Will you support Clackamas Community College’s $90 million bond measure to build a Industrial/Technical Learning Center and DeJardin Science Addition in Oregon City for various skilled trades and to help rebuild the health-sciences building in North Clackamas?

CCC’s elected board members expressed their support for it Wednesday night, and they’re asking you too to pay about $38 a year for making Oregon City’s science, automotive, electronics, wielding and manufacturing classes in line with current technologies. A rebuilt facility at CCC’s Harmony Campus just east of Milwaukie would replace a 61-year-old workforce development facility to modernize its 40,000-square-feet of health care classrooms and laboratories. Repairs are also on the docket to buildings throughout the district if voters mark their ballots “yes” Nov. 4.

Their pitch? You won’t have to pay any additional taxes, and it won’t be just the more than 28,000 students all over the county who will benefit. Over another 26 years (or less if the bond is refinanced), the average property owner would continue to pay 19 cents on every $1,000 of assessed value. Hundreds of thousands of people in CCC’s district from Molalla to Milwaukie, and from Happy Valley to Wilsonville, wouldn’t be affected by the passage of the bond, because the proposed bond debt service is anticipated (given current interest rates) to be the same average it has been over the past 10 years.

Before the board voted unanimously July 16 to refer the bond to citizens, Oregon City resident William Gifford testified that the bond should be viewed as an “investment in our community” with value that goes well beyond diplomas, as CCC graduates themselves build a better community through getting local jobs that they want to have. Clackamas County Chairman John Ludlow, State Rep. Brent Barton (D-Oregon City) and Jeanne Magmer, North Clackamas Education Foundation chairwoman, also expressed their support for the plan and looked forward to continuing their respective organizations’ productive partnerships with the college. Inspired by Ludlow’s comments, CCC Board Member Greg Chaimov added paragraphs to the bond resolution about the high number of CCC students who transfer to universities, get high paying jobs within six months of graduation and benefit businesses in the community.

Refining the proposal

As part of the college’s 50-year-anniversary “Imagine Clackamas” outreach effort that led to the bond, CCC employees have spent the last few years asking thousands of citizens and key business owners what they’d like to see happen on their three campuses.

Several key differences in the current proposal, compared with proposed $130 million bond that failed in 2011, came out of that feedback, CCC President Joanne Truesdell noted. Beside the lower price tag, taxpayer money now targets specific projects that have been recognized as most crucial.

With a $40 million difference between the original bond proposal and its current incarnation, there will be a lot of improvements the college will have to postpone. CCC’s athletes, for example, were disappointed that a renovation of their track and wrestling equipment were not part of the list to see upgrades upon bond passage.

Oregon’s state budget will still provide a total of $16 million if the bond passes. Instead of just augmenting the overall bond as was proposed in 2011, now the state’s funding is slated specifically to be divided equally between CCC’s Harmony and OC projects. While sitting on key committees, Barton advocated for the Oregon Legislative match as part of both the original proposal and also during the current reauthorization. But if voters rejected CCC’s bond again, it’s unlikely the legislature would reauthorize the state funding match again.

Another $5 million from businesses has also been committed if the bond passed, which, with other negotiations currently taking place with other interested business owners, Truesdell hopes will become a total of $20 million in commitments by the time of the vote in November.

“The piece that was so important that we spent time going out to the community and find out what mattered,” Truesdell said. “People see the success we’ve had with these partnerships, and in creating jobs.”
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