

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

November 14, 2022

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

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Treasurer MS. CAROLYN DANKO

**OTHERS PRESENT:** MS. LISA WATSON, President; DR. GERRY GIRAUD, Vice President for Academic Affairs; MR. DEE HAVIG, Interim Vice President for Student Services; MS. JILL ANDERSON; MS. HOLLY BERRYMAN; MR. FRED BRONNENBERG; MS. MARJORIE CORTEZ; MR. DUSTIN DICKS; MR. DAVE ERICKSON; MS. TRACY GASAWAY; MS. NANCY GILMORE; MS. MICHAELA JONES; MS. CAREY MILLER; MS. NANCY MILLER; MS. BOBBIE PATTERSON; MR. DENNIS QUILLEN; MR. RYAN ROBERTS; MR. JAKE SCHRICKLING; MS. LINDA SPOMER; MR. MARTIN STENSING; MR. OSCAR TREVIÑO; MS. SHELBY WETZEL; MS. BRITTANY WILSON; MR. ZAC TAYLOR, *Powell Tribune*; and MS. KELI BORDERS, Executive Secretary to the President and Board of Trustees.

**CALL TO ORDER:** The regular meeting of the Northwest College Board of Trustees was called to order on Monday, November 14, 2022, at 3:04 p.m. in the Yellowstone Building Conference Center.

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

**WORK SESSION** Trustees toured the site of the City of Powell’s proposed retention pond/storm drain system, which is on campus, north of Ashley Hall. They also visited the site of an existing City retention pond on the east side of town.

**MISSION MOMENT** President Watson welcomed Men’s Wrestling Coach Jim Zeigler and the Northwest College Wrestling team. She stated that the Trustees wanted to have an opportunity to meet the team and give blessings for healing following the grizzly bear incident and offer best wishes for a successful season.

Coach Zeigler introduced recruit Bridger Bennion from Vernal, UT, who arrived on campus moments before the Board meeting and therefore joined the team for the Mission Moment. Jim stated he is hopeful Bridger will be joining the team in January.

Wrestlers attending the meeting introduced themselves: Roberto Garcia, Victorville, CA; Avery McSpadden, Post Falls, ID; Jose Treyes, Jerome, ID; Boburjan Birdiyorov, Tashkent, UZB; Kendall Cummings, Evanston, WY; Jacob Olsen, Cedar City, UT; Brady Lowry, Cedar City, UT; Orrin Jackson, Kersey, CO; August Harrison, Vernal, UT; Aziz Fayzullaev, Tashkent, UZB; Cody Todd, Billings, MT; Ryker Blackburn, Duchesne, UT; Gavin Carter, Cedar City, UT; Josh Womack, Newcastle, WY; Leighton Jensen, Omak, WA; Codell McNiven, Laurel, MT; and Cody Pinkerton, Douglas, WY.

Interim Vice President Dee Havig extended his congratulations to the team as they defeated the number four team in the nation the weekend before.

President Wurzel thanked the Wrestling team for attending and especially for representing Northwest College well.

Coach Zeigler expressed his appreciation for the opportunity to coach and work with these young men. He stated that the team appreciates the overwhelming love and support they received following the recent tragedy.

**A CONSENT AGENDA:** **A motion was made by Trustee Spomer and seconded by Trustee Kuipers to approve the consent agenda.**

In response to a question from Trustee Housel, President Watson stated that the payment to Christiansen Drilling was for replacing the pump located in the pump house that feeds the soccer field.

In response to a question from Trustee Housel, President Watson stated that HR Director Jill Anderson recently attended The Society for HR Management (SHRM) Conference in Colorado. The President of SHRM noted that the number of available people interested in working is shifting so much that the days of forced retirements may soon be gone. The days of only hiring young professionals are over, and companies will have a newly diversified workforce with people from all different ages and generations.

In response to a question from Trustee Housel, President Watson stated that the College uses Arthur Gallagher, a compensation consultant. They provide national reports and consider national, regional, and local data. They will review the staff banding structure and faculty lines and offer suggestions for compensation adjustments. The College will consider those suggestions if compensation funds are approved.

Trustee Housel stated he was pleased to see the addition of the Wyoming Department of Transportation Snowplow Training course offered through CTD. He noted there seems to be a shortage of qualified snowplow drivers in the State and appreciates that Northwest College is offering the training program.

