

The 284th meeting of the Board of Trustees
Mount Wachusett Community College
Thursday, October 16, 2025
Murphy Room
Meeting Minutes

A. **CALL TO ORDER** – Chairperson Freda called the meeting to order at 1:02 PM.

B. **ROLL CALL:**

Present: Claire Freda, Rick Walton, Tricia Pistone, Sharmese Gunn, and Beckett Caisse.

Present via Zoom: Doug Petersen

Also, present from the College: President Vander Hooven, many members of the Leadership Team, and Executive Assistant Laurie Snoonian

Unable to Attend: Patti Bergstrom, Irene Hernandez, Denise Gosselin and Rozanna Penney

Many others joined via live stream on Vimeo.

C. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES** – Chairperson Freda asked for a motion to approve the minutes of August 21, 2025. Ms. Pistone made a motion to approve, and Mr. Walton seconded the motion. All approved. Motion passed.

D. **CHAIRPERSON’S REPORT** – Claire Freda

- a. Chairperson Freda highlighted the successful Hispanic festival on the Leominster campus.
- b. Claire reported on the first joint meeting of the Board of Trustees and Foundation, which went well with good exchange of ideas. She mentioned the strong turnout and good collaboration.
- c. Claire was happy to report that we have almost 100% board participation in donations to the Foundation and thanked Rick for getting it started.
- d. Acknowledged the admissions team’s work at the Johnny Appleseed festival in promoting the college. Claire was amazed at how many came to visit the booth and stated this is due to our reputation and staff.
- e. Congratulated Trustee Pistone on being named one of the Distinguished Citizen Award honorees by the Boy Scouts of America.
- f. The new Automotive Department just had a recent ribbon cutting celebrating a \$100K grant. Claire recognized Eric and the Foundation’s efforts praising the strong partnership and innovation in that program.
- g. Trustee Gosselin along with other committee members continue to update the bylaws and will have a draft for Claire and Jim soon.
- h. Trustee Hernandez continues to work on the evaluation process for the president. There was some discussion about how a survey would be created and distributed. Details are not complete.
- i. Claire recognized the “Monty the Mountain Lion” book along with the activity book. It was noted the activity book was done in our own print shop.

E. **PRESIDENT’S REPORT** – President Vander Hooven

- a. President Vander Hooven reported on attending a conference in Orlando, noting the rapid integration of AI across all aspects of education.

- b. Announced a 28-30% enrollment growth over the last year, the highest increase in the Commonwealth. He acknowledged the need for fiscal responsibility as enrollment stabilizes.
- c. The college is beginning a new strategic planning process alongside the NECHE five-year accreditation report. The strategic bridge plan will focus on manageable, targeted goals.
- d. Discussed the Auto tech program expansion from 15 to over 100 students thanks to the new facilities and Foundation support.
- e. Mentioned his efforts with other community college presidents to advocate for a statewide salary study for MCCC faculty and professional staff.

F. REPORTS FROM MEMBERS OF THE LEADERSHIP TEAM – Adam Duggan – Workforce Development Update (see attached presentation)

- a. Adam presented workforce development initiatives and strategic priorities.
- b. He outlined the division’s strategic priorities: access and opportunity, quality and accountability, and sustainability/efficiency/resilience.
- c. Discussed the expansion of MassLinks statewide virtual adult education program, which has doubled capacity while operating with reduced funding.
- d. Provided details on Workforce Pell, which will provide financial aid for short-term workforce training programs.
- e. Described the transition from Google to Microsoft digital infrastructure. Although he was not sure what would happen to Google accounts, Adam stated he was confident that our IT department should be properly handling the transition.
- f. Concerns were raised about misalignment between MassHire priorities and local healthcare industry needs.
- g. Workforce Pell implementation is targeted for July 1, 2026.
- h. The division is focusing on aligning short-term workforce programs with career communities and academic pathways.

G. MISSION/STRATEGIC PLAN UPDATE – Heather Layton – Strategic Bridge Plan (see attached presentation)

- a. Heather presented the Strategic Bridge plan development process and outcomes.
- b. She noted that the mission, vision, values, equity imperatives, five goals, and overall metrics remain the same.
- c. Heather reported that the strategic initiatives were reduced from 16 to 15, while strategic actions saw significant prioritization.
- d. She highlighted that the bridge plan has clear measurable outcomes and assigned ownership.
- e. The next strategic process will begin in January 2026.

H. ADMINISTRATIVE ORDERS OF THE DAY

- a. **AD 1339 – Approval of Fourth Quarter Trust Report FY25** –Trustee Pistone reported that the fourth quarter trust report was consistent with the audit. She also mentioned a new format for reporting will be coming soon. Chairperson Freda asked for a motion to approve the fourth quarter trust report FY25. Mr. NFOR made a motion to approve and seconded by Mr. Walton. All approved. Motion carried.
- b. **AD 1340– Approval of Audited Financial Statements**– Chris Pelland presented a brief overview of the audit that was fully presented on Tuesday at the Fnance and Audit meeting. Trustee Pistone reported that the committee accepted the draft report with minimal edits. Chairperson Freda asked for a motion to approve the

audited financial statements. Mr. NFOR made a motion to approve and seconded by Mx. Beckett. All approved. Motion carried.

I. NEW BUSINESS

- a. Discussion about changing future meeting times was discussed. Chair Freda suggested a 3 or 4 pm start time with the finance and audit committee prior to that. It was agreed that changing the board meeting to a later time would work, but to leave the finance and audit committee meeting a couple of days before the board meeting. The reasoning for keeping the finance and audit committee meeting earlier in the week is to allow any issues that may come up to be resolved before the board meeting. Jim and Claire will discuss a new time for future BOT meetings.

- J. **ADJOURNMENT** – Chair Freda asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. A motion was made by Mr. Walton and seconded by Mr. NFOR. All approved. Meeting adjourned at 2:26 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Laurie Snoonian