

BMCC faculty implore board not to accept budget proposal

BY PHIL WRIGHT

East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Faculty of Blue Mountain Community College 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, standing in the hallway outside the room, agreed faculty could go in 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 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 dollars 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 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 re-



Kathy Aney/East Oregonian

Sara Reyburn, who teaches psychology at Blue Mountain Community College, Pendleton, speaks to the college budget committee and board of educators Monday, April 25, 2022, imploring them not to cut 10 full-time faculty positions.

lieved 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 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.

BMCC 2022-23 budget

Blue Mountain Community College's budget document is available online at www.bluecc.edu/about/administration/finance.

video showing the board room and remainder of the meeting.

For about the next two hours the budget committee, 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, decided 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."

Browning didn't specify what "information," but the East Oregonian in recent weeks has reported the college was closing the industrial systems technology program, and Morrow County Commissioner Melissa Lindsay during the county board's meeting last week said BMCC is not going to fund its part of the Workforce Training Center in Boardman, so the county could direct the money to the center.

The college president said he wasn't giving up on receiving the funds, but he wasn't not counting on it, either.

Board member Kent Madison said it comes down to the college having too many tools — teachers — in its tool box for the work it has to do. He said it's important the college remain flexible in its educational mission.

Browning near the end of meeting said it was his impression the board needed more time to digest all the information they received, and the board agreed, deciding to meet again May 10.

Before that, the college board of education meets May 2 to take action on notifying faculty on May 3 about layoffs.

If the budget committee still needs more time after that, it can meet again May 12 to vote on the budget.

Shooting

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The team started in 2020, the first year of the pandemic.

As luck had it, maintaining a safe distance is a principal of a sport involving rapidly firing shotguns.

About 15 students signed up for the first year of competition.

Eleven stayed on from the first year and, together with assistant coach Wayne Paxton, 10 students competed at the Oregon state tournament in 2021.

Riley Hurliman, an eighth grader and team captain, was state champion in the novice division and third in the JV division.

This spring, coach Zack Kimball's squad, totaling about 30 students, has been annihilating clay targets for the past month or so despite air cold enough to cramp a trigger fin-

ger during evening practices at the Baker Trap Club, just east of Highway 30 about a mile north of town.

"I just saw it at the school and I thought it looked interesting," said Ethan Morgan, a three-year team member and current captain.

On bad weather days, students study techniques for taking out right and left angle targets, and other subjects.

Students clean and prep the Trap Club for the next session, stock the targets and wire up the clay pigeon-throwing machine. It resembles the rotating chambers of a revolver, and stacks hundreds of the clay disks in its racks.

Kimball is excited about how rapidly the team members have progressed.

Kimball said a grant from the National Rifle Association supplied clay pigeons as well as five shotguns that team members can use.

"It took about 15 hours to write out an NRA grant," Kimball said. "They really pulled through."

On the firing line

During practices, students one at a time call "pull!" and the machine whips the clay pigeon out to the range with an intentionally random skew.

Most of them don't touch the ground intact.

"They're gonna shoot about 20,000 clay targets," Kimball said, talking about the entire 2022 season.

At competitions, athletes generally shoot 25 targets for each of two days, for a total of 50.

During the Shamrock Shoot event on March 12 at La Grande, Hurliman placed first in the JV division, and Paxton, the assistant coach, was first in the coaches division.

Both Kimball and Paxton are competitive trap shooters.



Ian Crawford/Baker City Herald

Assistant Coach Wayne Paxton calibrates the target thrower at Baker Trap Club on April 27, 2022.

On Wednesday, May 4, Baker's team will travel to La Grande for one of the larger trapshooting competitions in the state.

Oregon state's tournament is set for June 25-26 at Hillsboro, with as many as 600 competitors expected. The

national competition is July 6-10 in Michigan, with more than 3,000 students competing.

The sport has demanding prerequisites — eye and ear protection to start, and all firearms are inspected before competition and must meet competitive minimums.

