Katie Bradshaw

Lancaster County Board of Commissioners 8/4/26

Were there any items of concern in terms of open meetings and good government?
Yes - The County had technical issues so the meeting was not available via livestream on any platform.

No report

Observed by Judy Kelly

Lincoln/Lancaster County Planning Commission 8/5/26

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?

The commission approved an application to build athletic fields at 5240 Calvert Street where College View Academy currently sits. The current College View will be demolished for the athletic complex which will be operated by Union Adventist University. The private school's new building would be constructed where Union Adventist currently has baseball and soccer fields. There was no opposition to this application.

Any general comments about the meeting?

As usual, the meeting was efficiently managed. The city council room had a good bit of trouble with its screens that allow members of the audience to see documents, but otherwise no glitches.

Observed by Janice Walker

Staff Meeting, Lancaster County Board of Commissioners 8/6/26

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

Chelsea Johnson was five minutes late

What were the main items of discussion at this meeting?

QUARTERLY VSO UPDATE Mark Lakamp, County Veterans Service Officer

Lakamp gave an update on calls received and visits from veterans and talked about funding. Received $169,000 from the state with potential for more funds. Increase in aid is always needed since the need for services is increasing.

QUARTERLY HEALTH AND WELLNESS UPDATE Danielle Fischer, City-County Wellness Coordinator, Lincoln-Lancaster County Human Resources

Fischer reviewed upcoming webinars for better sleep, work life balance and mental health first aid as well as challenges for sleep and steps. Health risk assessments and screening dates were also shared.

UNREPRESENTED COST OF LIVING ADJUSTMENT Jon Thober, Total Rewards Division Leader, and Amy Sadler, Human Resources Manager, Lincoln-Lancaster County Human Resources

Board recommended 3.25 increase and will put it to a vote next Tuesday.

CORRECTIONS DIRECTOR CLASSIFICATION DESCRIPTION AND RECRUITMENT Jon Thober, Total Rewards Division Leader, and Laura Leppky, Talent Acquisition Division Leader, Lincoln-Lancaster County Human Resources

Current Corrections Director is retiring after several years so this is to review recruitment strategy with board and get their recommendations for salary in job posting and qualities needed for this position. Team and culture building were mentioned by Vest, ability to collaborate with outside agencies (LPD, state agencies, etc.) was mentioned by current director, and Schulte mentioned that legislative experience (presenting at hearings, etc.) would be helpful. HR also asked how many applicants board wanted to review and then interview. Board recommended reviewing up to seven candidates and interviewing three with the understanding that there could be a natural break in candidates and could be more or less candidates depending on the applicant pool. The board was also comfortable with HR doing the phone interviews, initial screening of candidates and helping board with interview questions. The updated job description that was attached to agenda was in collaboration with HR and current corrections director. The board recommended salary posting to be $165,000. Current director's salary is $159,000 and salary range is $136,000 - $177,000. Due to the critical nature of this position, it was felt that starting at a lower salary in the range would not attract optimal candidates.

CLAIMS FOR REVIEW Erika Pecina, Accounting Operations Manager, County Clerk's Office

There were two mileage reimbursement claims that were submitted past the deadline, but it was explained the delay was due to grant work that was being done and the timing of those. Board approved the claims.

EXECUTIVE SESSION – private, is where board reviews pending litigation, potential litigation and receive legal advice

DEPUTY CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER REPORT Updated Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Plan for Lancaster County, Nebraska

Executive session went longer than expected so I was unable to stay for rest of staff meeting. My notes below are from reviewing updated plan document online.

The purpose of this limited English proficiency policy is to clarify the responsibilities of Lancaster County as a recipient of federal financial assistance from the Department of Justice and to assist Lancaster County agencies in fulfilling their responsibilities to limited English proficient (LEP) persons, pursuant to Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The plan is designed to be flexible and can be easily updated. Lancaster County and Lancaster County agencies may reevaluate the LEP Plan as necessary. When determining the frequency of reevaluation, consideration shall be given to changes in demographics, programs, services, and language assistance measures. Part of the changes were to update data based on 2024 census numbers as well as additional services and resources available.

Any general comments about the meeting?

The corrections director recruitment took up most of the meeting that I attended and was very informative.

