

Mt. Hood Community College 2025-26 Bond Hearing Minutes

Mt. Hood Community College Campus

2600 SE Stark Street

Gresham, Oregon and Zoom

Wednesday, April 23, 2025

6:30 pm

Present:

TSCC (in attendance via Zoom):

Chair Harmony Quiroz,
Vice-Chair Matt Donahue,
Commissioner Tod Burton, Commissioner
Allison Lugo Knapp, Commissioner Dr. Rita Moore,
Executive Director Allegra Willhite,
Budget Analyst Brittanie Abayare

Absent: None

Mt. Hood Community College:

College President Dr. Lisa Skari,
Vice President of Finance and Administration Jennifer DeMent, via Zoom
Vice President of Advancement and Community Engagement Jennifer Boehmer, via Zoom
Vice President of Instruction Tina Redd,
Manager of Budget, Accounting, and Student Financial Services Michelle Solberg, via Zoom
Board Chair Diane McKeel,
Board Vice Chair Andrew Speer,
Board Member Annette Mattson,
Board Member Dana Stroud
Board Member Diane Noriega,
Board Member ShaToyia Bentley

Opening Remarks and Introductions

Chair Harmony Quiroz called the hearing to order and welcomed everyone to the public hearing regarding Mount Hood Community College's proposed bond tax measure. Quiroz provided background on the role of the TSCC. She explained that the Tax Supervising and Conservation Commission is a community oversight body established over 100 years ago by the Oregon Legislature. TSCC is responsible for overseeing the budgets of all member taxing districts in Multnomah County, conducting annual reviews and certifications, and holding public hearings on property tax measures proposed by these districts.

She stated that TSCC commissioners ask questions that they believe reflect what a typical community member might want to know. In doing so, the Commission serves as a stand-in for members of the public who may not be able to engage directly with the district. She encouraged community members to attend hearings, submit questions, or provide testimony. Minutes from the hearing would become

part of the official public record. She emphasized that TSCC does not take a position for or against the bond measure. The purpose of the hearing was solely to promote informed decision-making through public information sharing.

TSCC commissioners and staff introduced themselves, followed by introductions from the Mount Hood Community College representatives.

Public Comment

No members of the public had signed up for in-person testimony. Executive Director Allegra Willhite stated that TSCC welcomes both in person verbal testimony and written comments from the public. TSCC received a written public comment for this hearing from Tom Busse. The submitted comment discusses the timing and impact of TSCC's hearings on tax levy measures and proposes several reforms on TSCC authority and scope of oversight. The Commissioners received the full written public comment, and it is currently available on TSCC website and will be included in the meeting minutes: [MHCC Bond Hearing Public Comment from Tom Busse](#)

Commissioner Questions and District Responses

Commissioner Moore asked: Tell us about your voter education efforts, what you have done so far? And which of these efforts do you feel have been most successful? How are you measuring this success?

Vice President of Advancement and Community Engagement Jennifer Boehmer explained that the college separates its public information efforts from advocacy conducted by the independent political action committee. The college's outreach focuses on informing voters about the bond measure and includes messaging around four key areas: expanding career education, modernizing and making facilities more accessible, improving campus safety, and repairing aging infrastructure. Outreach efforts included postcards, digital ads, billboards, videos, newspaper advertisements, and multilingual materials. Boehmer noted digital engagement metrics as a key indicator of success, highlighting over 840,000 ad impressions, nearly 7,000 independent visits to the bond website, and a 51% video watch-through rate—significantly higher than the industry standard of 35%. Board members state that they themselves, have been going out into the community and giving in person presentations about the bond and getting endorsements as well.

Follow-up question asked by Commissioner Moore: What outreach have you done with local jurisdictions? Are you seeing support from other local taxing districts?

Board Vice Chair Andrew Speer stated that outreach efforts included schools, city councils and other jurisdictions. They've amassed over 175 endorsements from elected officials, private businesses and other community members.

Commissioner Burton asked: This is not the first attempt to get a capital bond passed. What is different this time, and what gives you confidence for success?

