

**NORTHWEST COLLEGE BOARD OF TRUSTEES  
MINUTES OF SPECIAL MEETING**

April 19, 2021

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** President DR. MARK WURZEL; Vice President/Secretary DR. LARRY TODD; Treasurer Ms. CAROLYN DANKO; and Trustees MR. JOHN HOUSEL, MS. TARA KUIPERS, MR. BOB NEWSOME, and MR. DUSTY SPOMER.

**MEMBERS ABSENT:**

**OTHERS PRESENT:** MS. LISA WATSON, Interim President; DR. GERRY GIRAUD, Vice President for Academic Affairs; MR. DEE HAVIG, Interim Vice President for Student Services; MS. JILL ANDERSON; MS. JO ARGENTO; MS. ADRIANA ARISMENDI; MS. DIEDRE ASAY; MR. MILO ASAY; MR. ROBERT BECKER; MS. HOLLY BERRYMAN; MS. LESLIE BIGHAM; MR. BRAD BOWEN; MS. KAREN BOWEN; MR. DEAN BRUCE; MS. JENNIFER CANNIZZARO; DR. MARNEÉ CRAWFORD; MR. BILLY CRAWFORD; DR. JENNIFER DARE; MR. CASEY DEARCORN; MS. ELAINE DEBUHR; DR. RENEÉ DECHERT; MR. DUSTIN DICKS; MS. AMANDA ENRIQUEZ; MR. DAVE ERICKSON; MS. KIM FLETCHER; MS. MARY FORD; MS. DAVETTE FREY; MS. TRACY GASAWAY; MS. NANCY GILMORE; MS. ALEJANDRA GONZALES; MS. CHRISTI GREAHAM; MR. MICHAEL GUNDLACH; DR. RACHEL HANAN; MS. JOANN HEIMER; MR. WEST HERNANDEZ; MR. JASON HORTON; MS. BETH HRONEK; MR. LES HUNT; MS. CINDY JACOBS; MS. DEB JACOBS; MS. JESSICA JATKOWSKI; MS. AMY JOHNSON; MS. MICHAELA JONES; MS. DEB KELLY; MS. DENISE KELSAY; MS. JENNIFER LITTERER-TREVIÑO; MS. CASSIE LOERA; MS. AUTOURINA MAINS; DR. AMY MCKINNEY; MS. CAREY MILLER; MS. NANCY MILLER; MS. LARA MOLINE; MS. REBECCA MONCUR; MS. ASTRID NORTHRUP; MR. MATTHEW OSBORN; MR. CORY OSTERMILLER; MR. DENNIS QUILLEN; MR. SHAMAN QUINN; MS. LAURA RILEY; MS. MALLORY RILEY; MS. JEN SCHNEIDER; MS. LISA SMITH; MS. KERRIE SPINNEY; MS. LINDA SPOMER; MR. OSCAR TREVIÑO; MS. KARA WARREN; MS. SHELBY WETZEL; MS. MARSHA WILSON; MR. JOSHUA LEACH, *Cody Enterprise*; MR. KEVIN KILLOUGH, *Powell Tribune*; and MS. KELI BORDERS, Interim Executive Secretary to the President and Board of Trustees.

**CALL TO ORDER:** The special meeting of the Northwest College Board of Trustees was called to order on Monday, April 19, 2021, at 4:06 p.m. in the Yellowstone Building Conference Center.

**A APPROVE THE AGENDA:** **A motion was made by Trustee Kuipers and seconded by Trustee Todd to approve the agenda. Motion carried.**

**CITIZENS' OPEN FORUM** The Citizens' Open Forum convened at 4:07 p.m.

Laura Riley stated she has looked at the enrollment reports for Wyoming Community Colleges. She discovered that full-time student enrollment is down everywhere; however, part-time student enrollment has increased at LCCC. This has kept their FTE's higher in order to continue to receive the same level of funding from the state. She feels the full-time faculty have the greatest impact on residential students. She noted that according to Northwest College's strategic plan, a long-term goal is to increase enrollment. Ms. Riley feels it will be difficult to increase enrollment when full-time faculty are being eliminated.