Observed by Diane Freese

Justice Council 8/7/26

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?

The Justice Council provides a series of reports from law-enforcement and corrections agencies.

Jail. The county Jail is currently at 99% of operational capacity, but jail inmate numbers are generally below the last two years. The year 2024 seems to be the high point in recent history.

This has been a weird year, with constant ups and downs, according to Brad Johnson, Lancaster County Corrections Director. Overall, the numbers are lower than the last two years but higher than 2023.

Arrests are down for city, police, and pretty steady for the sheriff's office. Law Enforcement apparently believe that their efforts have reduced street crime. "You don't see people on the street slinging dope," like you do in other cities, the sheriff's representative said. The average length of stay in the jail has been up and down this year and is currently at about 175 days. Last year it dropped to 150 days. The length of days increased since Covid through 2024. It looked like the number was moving down this year except for a spike in January February and March.

There was a similar pattern for the number of days people waited to get into the regional center, which had been going down and now appears to be going up, but Johnson did not know if this was a trend or a blip

Community corrections: there was a lot of data presented. My general impression is that some programs were serving more people than last year and some were serving less. The 24/7 sobriety program had a significant increase and the program has moved from serving only people with DUIs, to include people who have been arrested for something else but their major issue is their addiction problems.

The drug court has been taken over by the state, so the county numbers in this area have fallen.

Lancaster County is ready to begin a PSA program, which stands for public safety assessment. It apparently is a number assigned early in the process to determine if someone is at risk of recommitting if they bond out. Everyone seemed to be quite excited about this.

A Subcommittee looking at shortening jail time for drug related offenses: the committee reported on several reasons for people being held in jail for a long time on low level drug related felony cases. (1) The delay between the court hearings. The county court generally has 30 days between docket calls; the district court has built in lags between court appearances (2) There may be an issue with education to participants about the problem-solving programs and courts. The subcommittee found there is an average 65 days after an arrest before people apply for a problem solving program. And very few low-level felony cases apply for the problem-solving courts.

The committee pointed out that of 100 people in jail on a drug related offense, only about 15 are in jail because of a single offense. The rest have multiple arrests or multiple charges. Some of those multiple charges may just be failure to appear in court. The PSA program may be helpful in determining who is in jail because of multiple failures to appear and who is in jail because they have been arrested on multiple criminal offenses.

A representative for the crisis center pointed out that some people need more assistance than just diversion programs. If they don't have food or don't have a place to live, they don't do well with the diversion requirements. They really need the social help as well as a mental health.

City Attorney Yohance Christie noted that people recently incarcerated are interested in two issues. They want to get out quickly or they want to have their felony charge changed to a misdemeanor. They are not thinking about changing their behavior or addressing their addiction issues. Early education on diversion programs won't change this, he believes.

The public defenders office is hoping to work with County Court judges to consolidate all the competency hearings under one judge. After competency is re-established, the person would return to the original judge.

The police chief noted that they believe there is a certain population that needs to be in jail for the safety of others. However, there are many people in jail for other reasons who do not really need to be locked up. They are willing to work with others to make sure these people don't get into jail or stay in jail.

Any general comments about the meeting?

The Justice Council is an effective way for people across the justice system to get to know each other, to understand each other's programs, and to work for a more efficient system.

Observed by Nancy Rose Hicks

Lincoln City Council 8/10/26

Were there any items of concern in terms of open meetings and good government?
Councilman Shobe not present

What were the main items of discussion at this meeting?

The council approved an amendment to the resolution for the Lead Reduction Grant agreement between the Health Department and the Nebraska Department of Water and Energy for lead testing and reduction.

Approved a tax levy request from the Lincoln Airport authority for road rehab and infrastructure work in Airpark. There was one person speaking in opposition to this as he felt this money was being used for operational funds instead of maintenance and infrastructure work. The Chairman of the Airport Authority testified that the funds were not being used for operational expenses.

Approved the Lincoln Parks and Rec application to the Recreational Trail Program administered by Game and Parks, which receives funding from the Federal Highway Administration. This would extend the trail from Pioneer Park Nature Center to S.W 56th Street.

