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Contact: Shannon Franklin, President's Office
541-278-5951, sfranklin@bluecc.edu

BMCC to target May 2015 ballot for bond in Umatilla, Morrow counties

PENDLETON, Ore. – The Board of Education for Blue Mountain Community College has decided to move toward placing a capital improvement bond on the May 2015 ballot for voter consideration. The Board reviewed recommended projects during its regular meeting Wednesday evening (Oct. 1).

The Board passed a motion to “proceed on a capital improvement bond,” and to “adopt the following key policy priorities for the proposed bond: 1. Workforce development and jobs are critical for our community; 2. Provide a safe and secure learning environment; 3. Protect our community investment.”

BMCC is looking to place the bond on the May 2015 ballot in Umatilla and Morrow counties. Based on bond legal counsel estimates, the proposed tax rate, if approved by voters, would generate \$23 million over 15 years. The tax rate would be \$0.25 per \$1,000 of assessed property value, which is 6 cents lower than taxpayers paid on the previous bond that expired earlier this year and that the failed bond in November 2013 asked voters to consider.

Since the bond proposal failed to pass last November, BMCC President Cam Preus has sought feedback from the community in an effort to put together a new bond package that voters would be more likely to support. This included numerous “listening sessions” throughout the two-county area in late-fall and early-winter 2013, a public opinion phone survey, a Citizen’s Review Panel of community members who reviewed all feedback and projects to make recommendations for a future bond, and, most recently, community meetings throughout the region to inform the public and gain more feedback on the recommended projects. BMCC students and faculty also were included in this process.

The recommended projects and key policy messages the Board reviewed came from the Citizen’s Review Panel’s findings and priorities. This includes three workforce development projects: a mechatronics and workforce center in Boardman, a precision irrigated agriculture center in Hermiston, and an agriculture center of excellence in Pendleton.

In addition, bond project recommendations include equipment upgrades for diesel technician, dental and nursing programs – all programs that showed strong community support in the public opinion phone survey. Building maintenance and infrastructure upgrades that relate to safety and security, energy efficiencies and protecting the community’s investment also are included in the recommendations.