President Watson stated that the flexibility of the CDL simulator allows the College to respond to the needs of various industries as they arise.

Trustee Housel stated he visited with a student who participated in Preview Day and felt it was a great experience. From his perspective, the event was comprehensive.

Trustee Kuipers made a note of the displaced offices in preparation for the construction of the new Student Center and the process of moving that will be undertaken by faculty and staff. She understands it will need to take place during the academic year and wishes to acknowledge the extra work and challenges involved with the project.

**Motion carried, and the consent agenda, including the minutes of the October 10, 2022, regular meeting and the minutes of the October 19, 2022, special meeting, was approved.**

**DISCUSSION/  
INFORMATIONAL ITEMS:**

Student Center

President Watson announced there is cause for celebration as the College will be moving forward with the new Student Center construction. She distributed an overall budget worksheet for Trustees to understand what is being committed to and the resources needed for the project.

The spreadsheet indicates that the Student Center building is designed to be 33,380 square feet, costing \$521.76/SF. The total cost of the building, including contingency, is \$18,283,736. President Watson stated that because the building contains kitchen equipment needed to provide dining services to students, it is more expensive.

President Watson further explained that additional owner costs include the temporary dining/soccer facility, design fees, special inspections, furniture, state-required art allowance, owner contingency, and miscellaneous expenses. The additional owner costs a total of \$2,489,434.

President Watson listed the total project components, including the Student Center building (including contingency), the temporary dining facility, the Outdoor Rec Co-op addition (originally a project alternate), the CMAR (Construction Manager at Risk) preconstruction contract, and the additional owner costs, bring the total project cost to \$23,421,663. The Legislature approved the Student Center project in the amount of \$25,130,756. Therefore, the project came in well under budget.

President Watson explained that the College is responsible for \$11,710,831, which is 50% of the project cost. The Foundation will contribute \$3,500,000 from their fundraising campaign and has already provided additional support in the amount of \$1,350,000 from dining endowments and the temp dining grant. That leaves the College with a responsibility of \$6,860,831. Northwest College has already contributed \$2 million to the project in earlier match requirements. Student Fees from the Plant Fund will be utilized for \$241,078. The remaining amount of \$4,619,753 will be paid for from reserves. The College was able to save \$3 million for the project due to conservative spending the previous two years and lost revenue that was recaptured from the Federal pandemic funds. The remaining amount will come from Fund 11 reserves, resulting in the College taking on zero debt for the project.

Fred Bronnenberg from Groathouse Construction (Construction Manager At Risk) stated that the working relationship between all parties during the Level III design work was very positive. The bid opening was successful because bids came in slightly under what was estimated. The project will utilize twelve companies from the Big Horn Basin, resulting in revenues of 63% of the project cost, over \$12 million, which will stay within the Basin. Twenty-four companies within the State will provide goods and services to the project, resulting in 90% of the project, over \$17 million in revenue, staying within the State.

Fred stated that a great pool of subcontractors would be working on the project. He commends the design team, including Northwest College staff, for their efforts and many hours of work that will result in an excellent facility.

Trustee Spomer stated that the \$23 million project cost is an excellent indication of the efforts that took place by the design team. When the Student Center project was first discussed, the cost was estimated to be approximately \$38 million. The efforts of everyone involved resulted in an exceptional outcome for the community and the College.

Trustee Kuipers echoed Trustee Spomer's comments regarding the reduced project cost and expressed her appreciation to Fred for highlighting the revenue impact on the Big Horn Basin and the State of Wyoming.

Jake Schrickling from the State Construction Department stated that this project is an excellent indication of how a CMAR is supposed to work. The project came in under budget, even considering cost escalations and supply chain issues, and is a testament to the College staff, the architecture team, and the contractor working cohesively as one team. Another unique element is that the \$2.2 million appropriated to cover cost escalations was not touched on in the final numbers.

President Watson stated that the design team was very thoughtful throughout the process and that the building will serve the College well for years to come. It is designed to allow future expansion as needed. As part of the value engineering, some furniture and kitchen equipment are being repurposed to save money, and new furniture can be purchased over time.

In response to a question from Trustee Housel, President Watson stated that the most significant contingency factor is likely to be time. If supplies and equipment don't arrive as expected, then challenges will arise with timelines.