Public hearing on amending the Municipal Code to add definitions for All Terrain Vehicles, E-Bikes and Golf carts on bike paths and to create a new chapter of the code for golf cars and low speed vehicles to be consistent with state statute. A citizen testified that she supports further clarification of types of vehicles allowed for public safety. There was also testimony from other members of the community who either use bikes or have businesses selling these types of vehicles also supporting the amendment. If I understood correctly the amendment is asking that low speed gas or electric powered vehicles be prohibited from using the path.

Observed by Julia Metcalf

Lancaster County Board of Commissioners 8/11/26

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

What were the main items of discussion at this meeting?

New sheriff badging ceremony; discussion, including public comment, on vacating two roads currently maintained by the county.

Any general comments about the meeting?

An incorrect date of 2021 (instead of 2026) was listed on a public meeting notice regarding vacating two roads. The public meeting portion of the discussion was still held, but also continued to September 1 because of the error. Commissioner Yoakum explained all of that prior to the initial discussion.

Observed by Judy Kelly

Lincoln Board of Education 8/11/26

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

9.2.1. A proposed agreement with Transportation Employees Assoc. was removed with no explanation. This is a bargain issue but an explanation could be provided with legal advice.

10.1.2.Agreement with Gallagher Benefit Services was removed with no comment and one board member (don't know who at this time) voted no without explanation.

9.2.2 School resource officers, adding additional officers at the district's expenses to cover for resource officer absences. Two female members spoke in a supportive manner in favor. The LPS Board met in closed session. There was no announcement about whether they would return to open session, which I would have expected, typically.

What were the main items of discussion at this meeting?

No discussion except one female board member spoke extensively about a Board committee, a report apparently on insurance, and perhaps a survey but it was unclear to me what the issue might have been or if there is one and I didn't ask because the board went directly into closed session.

Observed by BettyAnn VanDeventer

Staff Meeting, Lancaster County Board of Commissioners 8/13/26

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

What were the main items of discussion at this meeting?

Executive session 1st. i had to leave until discussion ended.

Dennis Meyer, Budget and fiscal officer spoke about the 15 cent levy allocation-Matt Schulte clarified the county boards scope of ability to ok allocations .

Rick showed the board that all including Ag Society (which funds the state fair) and all county rural fire departments are all within the Lid.

Next week allocations are out, the budget is due the 25th and okayed September 1st, numbers may change as groups such as the Ag society will be meeting Next Thursday.
Rick Vest asked if a member of the Ag society board could attend next week.

Discussion around the solar project on county property. Christa Yoakum spoke about this ongoing issue. Rick Vest made a motion to allocate 1.5 of the 3 million asked all 4 present voted yes.

Some discussion on meetings attended by board members present. Johnson and Vest attended Justice Council and reported recidivism in Nebraska is 35% and nationwide 15%.

Plans to replace a head of corrections who has served for 30 years.

Observed by Linda Lannin

Lincoln City Council 8/17/26

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?

Pretty routine meeting with approval of the consent agenda. Voted to approve previous ordinances including approving lease for Downtown Lincoln Association to lease space at the Old City Hall.

Approved the amendment to the Municipal code governing types of vehicles allowed on hiking/biking trails. The final decision is only people walking or jogging, bicycles, and E-bikes are allowed. No gas powered vehicles such as mopeds. After the meeting, I spoke with Jessica Kirchoff, one of the attorneys for the City, about Electric Personal Assistive Mobility Devices, as this was also on the list and I specifically asked about electric wheelchairs and scooters. She testified before the council. She says these are not allowed. I also spoke with Maggie Stuckey-Ross, Parks and Recreation Director and told her that we had done an Elder Care Study. She gave me her card and email. I don't know about restrictions of bike trails, especially paved trails impacting mobility for people in electric wheelchairs. Not sure if this is applicable to anything identified in the Elder Care Study.

Observed by Julia Metcalf

Lancaster County Board of Commissioners 8/18/26

Were there any items of concern in terms of open meetings and good government?
Only four commissioners present: Christa. Yoakum, Sean Flowerday, Rick Vest; Chelsea Johnson joined several minutes late.

What were the main items of discussion at this meeting?

Consent items; naming August 15 Barney Day for the Lancaster County therapy dog; Exceptional Circumstance Award for Alex Houcin from Community Connections for PSA program; Visitors Improvement Fund grant to Lied Center for $1.2 million

Public comment about county policy on data center; Lincoln has one and asked about county's.

