

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

June 12, 2023

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

MEMBERS ABSENT: Trustee MR. DUSTY SPOMER

OTHERS PRESENT: MS. LISA WATSON, President; DR. GERRY GIRAUD, Vice President for Academic Affairs; MR. DEE HAVIG, Interim Vice President for Student Services; MR. DUSTIN DICKS; MR. DAVE ERICKSON; MS. TRACY GASAWAY; MR. MARK GRANT; MS. JO ANN HEIMER; MS. JEN LITTERER-TREVIÑO; MS. CAREY MILLER; MR. DENNIS QUILLEN; MS. LISA SMITH; MS. LINDA SPOMER; MR. OSCAR TREVIÑO; MS. SHELBY WETZEL; and MS. KELI BORDERS, Executive Secretary to the President and Board of Trustees.

CALL TO ORDER: President Dr. Mark Wurzel called the regular meeting of the Northwest College Board of Trustees to order on Monday, June 12, 2023, at 4:02 p.m. in the Yellowstone Building Conference Center.

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

In response to a question from Trustee Housel, President Watson stated that the FY 2023 Accounts Receivable Bad Debt memo in the Board packet is included on the Agenda as Accounts Receivable write-offs as part of the Consent Agenda.

Motion carried.

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

President Wurzel stated that Northwest College hosted the Wyoming Community College Commission (WCCC) and the Wyoming Association of Community College Trustees (WACCT) for their meetings. He expressed his appreciation to the many individuals at the College for their effort in organizing a successful event.

President Wurzel stated that during the meetings, Dr. Sandra Caldwell, Executive Director of the WCCC, announced her retirement at the end of December.

In response to a question from Trustee Housel, President Watson stated that Ruffalo Noel Levitz provided an exit interview at the end of their assessment visit and provided ideas for procedural improvements. She has also received a proposal for services that she has yet to review. There are three core areas in which they support colleges: creating a strategic enrollment plan, aligning and enhancing marketing efforts, and academic program review and aligning programs with workforce needs and career interests that provide a livable wage.

President Watson and other key individuals attended the 3E Institute for Higher Education. The Institute provides mentors who are experienced higher education professionals interested in giving back. She also expects to receive a proposal from the company, 3E, regarding services they could provide the College.

President Watson stated that the College would need to determine if there are services from either company that would be beneficial moving forward. She noted that the College can also do much of the work independently. The group

of Northwest College attendees meets weekly to determine the best steps moving forward.

President Watson stated that in the Institute for Higher Education's President's track that she attended, the focus was on strategic planning, the Mission, and defining and then achieving the "desired state." They discussed competing with everyone vs. differentiating the College from others, which she feels aligns well with Distinction and Destination of Place being one of the pillars of the Strategic Plan.

Higher education is facing many challenges in terms of enrollment. President Watson stated that the College needs to determine what it can and can't control and then decide what to focus on moving forward.

In response to a question from Trustee Housel, President Watson stated that the College offers a couple of classes which include travel to Yellowstone National Park. The College could consider offering other opportunities for students to visit the Park through Student Activities, Athletics, or additional classes as part of the Distinction and Destination of Place pillar.

In response to a question from Trustee Housel, President Watson stated that it is challenging to determine the local appropriations since many unknown factors are associated with deferred revenue. The oil and gas companies can pre-pay their taxes, making it difficult to determine the allocations. There used to be an eighteen-month delay, but now it is much closer to real-time, and the College may have to respond quickly. The data is not yet available to finalize the numbers in the budget; therefore, the budget was conservatively developed to minimize the impact of a significant downward swing.

In response to a question from Trustee Laursen, President Watson stated that the employees of the College are required to undergo sexual harassment and Title IX training yearly. Many other voluntary training opportunities, such as cybersecurity, are also available.

In response to a question from President Wurzel, President Watson stated that the College is waiting on the Certificate of Occupancy for the Temporary Dining facility. It should arrive any day.

President Wurzel reminded Trustees that the Association of Community College Trustees (AACC) is providing Trustee training in Casper on June 21-22. Those interested in attending should notify President Watson.

In response to a question from Trustee Housel, President Watson clarified that students who stay on campus during the summer months are either taking classes or working on summer crews. They are housed in Trapper Village Main apartments.

Trustee Housel expressed his appreciation for President Watson's commentary on the bad debt that is a reoccurring problem each year and for the efforts that the administration and staff take to impress upon the students the importance of financial responsibility. He commented that the numbers in the Board packet seem to be declining from previous years.

Trustee Housel requested that the bad debt write-offs be included as a separate action item on the meeting agenda next year instead of being incorporated into the Consent Agenda.

President Watson stated that Northwest College's bad debt expense equals .675%, while the national average is 3-5%. She feels the College's lower rate can be attributed to the many ways it pursues unpaid balances while working

with students struggling to complete their financial obligations through payment plans.

Motion carried, and the consent agenda, including the minutes of the May 2, 2023, special meeting/retreat and the minutes of the May 8, 2023, regular meeting, was approved.