Fred stated there are contingencies built within the guaranteed maximum price, as well as contingencies on the state side, for challenges that may arise. Grothouse is now issuing the subcontracts and purchase orders to diminish the long lead times as much as possible. The procurement process is beginning three months in advance of construction starting.

President Wurzel stated that the Student Center project has been on the Board's plate for an extended period, and they highly appreciate the work done to ensure the space serves students in the best way possible.

Trustee Spomer extended his appreciation to the State of Wyoming for stepping up and committing roughly \$12 million to the Student Center. He especially wants to express his gratitude to the Foundation for bringing \$5 million to the project as well.

#### Preliminary Audit Report

President Watson invited Brittany Wilson, CPA, and partner at McGee, Hearne & Paiz, LLP (MHP), to present the preliminary audit report for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2022, for the Board's consideration. Brittany has twelve years of experience in higher education and has worked on Northwest College's audits for six years.

Brittany stated there are three parts to the audit. The first part is under generally accepted auditing standards, the second is reports under government auditing standards, and the third is Uniform Grant Guidance. She will review financial statement highlights, significant accounting estimates, and a new accounting standard adopted this year. She will also cover MHP's report to the Board of Trustees.

Brittany stated that the Independent Auditor's Report is under Generally Accepted Auditing Standards set by the AICPA. It applies to all audits and relates to the financial statements and notes. In this draft, MHP is issuing an unmodified (clean) opinion.

The Statement of Net Position shows the College's net position is -\$4.7 million. If the effect of pension and retiree health is backed out, the unrestricted equity is \$20.1 million. This is before funding the new Student Center. The Statement of Revenues, Expenses, and Changes shows an increase in that position to just under \$2.7 million overall. There was an expected decrease in federal grants from the previous year's COVID funds and increased state appropriations, tuition and fees, and auxiliary charges.

Brittany pointed out the four significant accounting estimates within the College's financial statements. The first is the net pension liability which relates to the College's portion of the funding deficit of Wyoming Retirement Systems' employee pension plan. The second is the total OPEB liability, which has to do with the College's participation in the State's health insurance plan.

President Watson stated that Colleges are not required to fund those deficits, but the accounting rules require them to be reflected in the financial statements. For many institutions, this causes their financial statements to look upside down which is challenging in higher education with Generally Accepted Auditing Standards.

Brittany reiterated that while they are liabilities on the books, they are unique liabilities that don't represent future cash outflow.

The third significant accounting estimate within the financial statement is the

scholarship allowance related to NACUBO guidelines and is a contra revenue related to institutional financial aid provided to students. The last one is unavailable property taxes. This refers to property taxes assessed in the county in January but won't be levied and received until the following fiscal year.

Brittany stated that a new GASB (Governmental Accounting Standard) was implemented this year and related to leases. While it adds another liability to the books, it also adds an offsetting asset. Any lessee arrangements previously accounted for as operating leases are now shown as a right-to-use intangible asset and a lease liability. Lessor arrangements now show a lease receivable and deferred inflow of resources related to the future lease revenue.

The next report is under Government Auditing Standards. The auditors are required to look at internal control over financial reporting and to also look at compliance with laws and regulations. Brittany reported that there were no findings on internal control deficiencies and no known instances of noncompliance.

The uniform grant guidance report is essentially the audit of the College's federal dollars. The College is considered a low-risk auditee; therefore, the auditors must audit at least 20% of the federal funds. This year's primary program audited was the Education Stabilization Fund (COVID), which accounted for approximately \$2.6 million. They must test all direct and material compliance requirements and related internal controls. They noted no non-compliance with directed material compliance requirements but reported one significant deficiency related to not documenting compliance with procurement and suspension and debarment requirements.

Brittany noted that the guidelines from the federal government regarding COVID programs were a moving target. They would issue little to no guidance or add additional guidance after the fact. The College was following guidance that had come out initially but missed updated guidance that came later. It was not a significant concern regarding a widespread deficiency related to all federal funds. President Watson stated she was disappointed in the finding related to procurement. The College was doing the required work but didn't have it documented how the federal government eventually wanted it reported.

Brittany added that when the money became available, the government did not care about procurement. They wanted the money spent as quickly as possible to lessen the effects of the pandemic. In changing the guidelines after the fact, there were conflicting guiding principles.

