

DRAFT
Corbett Fire District #14
General Obligation Bond Measure
Hearing Minutes
Wednesday, October 12, 2022, 6:30 p.m.
Corbett Fire Station
36930 East Historical Columbia River Highway
Corbett, Oregon
Measure 26-226

November 8, 2022, Election

Present:

TSCC:

Chair Harmony Quiroz, Commissioner James Ofsink, Commissioner Mark Wubbold, Commissioner Margo Norton, Executive Director Allegra Willhite, and Budget Analyst Tunie Betschart

Absent: Commissioner Matt Donahue

Corbett Fire District #14 District:

Board Members: Chair David Shannon, Vice-Chair Victoria Purvine, Secretary-Treasurer Matt McHenry, and Director Jeff Smith

Staff: Fire Chief Rick Wunsch, Fire Marshal David Flood and Administrator Heidi Timberman.

Guests: Assistant Fire Chief Brent Yonker, Assistant Fire Chief Tony Snelling, Lieutenant Tim Sherman, Volunteer Association President Lieutenant Joe Fahlman, Luke Flood, Kathleen Sherman, Malcolm Freund, Tom Layton and John Jordan

Chair Harmony Quiroz opened the Public Hearing on the \$4,500,000 General Obligation Bond Property Tax Measure by explaining TSCC's responsibilities concerning tax measures. She explained that the commissioners would take no action at the hearing but would provide a vehicle for the public to comment and ask questions the general public may be interested in hearing from the district. The minutes of this public hearing is prepared and retained as a permanent record of this hearing.

She followed with introductions of TSCC Commissioners, staff, and the district's representatives. Following the introductions, Chair Quiroz opened the hearing for public comment. She asked Executive Director Willhite if anyone had signed up to comment or if staff had received any written comments. Ms. Willhite had not received any written comments, and no one signed up to give statements. She

asked those attending if they would like to make any comments on the tax measure at this time. No one wished to comment.

TSCC Questions:

Chair Quiroz asked the following questions:

What was the impetus for bringing this bond to the voters? What problems is it working to solve?

Mr. Shannon answered, saying the district's reason for the bond measure is to promote public safety through fire prevention and suppression. He said the district has 31 volunteers. The low personnel costs have allowed the district to prepare for the future by investing in equipment necessary to do their job better. With no personnel cost, they can invest in the necessary equipment. They have changed to larger hoses. They plan to place six cisterns in the areas not served by hydrants. The impetus is long-range planning to expand the three stations, Aims, Springdale and Corbett, to house all the equipment. Currently, they do not have enough space. They would like to have room for all the volunteers and the equipment. Now, the equipment is housed outside. It will work better if there is room for the volunteers to meet, work out, and assemble. The district provides ongoing training for the volunteers. The bond will provide capital resources to build a training center for this activity.

Commissioner Norton asked these follow-up questions:

What are the major types of calls the district receives? Are they mainly emergency medical, fire-related, or search and rescue calls?

Chief Wunsch said they have a number of medical calls in the Columbia Gorge on trails requiring special equipment. They also have several water rescue calls on the river, which seem to be increasing. He said they do not have many structural fires in the area but do have wildfires.

Mr. Shannon said the bond measure would provide a smaller, more maneuverable vehicle for medical and search and rescue calls. Having the equipment necessary to do the job is essential for firefighters. They are planning to exchange the larger two-wheel drive ambulance for a smaller four-wheel drive one ton pick-up with a utility bed. This will be easier to maneuver, especially in the winter.

Chief Wunsch said they do respond to rescues on the cliffs of Multnomah Falls, water rescues in the Columbia or Sandy Rivers, and medical calls in the district. They respond to a range of fires, some in the district and some are not. This informs the equipment needs.

Commissioner Ofsink asked the following question:

Can you please describe your communication strategy with the community, both leading up to the election and communicating progress if the measure passes?

Ms. Purvine explained that the district had conducted four meetings with a presentation in various community spots, covering Aims, Springdale, Corbett and Bridal Veil areas. The presentation covered the plans for each building. They explained the district covers a 40-mile area from the Sandy River to the Hood River County line. They reviewed the types of calls they respond to and answered questions from the public. They described the new building they are proposing at the fire station, updates to the stations, and increasing the cistern size at Aims and Bridal Veil. They are planning on doing quarterly updates to provide details on the progress. The district is including information on the website. They plan to do a zoom meeting to help put the information out and allow the public to ask questions.

