

# BMCC faculty implore board not to accept budget proposal

## Budget committee holds off any decisions

By PHIL WRIGHT  
East Oregonian

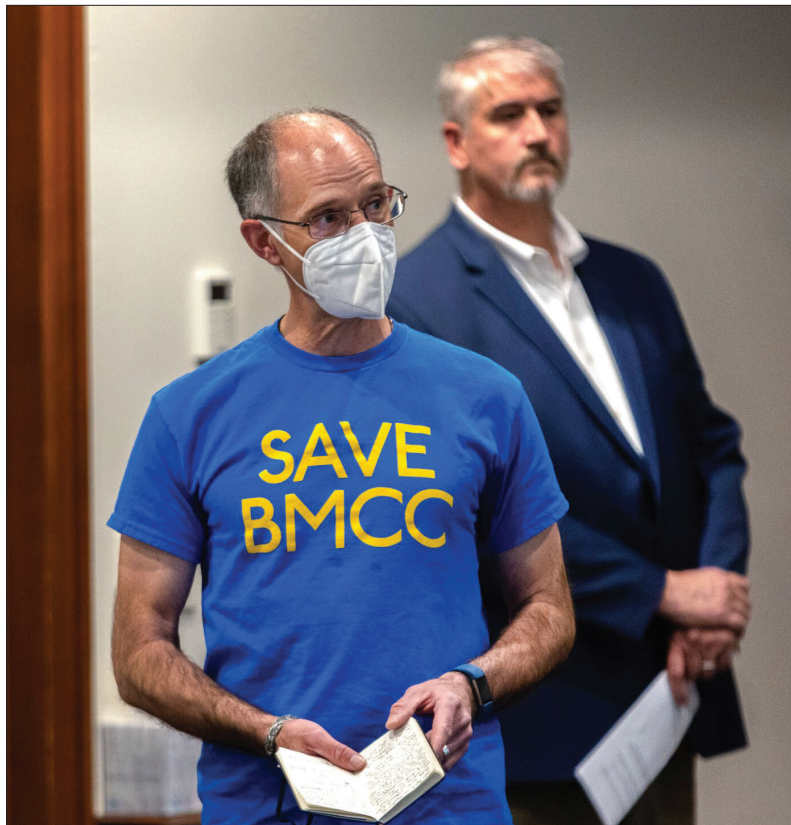
PENDLETON — Faculty of Blue Mountain Community College, Pendleton, took a unified stance Monday, April 25, against the budget proposal calling for numerous layoffs and program cuts at the college.

The budget committee, though, held off on making any decision after meeting for the better part of three hours.

BMCC instructors gathered at the Pendleton campus before the committee discussed the college administration's proposal to eliminate 10 full-time teaching positions, several part-time positions in multiple disciplines and eliminating criminal justice, college prep and industrial systems technology programs. They had prepared statements to deliver to the committee, the rest of the college board and the administration. The East Oregonian obtained several of the statements.

Just getting into the boardroom took some effort. The college was not going to let instructors into the meeting. BMCC President Mark Browning in the hallway outside the room agreed faculty could go on one at a time to address the board. Math instructor Bob Hillenbrand went first.

He told the committee and Browning that a similar scenario played out in 2002-03, when



Kathy Aney/East Oregonian

**Gary Parker, who teaches mathematics and computer science at Blue Mountain Community College, Pendleton, speaks Monday, April 25, 2022, to the college budget committee and board of education, imploring them not to cut 10 full-time faculty positions. BMCC President Mark Browning stands behind Parker.**

Travis Kirkland was president of the college.

“Just like then, we’re hearing now claims of the imminent demise of the college,” Hillenbrand said, “a false pretext for radical action from someone who just arrived primed with an anti-faculty agenda.”

But 20 years later, Blue Mountain continues operating. He warned this fight will end up in

arbitration and the outcome will be the same as it was then. The college spent nearly \$500,000 fighting legal challenges during Kirkland’s tenure, Hillenbrand said, and lost all of them.

“Don’t waste precious college funds on lawyers,” he urged.

Hillenbrand also said Browning was deceptive in his use of figures and obscured facts, such as the 39 classified and

### BMCC 2022-23 BUDGET

Blue Mountain Community College’s budget document is available online at [www.bluecc.edu/about/administration/finance](http://www.bluecc.edu/about/administration/finance).

administration positions the college cut in recent years. Those were “paper people that existed only on the pages of the budget,” he said, and had no effect on the actual ending fund balance nor on students served.

“Most of the real cuts were classified,” he continued. “I know of 14. By grouping classified together with administration he obscures the fact that only a small number of FT administrators were actually relieved of their positions. I know of only two.”

Science instructor Sascha McKeon provided the board with a “broad compilation of the beginning year revenues and top five expenditures for the last five years.” She said there has been a drastic reduction in faculty wages and questioned why faculty should “shoulder the burden of low enrollment?”

She told the committee the projected revenue for next year is down 6%, yet the administration is seeking to cut 33% of the faculty.

“That does not track, when revenue is projected to be up next year by \$300,000,” McKeon said.

