

LTCC banking on Measure F to pay for upgrades



Lake Tahoe Community College is seeking its first general obligation bond. Photos/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

Lake Tahoe Community College is going to be different in the coming years. How different depends on voters.

Measure F – as in facilities – is on the Nov. 4 ballot. It is a \$55 million general obligation bond that property owners in the district would pay back over the course of about 30 years. The amount owed cannot exceed \$25 per \$100,000 of assessed value. That means owners of a house valued at \$300,000 would pay \$75 per year. To pass, it must receive at least 55 percent approval.

The college expects to deliver \$107 million worth of projects over 10 years. The other \$52 million will come from matching

dollars from the state or other grants.

No argument in opposition to Measure F has been filed with the El Dorado County Elections Department.

The money is entirely for facilities. No money can go toward salaries or benefits.

While the South Lake Tahoe institution has been putting some money away for major repairs, those dollars are not enough to keep up with the major maintenance costs and ongoing technology upgrades that are needed. Nor does it come close to being able to cover expenses associated with new facilities. Plus, LTCC has been contending with five years of budget cuts.



Informational signs are scattered throughout the campus.

LTCC, while it turned 40 this year, has been at the current location for 25 years. To the untrained eye, the outside still looks fairly new. But President Kindred Murillo said closer inspection reveals the wear and tear on the facilities through the years, especially because of being located in a harsh climate like Lake Tahoe.

But the college is also contending with science labs that are 25 years old, a campus that doesn't have adequate wireless capabilities for a generation of students who have their own mobile devices, and safety issues that decades ago were not even on the radar – like protecting people on campus if there were a gunman.

For students coming to LTCC from South Tahoe High School, the facilities are like taking a step backward after the multi-million upgrades delivered from the 2008-voter approved Measure G bond.

The college bond is designed to bring LTCC into the 21st century “to give students and teachers the best environment.”

“I hate to send a highly qualified instructor into a classroom where they have to fight with heating, cooling and technology,” Murillo told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Plus, some of the upgrades will actually reduce some bills – like electrical and heating.

And if the bond doesn't pass?

“We will probably have to downsize classes and programs because we will need to shift money to things that need to be fixed,” Murillo said.

She said the vision of the college – to be California's premier destination college – wouldn't change. What will change is the time line to accomplish that goal. Murillo wouldn't say how many years it would put the college behind, but said it would take a lot longer to get to where the staff and board want to go.

With passage of the bond, what people would notice right away is the main building would be modernized, which includes being retrofitted for energy efficient lighting; crumbled sidewalks near the gym replaced; and the patchwork of roof repairs gone.



Broken concrete in front the physical education building gives the campus a rundown look.

The college is seeking matching money from the state to build a public safety training facility. This would tie into the school's fire academy. This would also act at the community's office of emergency services.

LTCC is also planning to create a university center. Senate Bill 850 is on the governor's desk. This would allow community colleges to offer baccalaureate degrees that don't compete with those that are available in the CSU and UC systems.

Murillo said staff is discussing a program that would be Tahoe specific. The college could either offer its own four-year degree or partner with an established institution.

Friends of Lake Tahoe Community College has been established to be the advocacy group for Measure F. A website will be launched in September with more information.