

The 277th meeting of the Board of Trustees
Mount Wachusett Community College
Wednesday, December 11, 2024
Leominster Campus – L341
Meeting Minutes

A. **CALL TO ORDER** – Chairperson Freda called the meeting to order at 8:30 AM.

B. **ROLL CALL:**

Present: Claire Freda, Irene Hernandez, Tricia Pistone, Doug Petersen, Denise Gosselin, Sharmese Gunn, and Oren Cohen

Unable to attend: Patti Bergstrom and Rick Walton

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

Many others joined via live stream on Vimeo.

C. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES** – Chairperson Freda asked for a motion to approve the minutes of October 24, 2024. Mr. Cohen made a motion to approve, and Ms. Pistone seconded the motion. All approved. Motion passed.

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

- a. Claire asked for a moment of silence for Sergeant Cole, acknowledging the support and value of the police department.
- b. Claire welcomed everyone to the Leominster campus and the importance of showcasing the work being done at different campuses. She stated she would like to have more meetings in Leominster and to also have one at our Auto Tech building.

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

- a. Jim also welcomed everyone to the Leominster campus mentioning the renovations during COVID with an emphasis on student-centered design and improved accessibility.
- b. The college was a recent stop for Wreaths Across America, with a ceremony honoring Gold Star families. There was a student speaker and dinner provided by our café. Jim thanked media, facilities, student services, campus police and other staff for the event’s success.
- c. Jim discussed a bus related incident on campus that injured three students. He praised the response from campus police, Jason Zelesky and emergency responders.
- d. Winterfest fundraiser raised over \$6,400 for the emergency student fund.
- e. Jim mentioned the Foundation event “Into the Woods” gala that will be happening in February. A flyer with sponsorship opportunities is included on the last page of the board packet.
- f. Jim acknowledged Dr. Ralph Hogan as he had an article published in the 2024 Grant Professional journal.
- g. Enrollment for Spring 2024 is projected to increase by 20-30% compared to the previous year. Efforts are being made to address faculty and class capacity to meet this demand.
- h. Jim mentioned last week he was at the annual NECHE conference in Boston along with Tiffany Parker and Kim Shea. He highlighted concerns over changing accreditation standards and the potential influence of the incoming administration. Two keynote speakers at this conference were not concerned about the elimination

of the Department of Higher Education, but how it will be changed. A brief discussion ensued on how changes might impact equity, diversity and the support provided to students from marginalized groups.

- i. Still waiting for the governor to approve 3 strong candidates to join the board.

F. REPORTS FROM MEMBERS OF THE LEADERSHIP TEAM – Jason Zelesky – Leominster Campus Overview

- a. Jason thanked the board for recognizing the campus and the importance to students and staff.
- b. He emphasized the campus was fully gutted and remodeled. One staircase was the only piece that remained from the original campus.
- c. A slideshow was presented on the recent renovations to the campus, which included expanded classroom space, updated technology, improved accessibility, a new elevator, faculty workspaces, and student study areas.
- d. At 10 AM, Jason will be providing a tour for anyone who would like to join.

G. MISSION/STRATEGIC PLAN UPDATE –

- a. The college is right in the middle of the strategic plan. Jim stated it is not too early to think about what comes after this plan. Heather Layton is beginning meetings next week with staff to prioritize initiatives to avoid being overwhelmed by too many objectives.
- b. The board discussed the need for clear institutional support and communication on matters of DEI. There were concerns mentioned about how incoming federal policies might impact funding, services and community college operations.

H. ADMINISTRATIVE ORDERS OF THE DAY

- a. **AD 1320 – Fourth Quarter Trust Report FY23** – Jay reported that this quarter is a housekeeping item that needs to be approved by the board but was previously discussed in the last Finance and Audit meeting. Chairperson Freda asked for a motion to approve the fourth quarter trust report FY23. Mr. Cohen made a motion to approve and seconded by Ms. Pistone. All approved. Motion carried.
- b. **AD 1321 – Fourth Quarter Trust Report FY24** – Jay mentioned this trust report was being tabled due to some questions that came up at our last Finance and Audit meeting. Chairperson Freda asked for a motion to table the Fourth Quarter Trust Report FY24. Mr. Cohen made a motion to table and seconded by Ms. Hernandez. All approved. Motion tabled.
- c. **AD 1322 – Audited Financial Statements** – Chris Pelland from Withum presented a brief overview of the audit ending June 30, 2024. A more detailed explanation was presented at the Finance and Audit committee meeting on Monday, December 9. Chris thanked Bob LaBonte for all his work on the audit. Chairperson Freda asked for a motion to approve the audited financial statements. Mr. Cohen made a motion to approve and seconded by Ms. Gosselin.
- d. **AD 1323 – Presidential Evaluation** – The board decided to table the evaluation to allow the president more time for a discussion with the board with all members present.

I. ADJOURNMENT – Chair Freda asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. A motion was made by Mr. Cohen and seconded by Ms. Gosselin. All approved. Meeting adjourned at 9:38 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

Laurie Snoonian