

BEFORE THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
FOR COLUMBIA COUNTY, OREGON

In the Matter of Calling an Election to                    )  
Consider Renewal of the Columbia County            )  
Jail Local Option Tax Levy for Four Years            )                    ORDER NO. 8-2025

WHEREAS, the old Columbia County Jail was built in 1969, and was designed to hold a maximum of 39 prisoners, but was frequently overcrowded, and as a result arrestees often had to be released into the community after booking and before arraignment, prisoners had to be released into the community before their sentences were served, and there was constant fear of litigation over the unsatisfactory conditions in the Jail; and

WHEREAS, on November 3, 1998, the electors of Columbia County approved a measure authorizing the issuance of bonds to finance the construction of a new County jail and related law enforcement facilities; and

WHEREAS, the new Columbia County Jail and Justice Facility was completed in January 2001, and is designed to house up to 255 prisoners; and

WHEREAS, the cost to operate the new jail and supervise a greater number of prisoners was unknown at the time the electors authorized its construction, but it was known that the cost would be much greater than operating and staffing the old jail; and

WHEREAS, even though it was known the cost of operating and staffing the jail would increase, the Sheriff and Board resolved to run the new jail for at least a year without additional funding to determine the minimum amount of new funds which would be necessary; and

WHEREAS, in order to temporarily run the new, much larger facility and supervise approximately four times as many inmates without additional funds, the Sheriff and Board pledged to try to raise as much money as possible through bed rentals to agencies such as the US Marshals Service, save money by shifting road deputies into the jail to assist the regular correctional deputies, and temporarily shift additional County General Fund money into the Sheriff's Office and Jail budgets; and

WHEREAS, the amount of revenue that can realistically be expected from bed rentals to other agencies has now been established; and

WHEREAS, the County General Fund can no longer fund the operation of the Jail in sufficient amounts to keep more than 25 local inmates in the Jail without a tax levy even with increased bed rental revenue; and

WHEREAS, in 2014, Columbia County voters approved a levy of \$.5797/\$1000.00 of assessed value for Jail operations; and

WHEREAS, in 2017, Columbia County voters approved a renewal of the levy for four years; and

WHEREAS, in 2020, Columbia County voters approved a renewal of the levy for an additional four years; and

WHEREAS, the General Fund and bed rentals have supported operations for 24 years; and

WHEREAS, the General Fund has experienced a significant decrease in the last decade and cannot fully support Jail operations without a levy; and

WHEREAS, General Fund support for the Jail has remained consistent since the 2014 levy; and

WHEREAS, during the pandemic Federal bed rentals decreased substantially and the cost to run the Jail substantially increased; and

WHEREAS, the Jail has used reserve funds to cover its costs since 2020 and reserves are now depleted to a point that they can no longer be used to bridge the operating budget gap; and

WHEREAS, the proposed tax levy renewal of \$.5797/\$1000 would raise approximately \$3,752,486 in FY 2026, \$3,906,755 in FY 2027, \$4,067,366 in FY 2028, and \$4,234,580 in FY 2029, for an estimated total levy of \$15,961,187; and

WHEREAS, the estimated total outlay over the four-year renewal period is approximately \$15,961,187; and

WHEREAS, the purposes for which the funds to be provided by the proposed local option tax are to be expended would be to retain up to 80 jail beds for the local jail population; provide sufficient staffing to manage jail population, provide for maintenance, and provide constitutionally adequate food, clothing, and health care to inmates; and

WHEREAS, the period of time authorized by the electors pursuant to ORS 280.060(3) would be four years;

NOW, THEREFORE, IT IS HEREBY ORDERED as follows:

1. An election shall be held on Tuesday, May 20, 2025, to consider the Columbia County Jail Local Option Tax Levy Renewal at the rate of \$0.5797/\$1000.00 of assessed value for four (4) years. The Columbia County Clerk is hereby directed place the question of the proposed renewal of the local option tax levy before the electors of Columbia County on the May 20, 2025, election ballot.

2. The purpose for which the funds to be provided by the proposed local option tax levy are to be expended would be exclusively for operating the Columbia County Jail.

3. The rate for this operating fund is \$0.5797 per \$1000 of assessed value, approximately \$58 to the owner of a \$100,000 home. The estimated money raised will be \$3,752,486 in FY 2026, \$3,906,755 in FY 2027, \$4,067,366 in FY 2028, and \$4,234,580 in FY 2029, for an estimated total levy of \$15,961,187.

4. The period of time authorized by the electors pursuant to ORS 280.060(3) would be four (4) years.

5. The proposed taxes are outside the limitation imposed by Section 11(3), Article XI of the Oregon Constitution.

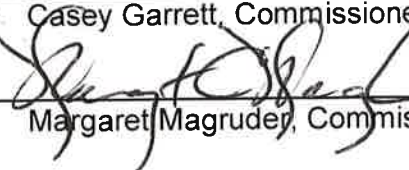
6. The Board of County Commissioners adopts and approves the ballot title and explanatory statement which are attached hereto and incorporated herein by this reference.

DATED this 12<sup>th</sup> day of March, 2025.