Any general comments about the meeting?
The meeting was adjourned after 20 minutes!

Observed by Judy Kelly

Lancaster County Board of Equalization 8/18/26

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

What were the main items of discussion at this meeting?

Approval to extend deadline to July 20 for Homestead Extension Applications; motor vehicle tax exemption application for Capital Humane Society (no public attended to support or oppose).

Any general comments about the meeting?
Meeting lasted 6 minutes.

Observed by Judy Kelly

Lincoln/Lancaster County Planning Commission 8/19/26

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?

This was a very short meeting, with no controversial items. Six of the eight current members were present. All votes were unanimous.

Christy Joy, Lorenzo Ball, Maribel Cruz, Gloria Eddins, Bailey Feit, Rich Rodenburg. Commissioners approved four issues.
— a zoning change from agriculture residential for property located around 4101 S. 88th St. to allow the land owner to build either a second home or a smaller accessory dwelling unit for a caretaker on 3.1 acres.

—- a special permit to allow an academy for up to 40 students on property located at 2110 Sheridan Blvd. A performing arts academy for 40 students will be held in Westminster Presbyterian Church.
—- vacation of an alleyway in the Haymarket area between L and M St. and west of S. 7th St. The land will be used as part of a park and will assist in parking for Canopy Yard, according to the planning staff report.
—— a change of zone from residential and office to residential-4, allowing for the construction of eight duplexes on the block at 1800 N. 48th St. Commissioners lauded the project for providing additional housing within the built area of the city, called infill, and for providing some transitional housing between campus and apartments and single-family homes. The project will use TIF, giving the developer additional money that would have gone to pay property taxes. Apparently the TIF money will be used to provide more affordable new homes. For decades, the city refused to allow TIF to be used for any residential development because schools lost property tax funding while likely acquiring additional students.

Observed by Nancy Rose Hicks

Staff Meeting, Lancaster County Board of Commissioners 8/20/26

Were there any items of concern in terms of open meetings and good government?
Meeting started at 8:35. Matt Schulte was not present.

What were the main items of discussion at this meeting?

I could only stay until 9:30. The agenda got moved around a bit because people were not there to present at the time they were on the agenda,

Jordan Arndt, Compliance & Regulations Manager, from Zelle HR Solutions, presented recommended HR Director salary ranges and the Commission provided direction on the higher salary ranges.

Dennis Meyer, Budget and Fiscal Officer, presented. He had sent a spreadsheet to the commissioner the day before, which the public, I do not believe, received. He discussed the proposed levy to be assessed. The Ag Society also presented as part of the budget presentation as they are seeking funding for a solar project. There will be a Budget hearing next Tuesday after the regular Commissioner meeting to discuss levy again and then the final budget will be approved the following Tuesday.

Meyer also shared that 58% of the valuations are increasing. Overall growth is at 2.6%, while the projected was 1.6%. This is mostly due to personal property growth. As part of the levy discussion, they are considering an increase in the cash reserve ($2 Million is going in this year). Other factors they are considering for the levy are increased health insurance costs, and the anticipated pieces of legislation that may place more lids/hard caps in the county. The levy will come down but it will depend on how much.

As of June 30th, most of the department's inventories have been certified. The County Engineering Department has not and there has been difficulties in getting accurate information

and there is concern of noncompliance. There will be a consent agenda item next Tuesday to certify all other departments inventories.

Observed by Jean McGuire

This meeting was also observed by Rachel Mulcahy:

BUDGET AND FISCAL UPDATE:
A- The Agricultural Society and a 15 cent allocation of valuations to fund several expansion projects, including solar energy on the fair ground roofs, repair sewers, parking lot and update kitchen - reference to Sandhills Even Ctr implied work done might be at that location? (owned by Peeds?)
B. Budget Hearings are upcoming Tuesday at County Commish meeting! Growth is 2.26%, higher than past, partially due to health insurance rates.
C. Environmental Public Health Fees
D. Chief Administrative Office Report - Transportation Study

Still curious about the transportation report

Lincoln Electric System 8/21/26

Were there any items of concern in terms of open meetings and good government?
Yes - There were no paper copies of the agenda available at the meeting. Everyone was expected to print their own from online or look at it online.

