

BEFORE THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF LANE COUNTY, OREGON

ORDER NO: 19-01-29-03

In the Matter of Referring A General
Obligation Bond To The Voters Of Lane
County To Construct A New County
Courthouse To Improve Safety, Accessibility,
Efficiency, And Service

WHEREAS, the Board of Commissioners recognizes that the current 60-year-old Lane County Courthouse is no longer able to meet the needs of the Lane County community; and

WHEREAS, Lane County Government is required by state law to provide a 'suitable and sufficient' location for the operation of the state circuit court; and

WHEREAS, the State of Oregon will provide, through the Oregon Courthouse Capital Construction Improvement Fund, up to 50 percent of the funding necessary to construct the State programmed portions of a new courthouse if local funding is secured; and

WHEREAS, the population of Lane County has more than doubled and case filings have increased to an average of more than 33,000 per year since the construction of the current courthouse in 1959; and

WHEREAS, space limitations of the current courthouse lead to inefficiencies including late start times and last-minute location changes, as well as a lack of space for mediation to avoid trials and lack of space for specialized and effective programs such as mental health court or veterans court; and

WHEREAS, the lack of security and safety measures in the current courthouse mean that inmates share elevators and hallways with witnesses, jurors, victims and judges; and

WHEREAS, a lack of private spaces in the current courthouse means there is no place for people to have confidential conversations with their attorneys; and

WHEREAS, access to Victim Services is not secure in the current courthouse and filings for a restraining order or other domestic issues are performed at a very public counter; and

WHEREAS, equal access to legal services is being constrained by the physical limitations of the current courthouse and those with wheelchairs, walkers or strollers are unable to access public spaces or participate fully in the justice system due to lack of Americans with Disabilities Act-compliant building features; and

WHEREAS, basic systems such as heating, cooling and plumbing are faulty and no longer reliable or functional; and

WHEREAS, renovation would be more costly than new construction and would not solve the problem of inadequate physical space to offer the level of services required by the community; and

WHEREAS, every year that a new courthouse is delayed, the County spends its limited resources maintaining a facility that will be short-lived regardless of what stopgap measures are taken; and

WHEREAS, the District Attorney's Office and Sheriff's Office located within the current courthouse struggle to provide efficient and accessible services in the constrained and poorly configured spaces they occupy; and

WHEREAS, these deficiencies have become increasingly problematic with the evolution of modern judicial proceedings, the advancement of technology, greater protections for the privacy of parties, and heightened attention to security; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Commissioners enacted Ordinance 19-01 to limit the ability of Lane County to issue general obligation bonds for the Lane County Courthouse Replacement Project unless the Oregon Legislature also authorizes state funding for the project and the Governor signs the bill.

NOW, THEREFORE, the Board of County Commissioners of Lane County **ORDERS** as follows:

1. The Administrator shall forward the proposed ballot language for a general obligation bond, in substantially the form attached hereto as Exhibit A but with such changes as the Administrator may approve, as well as an explanatory statement, to the County Clerk for review and placement on the May 21, 2019 election ballot for the purpose of constructing a new Lane County Courthouse; and
2. If this measure passes, the Administrator shall direct appropriate staff to create a special fund to account for all bond proceeds collected in order to ensure the use of such proceeds for the specific purposes described herein and in the ballot measure; and
3. The ballot title requires an independent financial audit of bond expenditures.
4. The County Clerk is hereby authorized to publish notice and take all other action to call the measure election.

ADOPTED this 26th day of February, 2019.



Pete Sorenson, Chair
Lane County Board of Commissioners

EXHIBIT A

Caption:

Funding a safer, more accessible and adequately sized county courthouse.

Question:

Shall Lane County build a new courthouse to improve safety, accessibility, efficiency, and service by issuing \$154 million in bonds?

If the bonds are approved, they will be payable from taxes on property or property ownership that are not subject to the limits of sections 11 and 11b, Article XI of the Oregon Constitution.

Summary:

Measure permits issuance of bonds for a new Lane County Courthouse. The current 60-year-old courthouse has significant safety, space and operational limitations impacting the length of trials, security and accessibility.

If voters approve the issuance of up to \$154 million principal amount of general obligation bonds it will be combined with expected \$94 million state and \$4 million federal funding. An independent financial audit of bond expenditures would be required.

Measure would finance capital costs of providing a courthouse to:

- Construct a facility sized for current and future needs
- Create separation between inmates and public
- Add space for mediation to avoid trials
- Add space for specialized programs (mental health court, veterans court)
- Improve access for those with wheelchairs, walkers, strollers
- Increase interagency coordination by including space for Sheriff and District Attorney,

The planned 20-year bonds would only be issued if additional state funding is authorized. The bonds are estimated to cost \$0.27 per \$1,000 of assessed property value annually. Actual rates may vary based upon interest rates and changes in assessed value.