President Dr. Lisa Skari explained that this bond effort differed significantly from prior attempts. They began by reviewing past feedback and documentation, both internal and external, which inspired a new approach. A comprehensive, college-led facility planning process helped identify and prioritize needs across campus. These priorities were then refined by a bond development workgroup composed primarily of community members; something that had not been done in previous bond efforts.

The college engaged in extensive public outreach through early 2025, sharing plans, gathering feedback, and adjusting messaging accordingly. Staff noted that the proposed projects clearly resonated

with the community, and the refined messaging strategy helped build stronger support. This round saw broader and more intentional engagement, resulting in endorsements from local cities, school districts, business groups, and numerous community organizations. MHCC expressed greater confidence in the bond's success based on this deeper community involvement and positive public response.

Follow-up question asked by Commissioner Burton: Are there any projects in this bond that were in some of the other bond attempts?

President Skari explained that a key difference with this bond is its focus on repairing and upgrading existing infrastructure rather than constructing new buildings, which was the focus of past bond proposals. This "essentials package" is centered on maintaining and modernizing current facilities. One example is the proposed creation of a multidisciplinary healthcare lab, allowing students from various healthcare programs to train together in a shared, real-world setting.

This approach—shaped by broad community engagement—reflects both internal priorities and external feedback. In addition, the bond proposal is notably more affordable than previous ones, costing six cents less per \$1,000 of assessed value, which the college believes makes it more appealing to voters.

Chair Quiroz asked: How would the bond funded projects impact programming for the college – would it change coursework offered in any areas, and if so, how?

Vice President of Instruction, Tina Redd shared that bond-funded projects would directly enhance student learning by modernizing outdated facilities, particularly in the sciences. Chemistry labs haven't been updated since the 2010s, and biology labs date back to the 1970s, lacking basic infrastructure like podiums and sufficient outlets. Upgraded labs would support hands-on learning, improve knowledge retention, and better prepare students for STEM careers and transfer degrees. Moving the nursing program to the main campus would increase student access to resources, foster collaboration with other health programs, and provide access to advanced simulation and skills labs—boosting both program visibility and applicant interest.

Additional improvements include facility upgrades for health programs such as surgical technology and physical therapy, as well as investments in simulation and robotics. Bond funds would also enhance arts and athletics facilities, ensuring Title IX compliance, improving security and accessibility, and updating HVAC systems to support media-rich instruction. These campus-wide upgrades would not only improve morale and learning environments but also allow faculty to shift their focus from overcoming facility limitations to innovating curriculum and instruction to meet modern workforce needs.

Commissioner Lugo Knapp asked: We understand the college has a number of projects that are ready to go – what is the timeline for the work to be done by the bond? Which projects would you complete first and when do you expect them to be done?

DeMent stated that the district was eager to begin work immediately. The pool enclosure and security system upgrades were prioritized and already in the planning stages. For the pool, they had staged preparation and conducted system research. If the bidding process proceeds smoothly, the pool enclosure could be completed by winter of 2026. Other major projects are still in the conceptual phase and will require additional input from students, employees, and industry partners. She explained that the goal is to pair infrastructure updates with building upgrades simultaneously to avoid repeating disruptions in the same spaces.

Commissioner Donahue asked: Increased square footage, new equipment, modern technology, etc. all come with ongoing maintenance costs. What do those costs look like going forward? Will you need to spend more on maintenance than you do currently? If so, how will you fund these costs in your budget?

DeMent explained that the bond proposal does not include any new buildings or added square footage. Instead, it focuses on modernizing existing facilities. While updated buildings still require maintenance,

the improvements are intended to prevent critical failures, which are more expensive and disruptive. She used the college's current security systems as an example: multiple systems have been "patchworked" together, creating inefficiencies. A new integrated system would be more cost-effective and simpler to operate in the long run.

Follow-up by Chair Quiroz: Quiroz observed that the bond appears focused on long-deferred maintenance. And asked whether these updates would reduce long- and short-term maintenance needs.

DeMent confirmed this and described a past incident where a fire in a visual arts building HVAC unit caused smoke damage, building closure, and long delays due to replacement wait times. These unexpected failures are costly, and addressing issues proactively with bond funds would help avoid such disruptions and reduce costs over time.