What were the main items of discussion at this meeting?

From what I gathered at the meeting and a conversation with Carl Eskridge, a board member, Google is supplying LES energy through their own contracts with other companies for solar and for wind generation. This helps increase LES' overall numbers for using renewable/battery generated power.

Google then buys back energy from LES. There was no indication of how much more energy Google needs to purchase than what it sells to LES. So there is no clear indication of how the data center affects LES' need for additional capacity.

It appeared that the conversation was general in nature because of the proprietary nature of the contracts with Google. Scott Benson, a director for resources and transmission planning, gave the report.

Most of the meeting was spent discussing a database and the work building that database for a series of 27 objectives. It appeared that the data showed how LES was doing in relation to an annual goal and a 2030 goal for each of these 27 objectives. The objectives ranged from employment turnover rates to having sufficient power to meet summer and winter peaks.

Many of the board members appear to really understand the objectives and had good questions and suggestions, but I don't have enough history or smarts to judge the entire report. Benson was also the staff person responsible for this discussion.

Any general comments about the meeting?

I would really like to know what effect Google's need for electricity has on LES's capacity needs and on rate payers. Since I have not observed this meeting in the past, I have no idea whether this has been discussed.

Observed by Nancy Rose Hicks

Lincoln City Council 8/24/26

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?

Other than routine liquor license issues, the meeting focused on the city budget. The budget was debated and ultimately passed. Councilmen Weber and Bowers spoke in favor of their respective proposed amendments to provide for low income tax assistance and for a grant process to provide support for pools, including Meadowlane Pool which is now a nonprofit organization if certain conditions were met. Neither amendment motion was successful.

Any general comments about the meeting?

Weber and Bowers were passionate about their amendments and expressed disappointment in their fellow council members or how they voted.

Observed by Shirley Williams

Lancaster County Board of Commissioners 8/25/26

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

Agendas are available only online. Background information, or reference to previous actions on several items would have been helpful. On courtesy/civility, on item 4.A. Commissioners Shulte and Vest engaged in a brief, somewhat contentious exchange regarding transparency. Shulte expressed a need for more transparency on the item and Vest took issue with the charge claiming the item had been fully vetted.

What were the main items of discussion at this meeting?

Regular meeting: On Item 4.A, final allocation of levy authority, Schulte opposed the item claiming the current study should be completed first to clarify the scope and return on investment. Vest responded that the issue was fully vetted. The item passed 4-1.

Item 4.B & C. fundraiser and festival approved.

Item 4.D. Commissioners approved Sheriff Terry Wagner request for a reappointment that had slipped for Dan Nolte on the Merit Commission.

Item 4.E. Approved a change order requested by Dan Nolte for $75,000 to Esri Canada to push out the schedule of mass appraisal software replacement to March 2028.

Items 4.F. NACO bulk mail permit. 4. G. Lincoln Sports Foundation grant from Visitors Improvement Fund.

Item 4.H. Approved new county human resources director classification description. Vest described the move as the first step in a big project the county is committed to taking on. A brief search, to explain the need for the new description, resulted in a Journal Star article from February 2025 about a related city financial error and approval of a contract to Zelle Human Resources Solutions at the 7/14/26 meeting. There was no discussion at the July meeting, so it's unclear if these topics are related. During public comment after the budget meeting, Lincoln resident, Peter Katt, shared his interest in learning more about this issue.

Items 4.I, J, and K, M and N all approved.

Item 4.L approved to receive services at no charge, valued at $50,000, from Longeye Services and software for artificial intelligence review of digital evidence. Crista Yeager, Lancaster County public defender, said that Longeye extends this value to departments across the country. 5 user licenses to 5 felony attorneys. 5,000 hours of processing time per year per user for use on major cases to provide easier review in discovery. Longeye will continue to be used, as needed, after the Axon software implementation. Articles available online discuss Longeye data collection and privacy concerns.

Budget meeting following the regular meeting:

Dennis Meyer, County Budget & Fiscal Officer, discussed the budget levy will drop this year. Meyer repeated several times that they will not be participating in the "pink card." Notable budget changes included a $4.7 million increase in salary and benefits (3.5 new FTE, funding current positions, and 12% increase in health and dental benefits) and election costs.

