



KATHIE F. STEELE
CIRCUIT COURT JUDGE

CIRCUIT COURT OF OREGON

FIFTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT
CLACKAMAS COUNTY COURTHOUSE
OREGON CITY, OR 97045

(503) 655-8678
FAX (503) 655-8491

March 31, 2023

Co-Chairs Girod and Holvey, and members of the Capital Construction Subcommittee,

For the record, my name is Judge Kathie Steele and I am here to speak in support of the state's match of the Clackamas replacement courthouse.

Built in 1936, the current Clackamas courthouse was designed to serve a population of less than 50,000 and can no longer adequately serve a population of 430,000 that continues to grow. The current courthouse is functionally obsolete, contributes to delays in justice, and poses significant safety risks. I believe everyone on the committee is familiar with the "Clackamas courthouse yardsticks" that represents the less than three feet the courthouse foundation lies from a 100-foot drop into the Willamette River.

Cost of courthouse replacement projects are a shared cost between the State and County. The Oregon Judicial Department and the County have collaborated closely over the past six years to ensure that the replacement courthouse will last for the next 50 years (and probably much, much longer).

In 2021, the Legislature approved initial funding for the replacement courthouse. Since then, the project has made great progress. The county used a "public-private partnership" (P3) for a highly competitive and transparent process to identify the most cost-effective, lowest-risk project. Under the P3, the county is always the owner, and it is a public project with hundreds of prevailing wage construction jobs and clearly articulated diversity goals.

However, like almost every capital project in Oregon, inflation reared its head and costs of the project have exceeded the pre-design estimate. OJD and the County saw this coming and proactively engaged in a value engineering effort to lower the cost of the project. To remain on track for courthouse occupancy in May of 2025, the Clackamas Board of Commissioners had to consider last July whether to commit the county to its share of the courthouse replacement.

They consulted with legislative leaders who acknowledged capital project costs across the state were rising and that they did not intend to leave projects "high and dry." With this assurance and the Chief Justice pledge to include \$61 million in the OJD requested budget, Clackamas County made its financial commitment to the replacement project and construction has begun.

I am pleased to share that the Clackamas replacement project is on track and needs the state's share of \$61 million. I urge your support.

Sincerely,

Circuit Court Judge
Fifth Judicial District