

LTCC board contemplates 2014 bond measure

By Kathryn Reed

The bulk of the buildings on the 164-acre campus of Lake Tahoe Community College have been funded by the state of California. But that might change next year.

For more than a year college board members have been discussing the possibility of asking local voters to pass a general obligation bond that would help create new facilities. John Palmer with Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe law firm discussed the legal implications, process and options with the board on Sept. 24.

At the Oct. 8 meeting the board will likely vote on a reimbursement resolution. This would not obligate the college to go forward with the bond, but it's the next step in the process.



LTCC President Kindred Murillo, from left, talks about a possible bond as board members Karen Borges and Roberta Mason listen. Photo/Kathryn Reed

LTCC is one of eight college districts in the state to have never gone to voters with a general obligation bond.

The college is looking at possibly asking voters in November 2014 to approve a bond of probably no more than \$38 million that would be paid back in 25 years.

The college has a list of \$43 million worth of improvements, but doesn't believe the higher amount is something the voters would stomach.

Another concern is the other tax measures that could be on that ballot. South Lake Tahoe is contemplating a snow removal tax hike and the local library is expected to ask voters to renew that tax.

When local voters went to the ballot in spring 1974 they agreed to tax themselves 72 cents on every \$100,000 of assessed property value. (This was pre-Proposition 13.) Voters were asked to create the college district, approve the tax that would buy the land, and select the board members. (Roberta Mason and Fritz Wenck were on the original board and are still board members.)

Hazel Hoak, who was El Dorado County's assistant superintendent of schools, became the interim president until the board that September hired Jim Duke to be the college's first full-time president. (Hoak will be at the college's 40th anniversary celebration in June.)

Classes started in fall 1975 at a motel on Highway 50. In 1988, the first building opened on the campus people know today. It is state dollars that have funded most every building on campus. There was a local capital campaign for the Haldan Art Gallery and library. The debt on that is paid for from money the college receives through redevelopment money and rent from the U.S. Forest Service.

And it is state money that would help LTCC achieve what it

wants for the next decade. Kindred Murillo, college president, said the goal is to double what taxpayers approve through matching dollars from the state.

Today when the state gives money for facilities it expects the college to come up with half of the funds for the project.

LTCC is going forward with plans to make improvements. It has made the short list with the state for a remodel for efficiency grant. The bond money would provide the needed matching funds. The plan is to modernize the science lab, upgrade technology on campus and make energy upgrades.

LEED certified buildings were brought up at last week's visioning session, which points to the community already wanting the college to be a leader in energy efficiency.

The college has also asked the state for money to build a public safety training facility. This would go close to where the U.S. Forest Service offices are. The college is also talking to city officials about this project because it could include a fire station. (The city has long wanted to update the outdated station across from South Tahoe Middle School.) It's also possible the college site could be a command center in the event of a major emergency like the Angora Fire.

Murillo would like part of the safety piece to also include another exit point in case of an emergency. This might be via South Tahoe Public Utility District. Putting in automatic door locks and being able to communicate with every classroom in the event of an emergency are other foreseeable improvements. So are cameras in the parking lot.

Other facilities the college would like to construct include residential housing for students. A public-private partnership is possible.

An environmental science building could have multiple uses – including being a university center for a four-year program.

Another upgrade would be the possibility of creating an early childhood development center that could incorporate the Child Development Center on campus with Tahoe Parents Nursery School.

While a decision has not been made, the bond counsel on Tuesday touted the option of going the route where only 55 percent of the voters need to say yes. More requirements come with that type of bond compared to the usual two-thirds needed for a tax measure, but it can also be easier to pass.