

# BMCC:

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Board member Kim Puzey of Hermiston voted against adoption. All other agenda items passed unanimously.

Six board members attended in person and Bill Markgraf of Baker City remotely.

The board had met in executive session at 5 p.m. to conduct deliberations with the college's labor negotiations team.

## Faculty, administration met June 3

BMCC administration met with the faculty union team for a final time June 3 to negotiate layoffs in the new budget.

"The meeting was short and not unexpected," BMCC President Mark Browning said. "The union did not bring any new ideas. They just wanted to know who is on the layoff list."

But it's not the role of the union to notify employees, he said, but rather the college's because it's the employer.

Layoff notices go out June 7, Browning noted.

"We need to move forward," Browning concluded, "and address student needs. It's time to wrap this up."

McKeon regarded the meeting as an implementation session.

"We came to the table for a polite conversation on options to save jobs," she said. "The administration didn't act on them back when there was time."

Faculty at risk of losing their jobs would have liked a timeline of what to expect, biology instructor McKeon added.

"The administration gave us reason after reason for not taking our suggestions to save money elsewhere, without providing any ideas themselves," she continued. "We tried to maintain a relationship. We could have had three days of turnaround, but the administration said there were lots of moving parts."

The union's collective bargaining agreement with the college requires meetings to discuss alternatives, but also for implementa-



Marie Ekin, former middle school teacher and Blue Mountain Community College tutor, talks to BMCC board members about character during the public comment portion of a meeting Monday, June 6, 2022, before the board approved a retrenchment plan that laid off five faculty members.

tion, McKeon explained. No implementation meeting had been held, so the June 3 session satisfied that contract requirement.

And the \$627,000 Amazon gift out of Morrow County won't help much, McKeon said.

With the board's approval of the budget, she said the faculty association could file grievances.

"It's frustrating to do good faith bargaining when we don't have the full picture," she said. "For whatever reason, the administration couldn't or wouldn't share their plans with us."

## College says Amazon money saved teacher jobs

Most of the 11 speakers during the 30 minute public comment period June 6 were full or part time Blue Mountain faculty members.

"It's time to grow the college, not cut it," math and computer science instructor Gary Parker said.

McKeon was the final speaker. She noted other schools dedicate 40% of their budgets to full-time instruction, but BMCC administration thinks 12% is sufficient.

"Our greatest asset is high-quality instructors who have honed their craft here," she said, "which makes them uniquely suited to serve our students' needs."

Board Chair Don Rice



Sascha McKeon, biology instructor and president of the Blue Mountain Community College Faculty Association, watches the college's board of educators during a meeting Monday, June 6, 2022, in Pendleton after the board approved a budget that lays off five faculty members.

of Hermiston recognized Browning after the public comment period.

"This has been a journey and process no one has enjoyed," Browning said. "Reducing faculty is not something anyone wanted to do. But we have to face economic reality. We have significantly lower enrollment, and a fiduciary responsibility to craft a budget that reflects that fact."

Browning explained why increased expenses in some

line items were justified, and why other apparent hikes were just warranted accounting changes. For instance, even before \$5 gas, the administration knew travel expenses would increase, as athletic teams would travel more than during the pandemic years.

"We started with a \$2 million hole," he added, "of which \$1.3 million was personnel. It's difficult to overcome. We need to offer students what they need. The

world is changing. We need to change with it."

Browning stated the Amazon gift in lieu of Morrow County property taxes helped to reduce proposed layoffs from 10 to five.

## Funding options

Rice asked for comments from fellow board members. Chris Brown of Heppner responded to comments from some speakers.

"This proposed budget was not drafted in isolation," he said. "The budget committee met three times, rather than the usual once, and with citizen and faculty involvement. It was forthright fact-seeking. I believe that our students are our greatest resource."

Puzey noted actual cuts don't have to go through until 120 days after notifications. He suggested selling or leasing buildings, seeking scholarships from business partners, county governments and the ports of Umatilla and Morrow. He also urged faculty members to leverage the channels to the community that they've developed to help increase enrollment.

"I'm hopeful it's not over yet," he said.

Kent Madison of Echo stressed the importance of outreach to high school juniors and seniors, who might not even know that their parents taxes

support the college.

"BMCC is not for profit," he said. "The layoffs aren't to provide dividends to shareholders. We just don't have the money. Enrollment has dropped 65% in 10 years."

Vice Chair Jane Hill of Pendleton also held out hope that more money could be found and enrollment increased before classes start in September.

"Every faculty member is important," she said. "I hope we can all come to the same table."

Hill noted that adjustments up to 10% can be made to an adopted budget. She asked Browning if the faculty cuts would fit under that share. He said they would.

The college also could receive an injection of federal funds via Umatilla County.

Umatilla County commissioners at their meeting June 1 in Pendleton discussed using a possible second round of American Recovery Plan Act funding to help Blue Mountain.

One of three major goals of new ARA funding is workforce development, and BMCC is Umatilla County's major source of workforce training. Commissioner Dan Dorran said providing funds to the college is something the county might want to do. Dorran noted signs in Hermiston offering truck drivers \$80,000 to \$100,000. If the county were able to invest in BMCC, the school could partner with businesses in training programs.

Commissioner John Shafer agreed Blue Mountain is a "huge driver" of the area's economy, citing Morrow County's application of its gift from Amazon Web Services to the college. He said the commissioners have expected the second half of Umatilla County's \$15.1 million ARA grant since May 11. However, the county still is waiting for that \$7.5 million to arrive.

McKeon in the hall outside the conference room lamented the revised fall schedule and need to notify students who signed up for classes, which now may have to be cancelled.