Commissioner Wubbold asked the following questions:

What are the highest priority projects on your anticipated list of projects (e.g., cisterns, training facility, new buildings)? What are the lowest priority items?

Mr. Shannon said the vehicles are the lowest priority. Cisterns are the number one priority. These cisterns cost about \$100,000 each. They will be on private land that has been donated. The next focus would be the buildings. The equipment, such as fire trucks, is the lowest priority if there are dollars available.

Commissioner Norton asked the following questions:

Your capital projects have been occurring on a pay-as-you-go basis for the last few years. If your voters reject the capital bond measure, will your priorities change?

Chief Wunsch said if it were to fail, they would continue with the pay-as-you-go approach. This bond is the last big step to move to the next step. This would slow the process if rejected, and the district must rethink its strategy. The service delivery would not change.

Mr. Shannon added that the bond is to try to get ahead of future need.

Do the people you have been talking to understand the difference between the pay-as-you-go and the long-term commitment to the bond measure?

Ms. Purvine said the people who came to the open house and asked questions seemed to understand. There were discussions about the difference between AV and RMV and how to determine the amount this bond measure would cost each homeowner.

Commissioner Ofsink asked these follow-up questions:

Assuming the measure passes, what projects can the voters see completed first?

Chief Wunsch said permits would take some time for buildings. Trading the current ambulance vehicle for a smaller rescue four-wheel drive pickup would happen immediately. Work would begin on the cisterns, and permit planning would begin.

When would the cisterns be completed?

Chief Wunsch said this would be a matter of working through the process since the land is currently available.

Chair Quiroz asked the following question:

New facilities and equipment come with operating and maintenance costs – how does your district plan to cover these costs in the long-term?

Mr. Shannon said the cisterns are maintenance-free, and the steel buildings are minimal maintenance. Even the buildings will not require a lot of maintenance as they are steel buildings and pretty maintenance free. The septic system in the new Springdale station will require ongoing maintenance. Vehicle maintenance and replacement will need to happen in the future.

Mr. Flood added that the ongoing maintenance is minimal. With the new equipment, the district may have additional funding sources from conflagration reimbursements from other districts or states.

Commissioner Wubbold asked the following question:

How do the cost estimates for project costs factor in the potential for material and labor cost increases in the currently volatile market?

Mr. Shannon said the skyrocketing materials are a concern for the district. They have added a 15% buffer above the recent cost estimates. This percentage is higher than what the district was advised to set aside. The district feels this buffer will help to mitigate this uncertainty.

Chair Quiroz asked the following questions:

How will the board oversee the bond program if the measure passes? How will you track and report on progress?

Ms. Purvine said the District Administrator, Heidi Timberman, has set up a program to track the bond measure revenue separately. She advises the board of any action the district takes, and all expenditures are reported to the five-member board each month, and it is reviewed by each board member. The auditors are pleased with the layers of oversight within the district.

Chief Wunsch added that if the bond passes, the board is committed to providing a quarterly update for the public, and he also supports this. Transparency has always been the fire districts policy.

Commissioner Ofsink asked this follow-up question:

Aside from the bond measure, how does the district regularly communicate with the district members?

Ms. Purvine said the district holds a monthly meeting. The fire chief or a representative gives an overview of the calls they have responded to, changes in personnel, or any updates about the district. The minutes from the monthly meetings are shared on the Corbett Oregon website, the Corbett Facebook page, and the Corbett Area Website.

Commissioner Norton asked the following questions:

This is a relatively small capital bond. If successful, how are you planning to sell the bonds as a stand-alone issue or bundled with a State of Oregon issuance? What are you anticipating for bond issuance costs?

Mr. Shannon said they would follow the advice of the bond council and Mr. James Albright. He is the financial advisor for the Special District Association of Oregon. The district has retained him on a contingency basis to advise them. He said the attorney's fees are capped at \$26,000 the financial advisor's costs are capped at \$15,000.

Is your financial advisor expressing any concerns about the interest cost related to this bond measure?

Mr. Shannon said the 15% buffer was based on the high end of the financial advisor's assessment of the potential risk.

Will the sixty-five cents hold, and if it looks like it won't, how will this affect your promise to the voters?

Mr. Shannon said they promised the voters they would build the three stations, the training tower, and the cisterns. If money is left, they plan to buy equipment estimated at \$700,000. So that, too, is a bit of a buffer.

Chair Quiroz said this concluded the questions TSCC has. She thanked everyone for attending. Chair Quiroz thanked the board members and Fire Chief Wunsch for answering TSCC's questions. Since there were no other questions or comments, she closed the public hearing.

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