Brittany stated that in the report to the Board of Trustees, there were no changes in accounting policies besides adopting GASB 87. There were no disagreements with management or significant issues or difficulties overall. MHP feels the audit went very well and extends its appreciation to President Watson, Brad Bowen, and the whole team for all of their work to have everything ready and for always being available to answer questions or meet the needs of the auditors.

President Watson stated that it is a very comprehensive annual audit that includes the Business Office, Financial Aid, Computing Services, etc., and many staff members contribute information to ensure it goes well each year. Special recognition to Finance Director Brad Bowen.

President Watson stated that in October, she, Trustee Todd, Trustee Kuipers, and Keli Borders attended the ACCT Leadership Conference in New York. After gathering feedback from other Trustees, the attendees attended as many relevant sessions as possible. President Watson found the conference useful,

and there were some interesting sessions. She felt there was value in gathering with peers to gain a national perspective and learn from other Colleges.

Trustee Todd found value in the national perspective about what's going on, the stressors and issues, and how colleges are attempting to deal with them. He appreciated going with the group, who could share the tasks and discuss what each was learning in the sessions they attended. He feels all Board members should regularly attend as the most recent issues are discussed in the most current context.

Trustee Todd stated his biggest takeaway was the tension surrounding the unpredictability of the future in terms of online courses and what students and the job markets will want. It makes the planning process more difficult. He felt it was a good conference and was helpful because he learned a lot.

Trustee Kuipers stated it was a group project in that the four attendees were strategic in their choices and attended as many relevant sessions as possible since there were multiple options each hour. She noted that many topics revolved around the uncertainty of the future. She encouraged Trustees to read the Trustee quarterly magazine in which there is an article in the November edition written by one of the keynote speakers, Arthur Levine, regarding the four changing elements of higher education.

Trustee Kuipers noted the many things Northwest College is doing very well and sometimes better than other community colleges in the nation. She was excited and encouraged by how the College can grow and the areas where Northwest College is leading the pack in many ways.

Keli stated she was able to attend sessions that were specific to Board Professional Staff and found them to be very beneficial. She also attended various sessions of importance to Trustees based on feedback received regarding items of interest. She expressed her appreciation to the Trustees and President Watson for the opportunity to attend the conference.

President Watson stated she attended many sessions related to overcoming enrollment challenges. Colleges are leveraging and seeing gains in their dual and concurrent enrollments, but these do not provide financial sustainability. They are also leveraging and expanding non-credit and credit pathways, which Northwest College has done recently through CTD programs. The topics centered around streamlining resources and ensuring everything is being done within the College's capacity to increase enrollment. NWC work is on target.

#### Review Board self-assessment

President Watson stated that the self-evaluation document was sent electronically as an anonymous survey. The results have been compiled, and a report has been sent to the Trustees via email before the meeting.

President Wurzel noted the Board scored itself reasonably high, with a few exceptions: Trustees felt they were not partaking in Board education opportunities; they could do more to assist with developing partnerships with community agencies; they are lacking a compensation plan that serves and retains faculty and staff; and, they have fallen behind in policy work. President Wurzel feels that the pandemic, transformational work, the Presidential search, and the Student Center project have taken much of the Board's attention. Policy work became less of a priority.

President Watson stated that many items consuming the Board's and campus's attention have come to a resolution, and policy work can once again become more of a priority.

Trustee Kuipers stated that, as indicated in the self-assessment, Trustees

acknowledge it is their charge as part of the leadership of the College to continue to work hard for a solution to the compensation issues related to recruitment and retention of faculty and staff. She noted that it is an area of priority in the Strategic Plan.

Trustee Spomer stated he noted the same four areas the Board could do better. He feels Trustees should spend the next twelve to twenty-four months putting real effort into those areas.

President Wurzel reiterated that the four areas that needed improvement were affected by the significant issues and activities that consumed the campus in the previous months. Board development was not a priority, appropriately so, but the focus can now shift slightly.

Trustee Housel stated he feels the Board is doing very well. He said there were things of greater urgency other than policies and priorities had to be adjusted accordingly. He was on the Board Policy Committee for many years, and policies of a critical nature have been addressed.