Mallory Riley stated she is a former student and has been working to assist students in getting enrolled at Northwest College and wished to share some of her experiences. While assisting a non-traditional student with admission, she noted that he received information which was not relevant to his chosen program of study in his admissions packet. He also received a letter which was addressed to a different student. While she is encouraging community members to enroll, she feels most were not aware that fall enrollment opened on April

14. She feels this is due to poor website design, poor marketing and staff's disheartened approach to assisting incoming students. Ms. Riley stated she would love to see Northwest College thrive, but a major overhaul needs to take place that is not related to full-time faculty. She feels there needs to be an evaluation of the Registration office, Marketing and web design. When considering reduced funding, those areas need to be looked at closer so that incoming students are able to access the quality education the College has to offer.

The Citizen's Open Forum adjourned at 4:14 p.m.

## **A UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**

Budget Reduction  
Recommendations

**A motion was made by the Board Finance Committee to bring forward the original motion that was tabled in January:**

**The Finance Committee would move to invoke Reduction in Force per Policy 5510 as described on page three of the Budget Reduction Recommendation and would also include Item 10, Discontinue operations of the Children's Learning and Care Center. This motion includes striking the last sentence of the third bullet point on page 3 relating to extended financial assistance for all other staff positions.**

**Trustee Spomer seconded. Motion carried.**

**The Finance Committee would move to include the following amendment to the original motion:**

**Section 10, page 7; strike the last sentence in the paragraph relating to the discontinuance of services effective February 26. Insert a new sentence recommending the discontinuance of services effective May 28, 2021.**

**Trustee Spomer seconded. Motion carried.**

Trustee Todd stated the Board has received a lot of input from a wide variety of sources regarding items not to cut, while offering very few reasonable alternatives in order to make the necessary reductions. He explained that his professional ethics and passion for higher education makes the decision to cut tenured faculty very difficult. Being an elected Trustee brings a different set of ethics and issues in regards to meeting the current budgetary constraints. This is a tough decision that he will not be happy making, but he is unable to envision a realistic viable option.

Trustee Newsome echoed Trustee Todd in the difficulty facing the Board to make the best decision for the long-term benefit of the College. Unfortunately, like many other institutions, Northwest College has to be able to do much more with less. He does not feel there is any other alternative to the budget shortfall than by invoking a reduction in force.

Trustee Danko stated the Board has been working on budget cuts since 2015. Every possible non-personnel cut has been made. Early retirements are no longer an option, further attrition is not possible, Classified Staff positions have been greatly reduced and job duties are being combined. Larger salaries have been eliminated five years ago through early retirements and it would take many \$40,000 salaries to make up the \$2,600,000 budget shortfall. Faculty are being asked to take on larger class sizes and more class offerings. Residence Halls have been closed, the food service contract has been renegotiated and all travel has been decreased. While the College attempts to keep activities and clubs, students are being asked to pay more in fees. None of this is enough to reach the necessary budget reduction. At most public learning institutions, 80%

of the budget is in salaries, while the remaining 20% is in fixed costs such as electricity, water, gas, building maintenance, grounds upkeep, etc. As difficult as the decision is, the lack of alternative solutions forces the Board to agree to the motion.

Trustee Kuipers views this as a two-pronged crisis. The decision before the Board addresses one of them, which is the dire budget situation. The other is declining enrollment. As Trustees, it is her belief that they must have the guts and leadership to address the ten-year enrollment decline and the decrease of public trust. While the budget cuts are very serious and one of the most challenging things the Trustees will face, she feels the other issues stated will be even more challenging and if not addressed, the budget crisis will continue.

Trustee Housel stated that in March 2020, as a result of the global pandemic, the stock market plummeted and oil and gas plummeted to negative valuations. He knew at that point the impact would be very serious on the funding of the College. There was no question that cuts would need to be made, but the question remained of how to go about making the necessary cuts. Having an elected citizenry on the Board brings varied backgrounds, education and a broad spectrum of the community to be represented and accountable to the voters. He stated that by having the Finance Committee deliberate on this type of grave and significant decision, he feels he has been deprived of the ability to be involved in the deliberative process. He also stated that he has not been privy to the full analysis and review of the factual circumstances, nor did he have the ability to provide input. Trustee Housel stated that during the retreat in May 2019, a ranking system was used to determine what is required, what is core, what is sacred and what is want. During those discussions, the viewpoint was in regards to programs. During the September 2020 retreat, the same discussion centered around ranking programs. He stated he was taken off guard in January when the budget reduction recommendations consisted of individualized faculty and courses. Trustee Housel does not feel that waiting for the transformational work to be completed will change or provide answers to low-enrolled programs. There have been many eloquent comments received that indicate to him that programs instead of individualized positions should be cut. When low-enrolled programs were cut in the past, people were better able to understand the rationale for doing so. Trustee Housel is also confused by the statement in January that the College is not going to consider cutting athletics at this time. He stated the Board has not officially made that determination and he feels everything should be on the table for consideration. Trustee Housel stated he doesn't feel he had the opportunity to express these concerns during the deliberative process and therefore he will be respectfully voting in opposition of the motion. He commends those who worked very hard on the recommendation, but urges the Board to review the committee system. He feels something of this significance should be considered by the entire Board of Trustees.

