

THE BOND BUYER

Bonds go back to the ballot

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Two bond issues return to Pullman ballots in a special election scheduled Feb. 13.

Proposition 1 requests permission to issue \$10.5 million in general obligation bonds to fund the purchase and conversion of the Encounter Ministries campus into a new City Hall, senior center and rec center. The bond also sets aside funds for securing a location for a new fire station, and for building a new event center. Proposition 2 is a \$2.4 million replacement for an existing bond of virtually the same amount that would continue to fund improvements to Pullman's parks and paths.

The bonds received more than the 60 percent approval required at the polls in November but the election failed to validate. That is, the total number of voters in the election fell short of a state requirement for bond elections that voter turnout equal or exceed 40 percent of the turnout of the last general election. In this case, that meant the 2016 presidential election.

"Obviously, the first time around, we were very grateful for the support we received in this community," Pullman Mayor Glenn Johnson said. "We're hoping that we can get that similar kind of support this time around."

According to Rod Schwartz, a member of the citizen action committee tasked with campaigning on behalf of the bonds, relatively low turnout in this past November's general election will make it much easier to reach 40 percent of that number in February.

"The turnout was so pitiful last time we don't have nearly the numbers to hit to reach that threshold that we did back in November," Schwartz said. "If all the people who voted yes vote yes again, it's a done deal."

City Supervisor Adam Lincoln said turnout need only exceed 1,550 voters for the bonds' passage to be valid.

Lincoln said the city will do what it can to educate the public, including holding more open houses at the Encounter Ministries campus, 190 SE Crestview St., but much of the advocacy will be left to the citizen action committee. Schwartz said his group will continue to advertise with signs and on social media, but the most important thing is that residents make themselves heard, regardless of which way they vote.

"Voting is important, and not only as a general principle, but specifically in this case," Schwartz said. "Voters in Pullman have the unique opportunity to accomplish something significant for the future of our town."

If the bonds pass, the City Council must decide what to do with the current City Hall, Lincoln said, but no discussion on that is planned before the results of the election are in.