"Now there is more pressure on teachers," she concluded, "if we're going to be recruiters as well, and fill in until the marketer in the budget is hired."

# Lights:

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In some cases the work may lead to lane closures. Crews do not typically need to turn off the power to perform the work.

Most work will happen between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m., targeting late evening hours for arterial and collector streets.

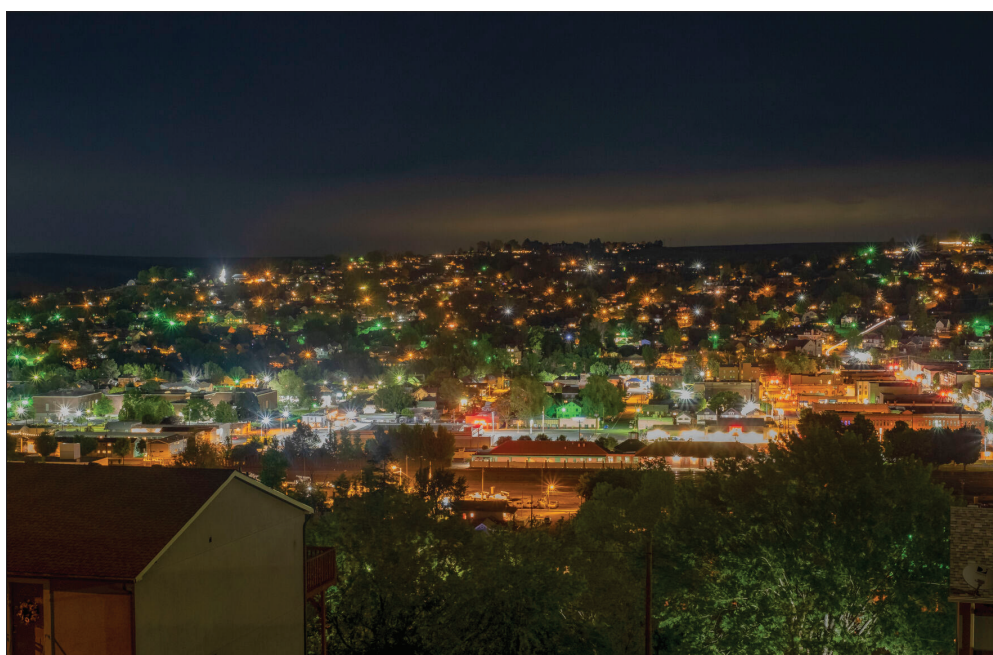
## Cost savings, other benefits

Installation of LED fixtures can reduce street-light energy consumption by more than 50%. The city also reported it estimates replacing the lights will achieve a total energy savings of nearly 500,000 kilowatt-hours annually and reduce carbon emissions by 310 tons per year.

The project also reduces the city's maintenance costs because LED fixtures do not have disposable components requiring regular replacement like the existing high pressure sodium bulbs.

In addition to energy savings, the LEDs require far less maintenance and improve illumination.

According to the press release, the city and Ameresco worked with Pacific Power & Light to



The lights of Pendleton on Tuesday night, June 7, 2022, cast a warm glow. The city plans to switch 1,005 of its streetlights, which tend to glow yellow, to whiter LED lights this summer.

## STAY INFORMED

- For more information about the city of Pendleton LED Streetlight Conversion Project, visit [pendleton.or.us/projects](http://pendleton.or.us/projects) and check out the project's Frequently Asked Questions.
- To see areas of Pendleton where the LED fixtures have been installed and the percent of the conversion that has been completed, visit [bit.ly/3aAW3jd](http://bit.ly/3aAW3jd).
- If you have questions or comments, email the project at [PendletonLEDStreetlights@gmail.com](mailto:PendletonLEDStreetlights@gmail.com) or contact the Public Works Department at 541-966-0202.

develop a new city standard for full-cutoff, 3,000 Kelvin correlated (warm-white) color temperature — or CCT — LED fixtures as part of

this project. A light's CCT (rated from 1,000 to 10,000 Kelvin) helps to classify the look of the light produced.

The new LED lights

may appear brighter and more white or blue in color compared to the yellow, high pressure sodium lights; however, they produce less than half the lumens.

The LEDs enhance peripheral vision for drivers, the city reported, enable people to distinguish color more accurately and improve detection of obstacles in the road. Also, the LED lights are more downcast than the existing lights, so light is directed below the light where it is needed with less illumination above the light.

# Drones:

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Springer runs the Volatus Group, a drone pilot training facility in Pendleton. He said there are several reasons Pendleton has become popular. High on the list: cost.

"They have a natural distinct advantage with their low-cost base," he said, noting the price of doing business in Eastern Oregon is cheaper than in parts of the country that already have a booming tech scene, such as Texas.

Also, Eastern Oregon skies are not busy as those around some other test ranges.

"They have a great big

range that nobody else can duplicate," Springer said.

Pendleton offers 14,000 square miles of sky, and the altitude limit doesn't kick in until 15,000 square feet. That's a big slice of North-eastern Oregon skies, higher than Mount Rainier. The range runs from Boardman in the west to the Idaho border in the east and from the Columbia River in the north almost to John Day in the south.

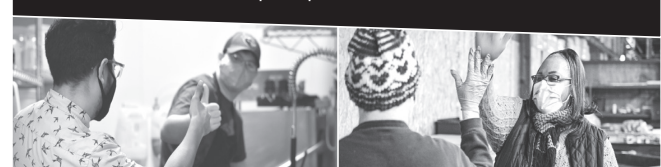
"By negotiating with area wheat farmers and other landowners, we can spread operations out away from congestion, which provides some level of safety," explained Cory Roeseler, with Hood Technology, which specializes in blade vibration and monitoring.

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