Baker team members are waiting on their first official team gear, arriving hopefully before they attend the meet in La Grande, on special order by designer Jason Ritter.

The Baker trapshooting team will host an open event on May 22, starting at 7:30 a.m. at the Trap Club, to raise money for expenses to travel to the state tournament.

For more information, or if you're interested in joining the team, call Kimball at 541-910-8446.

Training

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The regional training sites rotate among the counties, Ash said. Last year's exercise took place at Salt Creek Summit in Wallowa County. Baker County most recently hosted the event in 2015.

Union Creek campground, which is not open to the public for the season, is an ideal base for the training, Ash said.

Many of the search and rescue members will be camping for the weekend, and Union Creek, rare among Forest Service facilities, has campsites with full hookups for trailers and RVs.

There's also cell service in the area, he said, so participants can be reached if a work or family issue arises over the weekend.

Ash said officials at the Baker County Sheriff's Office have been designing the scenarios since January.

The focus, he said, will be on honing skills needed for a multi-day search involving two command teams.

On Friday evening, April 29, the first team was briefed about the situation, which involves a missing person or, potentially, more than one, Ash said.

The command team will then devise a strategy for a search that commenced Saturday morning.

The exercise is designed to keep searchers busy at least through the afternoon, Ash said.

If they happen to find the "victim" relatively soon, there are alternatives to extend the exercise, he said.

The command team will be given the sorts of information typically available at the outset of a search, such as the last point at which the person or people were seen.

The search area will be limited to about 3,000 acres, Ash said.

"We'll have some clues throughout the scenario for them to find," he said — a piece of clothing, for instance.

"We're not setting them up



Baker County Sheriff's Office/Contributed Photo

A search and rescue training took place in 2019 near Phillips Reservoir.

for failure, but it is a real scenario where they will have to use their skills to find the person," Ash said.

He said the scenarios are intended to be challenging. Ash, who has participated in many searches during his law enforcement career, said almost every incident involves some unexpected twist.

Earlier this month, for instance, when volunteers from the Baker County Sheriff's Office Search and Rescue team were summoned to look for a Pendleton couple overdue on a turkey hunting trip near Balm Creek Reservoir, northeast of Baker City, they were initially searching for a Dodge Dakota pickup truck.

But the couple, who spent the night in their vehicle and were found safe the next morning, were actually driving a Subaru.

Later on Saturday, following the search, participants will gather near Union Creek for a technical rope rescue exercise at a cliff.

The "victim" in this case will be a mannequin, Ash said.

On Saturday evening, responsibility for the search will be transferred to the second command team — in effect a continuation of the exercise earlier in the day.

The new command team will oversee another search on Sunday morning.

This task will have an additional challenge, Ash said.

The subject of the search is a person who, in real life, has a prosthetic leg. In the exercise scenario, that person will not have the prosthetic attached to simulate a victim who had a limb severed during an accident.

That will require searchers not only to find the person, but to "treat" the patient for severe injuries before loading the person on a litter for transport.

Other activities

In addition to the training exercises, Ash said a Life-Flight helicopter is scheduled to land Friday afternoon at Union Creek for a program about working safely around helicopters.

Also, FirstNet, an AT&T service designed to supply wireless communications to public safety agencies in the field, will have a mobile communications truck participating in this weekend's training, Ash said.

He said the Baker County Sheriff's Office is considering joining the FirstNet network. The service supplies mobile trucks to provide wireless communications in places that lack reliable cell coverage — a frequent issue in search and rescue missions in remote Eastern Oregon. The service also allows command teams to track the movements of all searchers through their cellphones.



Local Cancer Care Is Getting an Upgrade

We're committed to investing in the Fruitland community. St. Luke's Cancer Institute is installing a new linear accelerator in Fruitland this spring.

The upgrade will ensure local cancer patients who need radiation treatment will receive the very best in modern care.