Lincoln resident, Peter Katt, provided the only public comment saying the budgeting process and system are not taxpayer friendly and very confusing. He believes we need to be informed enough to have a meaningful conversation. Katt had tried to get information on the move away from the long-standing shared city-county personnel committee to create a County personnel department. He also questioned Board salary and benefits, the $20M to non-profits, county broadband and convention center. Katt asked why aren't high use county gravel roads paved to reduce life-cycle costs. He said that people don't want to get into the numbers and advised commissioners to think through the process claiming it is the Board's obligation to provide clarity and purpose.

Schulte added that the complexity of the county budget is a lot compared to, say, the school board budget and a vast amount of the non-profit line item is not county funds, it's state or federal funds accessed through the county and passed on to non-profits. It can't be intercepted for other uses.

Any general comments about the meeting?

Still curious about: Budget and accounting process, why expenditures have exceeded the budget for several years, need and cost to separate city and county HR duties, the non-profit funding pass through, and Longeye data collection and review.

Observed by Tracy Aksamit

Lincoln Board of Education 8/25/26

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

The board group scrupulously follows the letter of the open meeting law, but the meetings themselves provide no useful information or understanding of the issues that the board votes on.

What were the main items of discussion at this meeting?

The meeting was 26 minutes long, with everything approved, unanimously, and very little discussion or explanation. It was 26 minutes of sweet poppy cock.

It began with a professional quality video of the first day of school for kindergartners, all exceptionally positive messages.

Two private citizens spoke, a couple who own a home in the LPS district, and who pointed out that the increase in spending every year is above the overall inflation rate and that the total budget has grown by more than 50% in the last five years.

One staff member pointed out that the chart the couple used for this computation was not easy to understand, and the actual growth was somewhat less. But she didn't give an accurate growth number. If I heard her right, it would probably be closer to 35% increase overall.

The couple said high property taxes are making homeowners house-poor and leading people to leave Nebraska.

The board voted to increase their allowable base growth percentage by the 4% allowed under state law. The written materials gave some explanation, but there was absolutely no discussion and no further explanation of why this was being done. (By a super majority vote, the board can increase the percentage the budget is allowed to grow above the state lid requirement. The district does not have to use that growth each year and can save it up to use in years where they have special problems. That's my understanding from my history, but things could've changed.)

Any ordinary member of the public would have no clue what the board was doing based on the written documents, and the public discussion. Reading all agenda materials provided some information, but those documents are still aimed at a fairly sophisticated audience,

Observed by Nancy Rose Hicks

Staff Meeting, Lancaster County Board of Commissioners 8/27/26

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

Big news near the end regarding Commissioner Shulte's legal draft to place a moratorium on data centers in Lancaster County. A plan for review, further discussion and voting was agreed to by the body.

What were the main items of discussion at this meeting?

David Cary (planning dept) and Pam Dingman (county engineer) spoke at length about activities in their realm.

Any general comments about the meeting?

Curious about: Ongoing conversations with the County Engineer and union negotiations.

Observed by Tari Hendrickson

Lincoln City Council 8/31/26

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?

Prior to the start of the meeting, I was informed by Maggie-Stuckey-Ross, Parks and Recreation Director, that the ordinance regarding what vehicles can be on walking/biking paths had incorrectly omitted electric personal electric chairs and scooters. Julia Metcalf had bought that up in your Observer Corps report and I had contacted Maggie and the city attorney about the omission. Maggie let me know it has been corrected.

Nothing of note in the consent agenda. All were passed unanimously. Eight resolutions were related to Liquor. All passed unanimously. Other resolutions of note was designating the Human Rights Manager as the City's Title VI coordinator and the City's ADA Coordinator under the Commission on Human Rights and the approval to conduct an audit of the City's payment card processing services to set up the city for future processing fee requirements, improve security measures and to look for efficiencies in card processing services. There was one 3rd reading on a Planned Unit Development and several first readings, none of note that I could tell. The only public comment was from Andy Faust (sp) who supported the proposed $165,00 amendment to create a city-funded program to help residents prepare and file their federal and state income tax returns which had been rejected by the City Council.The meeting adjoined at 6:02 pm

Observed by Jean McGuire