

Editorial: Vote no on Measure F

Publisher's note: *Lake Tahoe News convened an editorial panel of seven community members to come up with this endorsement.*

For 40 years, Lake Tahoe Community College has served the needs of the community through excellent programs, outstanding educators and what are now adequate or subpar facilities.

But we believe the leaders need to go back to the white board, crunch the numbers again, perhaps even take an analytics class to come up with another bond.

It's great to dream, have aspirations and a vision for the future. But if they are not shared dreams, aspirations and visions, then they likely will never come true.

Lake Tahoe News dreams of a successful, viable two-year institution that continues to thrive in South Lake Tahoe. We want students to have state-of-the-art equipment and roofs that don't leak. We want the college to be a centerpiece of the South Shore. We want the college to succeed and even be more than it is today. But Measure F is not the way to get there.

The \$55 million bond on the Nov. 4 ballot is the gold-plated version. It's a pie-in-the-sky approach to getting things we are not convinced the college or community need. We don't believe that just because you build it, they will come.

There is more than \$5 million in the bond project list for an environmental studies and sustainability center. Clearly, the environment is a big deal here – so is studying it based on all the agencies that call the basin home. But where is the proof that this discipline needs its own multimillion-dollar facility? (The total price is nearly \$16.8 million; with the

rest of the money coming from the state.) Where are the statistics to prove we are losing enrollment by not having it or the figures that show LTCC would gain enrollment by having it?

If the college wants \$5.7 million of bond money to be spent on an \$18.5 million regional public safety training facility, maybe it should be working with the Legislature to get some of the fire tax money that was hijacked by the state. Maybe the college should explain how its much heralded fire academy would benefit. And with the city of South Lake Tahoe recently upgrading its emergency operations center and the ability to use the police station (which is across the street from LTCC), the need for such a facility has not been demonstrated.

With online education growing, do we need more brick and mortar?

LTCC has many wonderful programs. Enhance and grow what is working before becoming more than you are. There is room for improvement for what exists today.

Officials say they want LTCC to be a destination college. How is this even possible when there is no housing for students? Student housing is not part of the bond despite the fact that in September 2013 during a daylong visioning session dorms were at the top of the list of desires from the community.

We are not convinced more buildings and programs will bring more enrollment. And if enrollment doesn't increase, what would be the point of such a significant outlay of money?

It's alarming that \$2.25 million of bond funds are allocated toward planning, including state and federal documents, and Tahoe Regional Planning Agency permits. Bond management is another \$1.75 million. We realize there is a cost to doing business – especially here – but that is 7 percent of the bond. And that \$4 million doesn't even account for the bond financial advisory services and bond legal counsel.

We believe the college should come back to voters with a downsized bond that looks less like a wish list and more like a needs list. We want to know our money is going for substance and not fluff.

We know the college needs to upgrade its technology, science lab and work on safety issues. These needs we believe are things the voters should invest in.

While getting matching money from the state is great, sometimes it's OK to say no thank you.

We can't justify spending more taxpayer money on facilities when the college has clearly demonstrated it cannot maintain what it has. The college needs to get its house in order before it starts building new facilities.

For these reasons we urge voters to vote no on Measure F.