In terms of Board education and development, Trustee Housel stated that due to the budget crises, the Board decided it was going to limit its spending. He reads the Trustee quarterly magazine and feels it's a good way to educate oneself without spending money attending national meetings. He also feels the twice-per-year retreats are more than meeting what is expected of a typical Board. He stated there are also opportunities for education during the Board Orientation that each new member receives.

Trustee Housel stated that the National Trustee Association developed the questions on the Board self-assessment, and several are very subjective. He feels the assessment serves as a checklist for Trustees to ensure they are doing a good job personally as a Board member.

Trustee Todd feels the intent of the self-assessment is to extract talking points from the compilation of results. He noted that Board members used the assessment as intended and identified ways to improve.

President Watson reminded Trustees that a complete policy manual was written and approved regarding the College's response to the pandemic. All operations were changed on campus to sustain instruction. She agrees with Trustee Housel regarding the need to manage travel to conferences considering budgetary challenges but stated that ACCT offers many individual online educational opportunities. She expressed her appreciation to the Trustees for their willingness to serve and their efforts to make the College a better place.

Nomination Committee for Board Officers and Committees

President Wurzel stated he had asked Trustees Spomer, Kuipers, and Todd to serve on the Nomination Committee. Before the December meeting, they will develop a list of candidates for Officers and Committee delegations. He asked the Trustees to notify the Committee of their areas of interest.

#### **CITIZENS' OPEN FORUM**

The Citizens' Open Forum convened at 5:00 p.m. No citizens requested to address the Board; therefore, the Citizen's Open Forum adjourned.

#### **A UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**

NWC 2030 Strategic Plan

**A motion was made by Trustee Housel and seconded by Trustee Kuipers to approve the NWC 2030 Strategic Plan.**

President Watson said the Strategic Plan was sent to the Wyoming Community College Commission for review. They were very much in favor of the Plan and suggested minor terminology changes. She stated they desire to see the

College's commitment to economic development and workforce needs at the local, regional, and state levels. A similar goal was in place, but she made a few adjustments to that goal to better align with this request.

Trustee Housel reminded Trustees that during the May retreat, the Board requested that President Watson develop the Strategic Plan by the September meeting. He stated it is a significant accomplishment for President Watson and the faculty and staff who worked hard to have it ready to present on time. He feels the result is a very comprehensive Strategic Plan that will guide and assist the Board for many years.

Trustee Kuipers agreed that what the College has created is exceptionally impressive. She feels that because the document is so well laid out and comprehensive, it enables the Trustees to focus on oversight and guidance.

**Motion carried.**

**A NEW BUSINESS:**

Academic Calendars 2023/24,  
2024/25, 2025/26

**A motion was made by Trustee Kuipers and seconded by Trustee Todd to approve the academic calendars for years 2023/24, 2024/25, and 2025/26 as presented. Motion carried.**

**FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS  
FEEDBACK TO CITIZENS'  
OPEN FORUM TOPICS:**

December 12, 2022, upcoming:

- Statewide legislative update
- Concurrent and Dual Enrollment Summary
- Quarterly budget adjustments
- Oath of office for new Trustees
- Election of officers
- Annual signing of Ethics Policy
- Disclosure of Interest forms distributed
- Acceptance of audit
- Other TBD

**ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

Brass Recital, November 14, 2022, 7:00 p.m. NPA  
Stothart Reading, November 17, 2022, 1:00 p.m. Hinckley Library  
26<sup>th</sup> Annual Native Ways Buffalo Feast, November 17, 2022, 6 p.m. YB  
Small Ensembles Concert, November 21, 2022, 7 p.m. NPA  
Intercultural End of year Party, December 3, 2022, 4-6 p.m., ICH  
Vespers Choir Concert, December 7, 2022, 7:00 p.m., NPA  
Holiday Party, December 9, 2022, 5:30 p.m., The Commons  
Faculty Jazz Christmas Concert, December 12, 2022, 7:00 p.m., NPA  
Next meeting, December 12, 2022, 4:00 p.m., Meeteetse

**A EXECUTIVE SESSION:**

President Mid-Year Evaluation

**A motion was made by Trustee Housel and seconded by Trustee Todd to move into executive session. Motion carried, and the executive session convened at 5:57 p.m.**

**The executive session adjourned at 6:58 p.m., and the regular session resumed.**

**A ADJOURNMENT:**

**The meeting adjourned at 6:58 p.m.**