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
FOR COLUMBIA COUNTY, OREGON

By:   
Kellie Jo Smith, Chair

By:   
Casey Garrett, Commissioner

By:   
Margaret Magruder, Commissioner

Approved as to form

By:   
Office of County Counsel

# Measure 5-304

3/12/2025 4:00

## Notice of Measure County

Assigned 3/12/2025  
May 20, 2025 Special District Election

**SEL 801**

rev 01/16: ORS 250.035, 250.041,  
250.175, 254.103, 254.465

<b>Notice</b>		
<b>Date of Notice</b> March 12, 2025	<b>Name of County or Counties</b> Columbia County	<b>Date of Election</b> May 20, 2025

**Final Ballot Title** The following is the final ballot title of the measure to be submitted to the county's voters. The ballot title notice has been published and the ballot title challenge process has been completed.

**Caption** 10 words which reasonably identifies the subject of the measure.  
Renewal of Tax Levy for Jail Operations - Four Years

**Question** 20 words which plainly phrases the chief purpose of the measure.  
Shall Columbia County renew a tax of \$0.5797/\$1000.00 of assessed value for four years beginning in FY2026 for Jail operations? This measure renews current local option taxes.

**Summary** 175 words which concisely and impartially summarizes the measure and its major effect.  
In 2014, 2017 and 2020, voters approved a four-year tax levy for Jail operations that expires In FY2024-2025.  
The three primary funding sources for the Jail are the County's General Fund, Federal bed rentals, and the existing Jail operating levy. Since the levy initially passed in 2014, County General Fund support for the Jail has remained consistent. Federal bed rental revenue has also remained stable but is not a guaranteed revenue source. The County Jail cannot continue at current capacity without renewal of the levy and an increase in U.S Marshals bed rentals.  
Prior to the 2014 levy, the County was required to reduce Jail beds for local adults-in-custody to 25, and anticipated a full closure of the Jail without the levy. The operating levy is one of three funding streams that supports local beds, and funding for the constitutionally required food, clothing, management and health care for adults-in-custody. Without these three funding streams, the Jail may have to close. Renewal of the levy will help support continued operation of the Jail through FY2028-2029.  
The estimated money raised will be \$3,752,486 in FY 2026, \$3,906,755 in FY 2027, \$4,067,366 in FY 2028, and \$4,234,580 in FY 2029, for an estimated total levy of \$15,961,187.

**Explanatory Statement** 500 words that impartially explains the measure and its effect.  
If the county is producing a voters' pamphlet an explanatory statement must be drafted and attached to this form for:  
→ any measure referred by the county governing body; or  
→ any initiative or referendum, if required by local ordinance. **Explanatory Statement Attached?**  Yes  No

**Authorized County Official** Not required to be notarized.

<b>Name</b> Kellie Jo Smith	<b>Title</b> Chair
<b>Mailing Address</b> 230 Strand, St. Helens, Oregon 97051	<b>Contact Phone</b> 503-397-4322

*By signing this document:*  
→ I hereby state that I am authorized by the county to submit this Notice of Measure Election; and  
→ I certify that notice of receipt of ballot title has been published and the ballot title challenge process for this measure completed.



March 12, 2025

Signature

Date Signed

COLUMBIA COUNTY  
EXPLANATORY STATEMENT FOR COUNTY VOTERS' PAMPHLET

**Ballot Title Caption:** Renewal of Tax Levy for Jail Operations - Four Years

Measure Number (if known): Word Total (500 Max): 417

**Statement**

Renewal of the Jail levy will permit the continued operation of the County jail. If the levy is not renewed the County will not have sufficient revenue to continue to pay for the necessary staffing, maintenance, and services required to keep the Jail fully operational.

In order to remain functional at current levels, the Jail's budget will rely on a combination of a continued \$1,000,000 contribution from the County General Fund, an increased amount of bed rentals to the U.S. Marshals Service and the renewal of the current levy amount of \$0.5797 / \$1,000.00 assessed value for another four years.

The County Jail houses adults awaiting trial who are accused of committing crimes in the cities and in the County. The Jail also houses adults who are serving a sentence of less than one year for city and State crimes. Cities do not pay the County for their use of the Jail.

Without renewal of the levy, in order to adopt a balanced budget, the County will be required to reduce Jail operations. Options to reduce Jail operations range from a reduction in local beds to 25 beds to a full closure of the facility. Without the levy, full closure of the Jail will depend on the number of beds rented by the US Marshals.

If the Jail is closed, all adults in custody will be released or transported to a different Jail as funding allows. If the number of local Jail beds is limited to 25, most local adults in custody will be released according to a matrix adopted by the Board of County Commissioners. Only high-level, Measure 11 arrestees who score high on the matrix will be held. The Sheriff and the cities can either rent a bed from another County if funding allows or release the arrestee. Due to the high cost to house local arrestees in other counties, the County does not anticipate funding will be available to house arrestees unless they are required by law to be held for trial. While transporting adults in custody to another jail, law enforcement will not be available for patrol or local response, reducing availability to address other local public safety issues.

By renewing the levy, the County anticipates that the Jail will remain open and functional at existing levels. As a renewal, property owners will continue to pay the existing levy rate for four years. A property owner with an assessed home value of \$100,000 would continue to pay \$57.97 per year for four years.

**Person responsible for the content of the Explanatory Statement:**

**Kellie Jo Smith**

(Name: TYPED)

X 

(Name: SIGNED)

Columbia County Board of County Commissioners, Chair

Position

**3/12/25**

Date signed

**Instructions**

- The explanatory statement shall be typed.
- Word total: not to exceed 500 words.
- Signature: signed by the person responsible for the content of statement and to include the name of the governing body that person represents.
- Deadline: The statement filing deadline is the same deadline date as that of filing the Notice of Measure election (5pm)
- Note: The county clerk shall reject any referred measure submitted without an explanatory statement