Trustee Spomer stated that many bodies such as this, whether it be the Legislature, municipality, trusteeships, etc., use committees for the purpose of having the ability and the time to thoroughly work on an issue. He feels this Board needs to continue to use committees. The process has been moving forward for many months and has afforded the opportunity to bring it to the Board for the purpose of discussion and answering questions. Former President Hicswa, followed by Interim President Watson, have provided willing and exhaustive responses to many questions. His recollection of the ranking exercise in May of 2019 vs. the same exercise in September 2020, was the

realization that this decision was well past wants and needs and we had to rethink the funding model of the Institution. Therefore, the transformational process began in which serious effort and direction has been placed and it focuses on the future revenue stream of the College. In that work, discussion has taken place regarding what must be protected, knowing that these cuts would need to be made. In the aforementioned retreats, programs, services, amenities and the look and feel of the college experience were all discussed. Trustee Spomer stated that while enrollment has declined, the staffing level should follow. The Finance Committee is bringing forth a recommendation, not a decision, on the budget reductions.

Board President Wurzel stated that Board Committees and the role they have in governance will be on the agenda for the next retreat. That being said, he went on to state that the information shared in Committee meetings is available to all Board members. Three months have passed since the recommendation was brought to the Board in which Trustees had the opportunity to ask or gather any information they felt they were lacking in order to make a decision. The College's administration has been very forthcoming with any and all information requests. Board President Wurzel stated that in the past, three programs and related faculty were cut that weren't drawing enough students. With declining enrollment, there are faculty positions that aren't supported by student numbers which must now be addressed. He stated that people are needing the Board to make a decision so they can move on with their lives.

Trustee Danko stated that when the Journalism program was cut in 2015, she believes there was fallout for other programs because many of the Journalism students were also taking Photography and Communication courses. While cutting faculty positions is not desirable, cutting programs instead is not necessarily a better option.

Trustee Todd stated that universities are beginning to consider shifting away from program-based studies to interdisciplinary, multi-disciplinary, and non-programmatic ways of dealing with the world. In some ways, we may not want to consider what programs to keep, but rather if the concept of programs is relevant to education going forward. In the long run, the concept of cutting people vs. programs may no longer be relevant.

Interim President Watson stated she feels it is important to point out that in the 2017 cuts, there was a heavily funded early retirement option for faculty, of which eighteen faculty members took. At that time, the decision had to be made if each position was going to go away or if it would be replaced. A small number were replaced. That self-selection process is no longer an option as the Board eliminated the early retirements for faculty and staff because of the financial condition of the College. Program changes are still likely as programs are evaluated in relation to student and industry needs. Programs can be defined in many ways such as support service programs, academic programs, etc. All programs have been reviewed several times, but there will always be varying opinions on the direction that was taken in the recommendations. If Trustees feel there are needs not being met in relation to information, then that should be rectified. Interim President Watson stated she hopes Board members are seeing her efforts to share information in the agendas and her attempts to reach out to each Trustee. Interim President Watson stated she feels we need to make these decisions and move forward and continue conversations about a transformation and responding to the economic crisis. Northwest College needs the Board to be transformational and willing to move forward. She stated the Board has had many conversations and has diligently reviewed many items and

that needs to be taken into consideration when making a decision on the recommendation.

**Motion carried with Trustee Housel voting against.**

**A ADJOURNMENT:**

**The meeting was adjourned at 5:15 p.m.**

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LARRY TODD, Vice President/Secretary

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Date