**DISCUSSION/
INFORMATIONAL ITEMS:**

2024 Board and President Goals

President Wurzel stated that the 2024 Goals were discussed at the Board Retreat in May. He and President Watson continued the work based on the discussion. Detail has been added to each bullet point for clarity.

The first Board Priority is to support the 2030 Strategic Plan. Faculty and Staff developed strategies for the Strategic Plan, which will be reviewed over the summer. President Watson will provide the Board with an update at the September meeting and further updates throughout the year.

The second priority is to support campus revitalization efforts. President Wurzel stated that support comes in the form of work by the Facilities Committee, which then brings a recommendation to the Board. While construction of the Student Center is underway, the College has also received Level II/III funding for the Orendorff Renewal Plan and Level II funding for the Nelson Performing Arts Center.

The third Priority is advocacy for Northwest College and the community colleges, which comes in many forms. Recently, a workshop at Casper College focused on the need for sustainable funding. The Legislature recently approved additional funding for K-12 but has yet to allocate sustainable funding for the community colleges. Another concern is the rise in property taxes for the citizens of Wyoming. The Legislature has expressed interest in reducing property taxes, which could further reduce funding to the colleges and all agencies depending on the reductions.

President Wurzel stated that the fourth priority of the Board is to support the President and the campus through campus engagement. During the retreat, Trustees noted that a calendar of events for campus activities would help them prioritize and schedule attendance at events.

Trustee Kuipers expressed her appreciation for the work on refining the Priorities the Trustees discussed at the Retreat. She feels the bullet points and the supporting information provided by President Wurzel reflect everything discussed at the Retreat.

President Watson stated that her role is to take a higher-level view of the campus operations. Her Priorities for 2024 include the 2030 Strategic Plan, Campus Revitalization efforts, completion of a comprehensive Marketing Plan, and a Strategic Enrollment and Retention Plan.

When considering the Strategic Plan, she will oversee and ensure the development of the tactics and timelines while providing updates to the Board annually on ongoing efforts.

While President Watson is leading the construction of the new Student Center, she expressed her appreciation to Dennis Quillen, Interim Facilities Director, for attending the weekly operational meetings regarding the construction details. She reiterated President Wurzel's comment regarding the Level II and III design work on the Nelson Performing Arts and Orendorff Buildings,

stating that the College will continue its revitalization efforts. She feels these efforts will result in a positive outcome for the College and the community.

President Watson stated that the College is working on completing and implementing a comprehensive marketing plan and the enrollment and retention plan efforts. She is working with the Vice Presidents and Directors to create practical, relevant, and manageable plans to match the resources and capacity of the College.

A motion was made by Trustee Todd and seconded by Trustee Housel to adopt the 2024 Board and President's Priorities as presented. Motion carried.

BOCES Budgets

President Watson stated that while the Board packet contains the proposed budgets for Park County School District #1 (PCSD #1) and Big Horn County School District #2 (BHCSD #2), the College did not receive the Big Horn County School District #3 (BHCSD #3) budget. Trustee Todd and Trustee Newsome, the Board representatives to the Greybull BOCES Board, stated they did not receive the budget but will try to get a copy for review during the July meeting.

Trustee Laursen reported that the discussion regarding the PCSD #1 budget during the most recent BOCES Board meeting related to the mil's portion. The Board was trying to determine if they should ask for a half mil or 3/8 mil and ensure there was enough money to cover necessary items. The proposed budget was passed on the first reading.

Trustee Housel reported on the recent meeting he attended and stated that the Lovell BOCES Executive Secretary has resigned, and they are filling the position. The Board discussed bringing back the Summer Film Festival that used to take place at the Hyart Theatre. He stated that the Lovell BOCES is very supportive of Northwest College, especially the concurrent and dual enrollment program. There was also discussion about the strong community sentiment for offering a CDL program through the Lovell BOCES, which they intend to implement in the future.

In response to a question from President Wurzel, Trustee Housel stated that BOCES is using reserves to cover the budget shortfall that has taken place over the last two-to-three years.

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:

There were no unfinished business items on the agenda.

A NEW BUSINESS:

Preliminary FY2024 Budget

President Watson stated that in comparing this year's proposed budget to last year's budget, there is a decrease in revenue and expenses due to completing the grant and finalizing the purchasing related to the federal and state appropriations associated with the pandemic.

President Watson stated that another difference from year to year is that the Legislature appropriated funds to the colleges for compensation. Last year, the College increased salaries by 3%, and this year all employees will receive at least 4% to address inflation.

President Watson reminded Trustees that the Board committed \$1 million towards compensation in 2019 because the College was losing ground with market values on positions. The College has committed another \$1 million to its employees thanks to the legislative appropriations. Increases were applied as a fixed dollar amount to all employees, allowing the College to bring salaries closer to the midpoint of the market. Market adjustments were made to those positions well below the midpoint of the market, as has been done previously. These appropriations allowed the College to raise the entire salary structure by 4%.

The Colleges also received one-time inflationary funding from the Legislature in the amount of \$1.2 million, of which Northwest College received \$130,000. That money went to utility and contractual increases.

