

**BITTERROOT VALLEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE  
BOARD OF TRUSTEES  
WORK SESSION  
5:30 PM, WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 19, 2022**

**1. Call to Order and Roll Call**

Chair Marci Smith	Vice-Chair RAN Pigman – via Zoom
Secretary Don Gardner	Trustee Janet Woodburn
Trustee Sue Smith	Trustee Carrie Guarino

**BVCC Staff Present:**

Victoria Clark, Transition Services Contractor  
Nancy Bussiere, District Clerk – via Zoom

**Public Present:**

Chad DeLong, candidate for Trustee vacancy  
Saundra Amsden, BVCC Foundation  
Kierstin Schmitt, BVCC Foundation Secretary  
Wes Spiker, Spiker Communications  
Eric Gren, Bitterroot College faculty  
Matt Kaler, Bitterroot College faculty  
Jennifer Johnson, Bitterroot College faculty – via Zoom  
Wendi Fawns, Valley Oak Education Resource Center - via Zoom

**2. Review, Revise, and Approve Agenda (Action)**

A. Trustee Woodburn made a motion, seconded by Trustee Gardner, to approve the agenda for the January 19, 2022 Bitterroot Valley Community College (BVCC) Work Session. With no trustee discussion nor public comment, the motion passed with six (6) “yes” votes.

**3. Public Comment/Correspondence on Items Not on the Agenda – None.**

**4. Presentations (Information/Discussion)**

A. Administer Oath of Office to Newly Appointed Trustee Chad DeLong

i. Montana Notary Public Meri Telin administered the oath of office to Chad DeLong.

B. Levy Education Campaign Update by Spiker Communications

i. Wes Spiker of Spiker Communications presented their proposed education campaign for the May mill levy election. There is the possibility, with the Hamilton School District also requesting a levy, of a walk-in ballot rather than a mail-in ballot. Victoria Clark will research this question with Ravalli County Election Administrator Regina Plettenberg. Mail in ballots would be sent out around April 15 and will be due back at the Ravalli County election office no later than 8 pm, May 3. Spiker stated April is the key time period to educate voters about the BVCC levy request. Spiker’s campaign will include digital outreach, social media, yard signs, brochures, handouts, large banners on large buildings, as well as banners on the Bitterroot

College's (BC) CDL truck and van which can be parked in various places in the district. With a current theme of 'students and their parents telling the story,' public attendees and trustees reminded Spiker the current BC has many nontraditional students and this should be factored in to the campaign. Magnetic signage and buttons may be an option employed by a separate ballot issue committee. Spiker was requested to ensure the ballot due date is present on all education materials. It was agreed mill levy election education information will be placed on the BVCC website.

C. Operating Levy Discussion Informed by Draft FY2024 Budget

i. In response to Trustee Gardner's question, Clark stated the legislature will require our biennium budget for FY2024 and FY2025 before August 1, 2022. The Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education (OCHE) will require the BVCC FY2023 budget before August 15, 2022. Clark informed the trustees the draft budget is a starting point and adjustments can be made. Ultimately, the budget must balance. Trustee DeLong stated he is inclined to increase the mill amount as the future will continue to bring increases in prices and salaries. In response to Trustee Gardner's question, Clark stated the salary information was researched in five ways: 1) BVCC joined the Mountain States Association of Community Colleges which publishes a salary survey; 2) conversations with the three Montana community colleges; 3) knowledge of UM salaries; 4) the US Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Outlook Handbook; and 5) the Montana Labor & Industry State Wage Handbook. Trustee Woodburn noted if BVCC is audited, the IRS will require information on how salary determinations were made, and praised this depth of research. The trustees and the public discussed FTE numbers. Clark stated the 44 FTE dual enrollment students shown in the draft FY2024 budget would be better classified as dual credit students. These students pay ½ tuition and no fees, other than a possible course fee, and are students who take college courses on their high school campuses. Alternatively, early college students (on-the-college-campus high school-age students) are included in the FTE number of 128. Presently, BC has about 60 FTE non-campus regular students and about 45 FTE in dual credit students. Clark noted there are more than 300 dual credit students taking classes in high school classrooms and about 85 regular students on the BC campus. In response to Fawn's question, Clark stated effective summer 2021, BC and BVCC will be continuing the "1, 2, Free" program, with the state picking up those costs. BVCC FTE numbers should increase because work force programs will change to college programs. Trustee Woodburn described the current economic situation in the district and stated it justified asking for more mills than BVCC did in 2020. Jennifer Johnson stated the mill should not be lowered as it would then appear the request in 2020 was inaccurate. Trustee Pigman added it is not wise to lower the mill as everything is going up in price and support for the BVCC is not based on decimal points. Trustee Marci Smith noted the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities advised BVCC not to make the error of going low on the mill, as our budget is examined during the accreditation process. She added, with Trustee DeLong's agreement, BVCC cannot underdeliver on its promises. Clark revised the spreadsheet for the trustees' review, changing the mill rate to various points, to show the anticipated surplus balance. Clark noted state appropriation per student could increase which could change out tuition amount per credit. Unfortunately, this change will be

announced after August 2022 so it cannot be factored into the present decision-making. Trustee Guarino stated BVCC needs to budget for reserves as there is always organizational need for unexpected expenses. Clark stated Hamilton School District may be asking to increase their general operations levy amount from its present 92%. Clark will research how community college reserves are handled year to year and the requirements on spending reserves. Reserves are operational funds, not capital campaign funds, so cannot be used, for example, to purchase property. Trustee Guarino stated there are state programs for property tax assistance for low-income residents, such as the Property Tax Assistance Program, the disabled veterans program and elderly homeowners program, and noted the importance of having brochures on each of these programs available when giving presentations to the public. Clark added many seniors take continuing education classes at BC and receive no discount. With BVCC, they will be subsidized. Trustee Gardner stated BVCC should not cut itself short and ensure a mill amount that will deliver the programs the valley needs. Trustee Pigman added the importance of a good reserve number that will allow the college to survive. After reviewing many different scenarios at different mill rates, it was agreed Clark will prepare and distribute budgets based on a 9.95 mill rate and a 10.75 mill rate. Chair Marci Smith stated these new draft budgets will be discussed, and possibly voted on, at the next trustee meeting on February 7, 2022.

5. Adjournment

A. Trustee Guarino made a motion, seconded by Trustee Gardner to adjourn. The motion passed unanimously.

  
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Marci Smith, Chair

2/7/22  
Date

  
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Don Gardner, Secretary

02/07/2022  
Date