Commissioner Moore asked: If this bond does not pass, how will the college, its students, and the community be affected? Do you have any options for funding some of these projects in other ways?

DeMent acknowledged the college's long history of unsuccessful bond efforts and said that they deliberately built a scalable facilities plan. If the bond fails, only small portions of projects could be funded using the district's limited capital project budget—currently about \$400,000 annually. Larger efforts like seismic improvements or access control systems would be postponed unless other funding sources were identified. She said the college had applied for \$8 million in state capital construction funds for classroom and lab upgrades. However, that funding requires a local cash match. Without the bond, they would need to assemble those match funds from alternative sources like ARPA funds, grants, or revenue from the pandemic period, as they had done in the last biennium.

Follow-up asked by Commissioner Moore: What kind of impact would it have on the students if you were not able to do all of these upgrades?

DeMent said faculty have been creative in using current spaces and that some classrooms have been updated with previous funds. However, those updated rooms are few and in high demand, creating scheduling problems. Students might have to take classes at less desirable times because those limited rooms are so heavily used. If the bond passes, more classrooms would be upgraded, giving students better access and flexibility. She also noted that other improvements, like updated signage and aesthetics, would make the campus more welcoming and accessible. Without the bond, these issues would continue or require lower-cost alternatives that might compromise quality.

Commissioner Burton asked: The measure summary mentions an independent oversight committee – what would this look like? Who would be on the oversight committee? How frequently will they report back to the board?

DeMent said the district has no prior experience implementing a bond, but they are researching best practices from peer colleges. The committee would ensure transparency and accountability in how bond funds are used. Membership would likely include community members, industry representatives tied to the areas being improved, students, and college staff. Meetings would be open to the public to allow transparency for non-members. The committee would meet at least twice a year and provide summary reports to the college board.

Before proceeding with the final question, Chair Quiroz asked the commissioners if they had any additional questions. Commissioners responded no, and Chair Quiroz voiced her support for MHCC and noted that the Commissioners are rooting for them. Chair Quiroz stated that this final question was to give the college a final opportunity to speak directly to voters and explain why they should support the bond.

She then asked: A question for any of the board members able to attend - you've had a hard time passing a bond in the past. What do you believe is the most compelling reason for voters to pass a bond this time around?

Speer responded by acknowledging that many key points had already been touched on throughout the hearing but emphasized the intentionality of the planning process. They explained that while the bond might seem new to voters, it was the result of nearly five years of work. That process began with the college's strategic plan, continued through a master facilities plan, then the formation and work of a bond planning committee, and now has culminated in the formal steps of presenting the bond to voters.

He stated that, from their conversations with the community, it's important to not only show the need but to also answer the question: "What do we get out of it?" The college provides an estimated \$300 million annually in economic revenue to the district. The bond would help bolster and grow that value into the future, particularly through investments in career and technical education—such as the allied health programs discussed earlier—as well as trades-related programs.

He also pointed out that it's been 50 years since the last bond was passed, and that facilities have long surpassed their typical accounting life, which generally ranges from 40 to 50 years. This situation demonstrates the strong financial stewardship of both current and past college administrations, as well as the thoughtful planning behind this bond effort.

Further, Speer highlighted that MHCC serves as a true community resource. Over the past year, the college has provided more than 26,000 swim lessons and access to swim meets and pool facilities, supporting both public health and local tourism.

Finally, he addressed the affordability of the bond. MHCC is proposing a tax rate of 25 cents per \$1,000 of assessed value, which would result in an average cost of \$5 per month—or \$60 annually—for residents in the district. They emphasized that the college has been mindful of the community's demographics and aimed to make the request as affordable as possible. Redd described it as a good investment, stating, "If voters want a strong East County, then we have to invest in the mechanism to get it there."

Closing Remarks

Chair Quiroz thanked the college representatives for sharing information with TSCC and the public and closed the hearing by expressing hope for positive news during the upcoming budget review. Commissioner Burton expressed excitement about the upcoming Jazz Festival and questioned if MHCC would have a presence. MHCC confirmed that they would have a table presence at the festival.

There being no other business, Chair Quiroz closed the meeting.