President Watson stated that although local levies appear to be up, the budget was developed with a conservative approach. \$160,000 was added to the one mil account based on early estimates, but those funds were not allocated to operational expenditures and could be used toward one-time enrollment, marketing, or programming. It could also be used for unexpected operational costs since campus-wide budget contingency levels are always extremely low.

President Watson stated that the budget is up approximately \$1.5 million in projections associated with tuition and fees, state and local appropriations, and other sources. A less conservative approach was taken regarding tuition and fees since enrollment is tracking nicely. The College is hopeful for a slight increase in fall enrollment, but it is still too early to know for sure.

President Watson stated that the College budgeted for approximately 260 students living in the residence halls in FY2023; however, there ended up being 307 students, with a strong enrollment cycle for returning students in the halls. She stated she hadn't seen the occupancy numbers recently. Still, with the conversion of first-year students to sophomore returners showing positive numbers, the revenue and expenses in the residence halls and food service accounts were increased accordingly. President Watson reminded Trustees that the food service line could see a loss this year due to the cost of the Student Center project, related to labor and transportation costs as well as consumables.

President Watson directed the Trustees' attention to the pie charts in the budget proposal and stated that the projected revenues are relatively flat comparatively, with variances between revenue types. Expenditures are also defined by division and type, such as salaries and operating expenses, etc. While the overall expenditures appear to be higher in the proposed budget, President Watson pointed out that the additional funds from tuition and fees were placed in a contingency account that can be reallocated once enrollment numbers and local levies are determined.

In response to a question from Trustee Housel, President Watson stated that Instruction costs represented on page 16 of the report indicate the budgeted amount for 2022-2023. Instruction costs represented on page 20 are actual costs as of May 31, 2023, before the end of the fiscal year, June 30, 2023, when all salaries and expenditures will be realized.

Trustee Housel expressed his appreciation to President Watson for her work to secure funding for compensation increases.

President Watson stated that the Wyoming Community College Commission conducted much analysis, and the CFOs of the colleges provided data. The reality is that state agency employees needed increases. Many state employees

have transferrable skills, and the State suffers when the agencies lose good employees.

Course Fee Proposal

In response to a question from President Wurzel, President Watson stated that the presented budget proposal comes before the Board as a first reading. There will be a budget hearing on July 10, 2023, in which the Board will be asked to approve the proposed budget.

President Watson explained that the proposed increase in course fees for the Photo Field Studies class is to accommodate increased costs associated with material needs for the students to participate in an exhibit of their work.

The increased fees proposed for the Aeronautics program are associated with increased pass-through fees from Choice Aviation that are charged to the College for its students to participate.

A motion was made by Trustee Kuipers and seconded by Trustee Newsome to approve the proposed course fees. Motion carried.

President's Contract & Project Pay

Trustee Housel stated that one of the provisions of the Presidential contract is that it be reviewed annually at the anniversary of the agreement, which in President Watson's case, is in July. Trustees discussed the contract during the executive session.

A motion was made by Trustee Housel and seconded by Trustee Todd that President Wurzel and President Watson engage in negotiations regarding an upward adjustment to her compensation package, as was discussed during the executive session, and that those specifics will be made known during the July Board of Trustees meeting. Motion carried.

A motion was made by Trustee Housel and seconded by Trustee Kuipers to approve the proposed project pay, adjusted for inflation, for President Watson. Motion carried.

A EXECUTIVE SESSION:

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 5:42 p.m.

A motion was made by Trustee Housel and seconded by Trustee Todd to adjourn the executive session. Motion carried, the executive session adjourned at 6:45 p.m., and the regular session resumed.

July 10, 2023, upcoming:

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

- Year-end Budget Adjustments FY2023
- Budget Hearing
- Annual hearing for the Mil levy approval
- Other TBD

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

President Watson introduced newly hired Finance Director Mark Grant. Mark is from Lovell, WY, and received his Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Accounting from the University of Wyoming. He is a Certified Public Accountant and has worked for several years in public accounting performing audits and tax preparation.

President Watson stated that Vice President Gerry Giraud announced his retirement, effective June 23, 2023. Dr. Giraud has accepted a Registry Interim VPAA appointment to a community college in Las Cruces, NM, as the Vice President of Academics for one year.

President Watson expressed her appreciation for his service to Northwest College. Dr. Giraud facilitated many improvements over the years, such as with accreditation, a focus on retention and graduation, a focus on the use of data, program evaluation, and policy work. She described her years working with him as a valuable teammate and mentor. She wishes him the best in his retirement and new adventure.

President Wurzel also expressed his appreciation to Dr. Giraud and wished him well in his new endeavor.

New Student Registration, June 12, 2023, ORB
Yellowstone Summer Music Camp, June 18-23, 2023, NPA
New Student Registration, June 26, 2023, ORB
NWC & Powell Boys Basketball Camp, June 26-29, 2023, Cabre Gym
Volleyball Camps, July 10-15, 2023, Cabre Gym
July Board meeting, July 10, 2023, 4:00 p.m., Yellowstone Building

A ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting adjourned at 6:47 p.m.

TARA KUIPERS, Vice President/Secretary

Date