Gary Parker, Blue Mountain math and computer science coach, told the board, “Many of the programs scheduled to be cut have low overhead and gen-

erate excess revenue,” including math, English and adult basic education. And if Blue Mountain doesn’t have what students want, they will not come here.

A number of other faculty also spoke, but for the public tuning in via the streaming platform Zoom, this portion of the meeting was difficult to follow. The audio was poor in quality and there was no video. After instructors made their presentations, the college restarted the Zoom meeting, which then had video showing the boardroom and the rest of the meeting.

For the next two hours the budget committee, the rest of the college board, Browning and several administrators discussed the budget proposal and kicked its tires, including its \$17.2 million general fund.

During the course of the discussion, the board asked about roughly \$627,000 in money from Amazon the college was to receive from Morrow County. The board of commissioners there, however, voted last week not to send the money to Blue Mountain. Board member Chris Brown, who represents Morrow County, asked the administration to explain what happened.

Browning said Morrow County commissioners on a 2-1 vote pulled the plug on providing the funds to the college because they wanted to keep the money in Morrow County.

“I think there was some politics in play with some of this,” he said, “and the information in the wind didn’t help.”

# Future of WWII guardhouses up in the air

By JOHN TILLMAN  
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — The World War II-era guardhouses at the Eastern Oregon Regional Airport in Pendleton are not going anywhere any time soon, Airport Manager John Honemann said.

But how to preserve the shacks remains open-ended.

The 11-member airport commission discussed the preservation of the guardhouses at its meeting Wednesday, April 20. Honemann said it’s been some time since the commission discussed the structures.

“I’ve been the airport manager for nine and a half months and the preservation of the shacks is a new topic of public interest,” he said.

The agenda item was there to facilitate discussion about the historical 1941 Pendleton Army air base guardhouses that are rapidly deteriorating due to decades of neglect. The structures also are possibly under threat from the construction of the adjacent Radisson Hotel and increased traffic at the airport.

Honemann said the board overwhelmingly supports preserving the shacks to showcase the historic significance of the airport and Pendleton in the country’s efforts in World War II.

“At this point, I don’t know exactly what that will look like,” he said, “but rest assured, the airport is not demolishing or getting rid of the guard shacks.”

### Preservation options

The Pendleton Air Museum has promoted preserving the buildings. PAM board member retired U.S. Army Col. Tim Kelly presented the commission with three options for the guardhouses: tear them down, move them to preserve them or preserve them in place. Kelly said the museum recommends restoring the shacks where they have always been.



Kathy Aney/East Oregonian

**A World War II-vintage guardhouse, one of two at the entrance to Airport Road south of the Eastern Oregon Regional Airport, Pendleton, sits near construction of a Radisson Hotel on Thursday, April 21, 2022. The airport commission is keen to preserve the shacks, but there is no plan on how to do that.**

“Moving the concrete, stone masonry and hewn timber guardhouses would be more difficult and expensive than transporting smaller, lighter wooden buildings,” he said. “The process would risk damage to the 81-year-old structures.”

He also spoke against rerouting traffic around the venerable structures.

“Let people drive between them as was intended in 1941,” he said. “Set up a truck route to avoid them, with vehicle weight or length limits.”

Airport Commission Chair Jim Webster said there was “a lot of good information from Pendleton Air Museum folks and other members of the public” during the meeting, and a good number of people “with a long history in Pendleton showed up in favor of keeping and improving the guardhouses, and stating why they’re important. There was support for maintaining the

history.” But, he added, the commission has not received a statement from the city or planning department requesting an opinion. “That’s usually the direction discussions flow,” he said. “So we’re not at a decision point yet.”

Kelly, however, said he was under the impression the airport commission could initiate and forward a recommendation to the city for approval.

“If we have to go to the city planning department first, then the city council, we will,” he said. “We could come up with a detailed proposal.”

### Decades since last work on shacks

Honemann said he would like to form a group or committee from a cross section of stakeholders to determine the way forward, work on funding grants and preserve the town’s history.

Kelly said he would prefer to keep such a

project local, use volunteers, online fundraising and donations of equipment and labor from Pendleton construction companies. Surveyors, engineers or architects could donate blueprints and visualizations to present to the planning department and council. Going this route, he asserted, the project would wrap up in six months to a year.

“If we get governments involved, and apply for grants to fund the project, it could take two years or more,” he said.

Harold Nelson of Pendleton Aircraft Services offered a similar suggestion, at least for renovating the guard shacks, if not improving their environs.

“This community can come together and take care of them, without city support,” he said. “Local log house builders might well donate logs to replace those most damaged, or all of them.”

He said the last maintenance work on the shacks probably was Chris Demianew’s Eagle Scout project about 30 years ago.

Demianew, now a teacher at Sunridge Middle School, Pendleton, said his project was to replace the guard shacks’ roofing.

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**Robert “Bob” Goss!**  
Bob Goss, 97 and long-time La Grande resident was recently recognized by the national branch of the American Legion for his 75-years of membership in good standing and as the oldest member of the local American Legion Post 43. Bob was also honored as the Grand Marshal of the 2009 Veteran’s Day Parade and took part in the 2014 Honor Flight to Washington, D.C. and the World War II Memorial.

We salute you,  
**Robert “Bob” Goss**

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