

The 278th special meeting of the Board of Trustees
Mount Wachusett Community College
Tuesday, February 4, 2025
Murphy Room
Meeting Minutes

A. **CALL TO ORDER** – Chairperson Freda called the meeting to order at 2:04 PM.

B. **ROLL CALL:**

Present: Claire Freda, Patti Bergstrom, Lawrence NFOR, Rick Walton, and Sharmese Gunn

Present via Zoom: Doug Petersen, Tricia Pistone and Oren Cohen

Unable to attend: Irene Hernandez and Denise Gosselin

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

Many others joined via live stream on Vimeo.

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

a. Chair Freda welcomed everyone to this special meeting of the board of trustees. She welcomed back Patti, who is retiring the next day. Claire also welcomed Lawrence NFOR to the board, a former student and employee of the college.

D. **NEW BUSINESS** – President Vander Hooven - Update on the recent Executive Orders in Washinton and actions taken by MWCC

- a. President Vander Hooven stated the purpose of this meeting is to address confusion regarding recent federal actions and their impact on institutional policies, particularly concerning students.
- b. He provided a summary of existing policies and institutional commitments. A protocol on how to handle external law enforcement was sent out the previous week.
- c. President Vander Hooven stated the institution remains committed to serving students equitably while adhering to legal requirements. No immediate institutional changes were being made while awaiting further guidance.
- d. A review of federal grants potentially affected by executive orders is underway.
- e. The college is awaiting more clarity regarding potential funding changes, particularly regarding DEI related programs.
- f. Police Chief Croteau provided insights on law enforcement procedures related to campus security and external agency protocols.
- g. She reassured the department’s mission is to protect all individuals on campus, regardless of status.
- h. Chief Croteau mentioned that community policing efforts, including engaging with students, are being strengthened.
- i. Several board members raised concerns about student safety and potential disruption to education.
- j. The importance of continued advocacy for students and staff was emphasized.
- k. Chair Claire Freda emphasized the importance of keeping the discussion focused on the students and institutional responsibilities rather than allowing it to become politically driven. She acknowledged the concerns raised but urged the board and leadership team to remain neutral in political discourse.

- l. Chair Freda reminded the board that regardless of personal views, the institution must comply with federal and state laws while also upholding its commitment to students.
- m. President Vander Hooven stated he is committed to providing timely updates as more information becomes available. He also concluded with a reaffirmation of the institution's commitment to supporting students and maintaining a safe learning environment.

E. ADJOURNMENT – Chair Freda asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. A motion was made by Mr. NFOR and seconded by Mr. Walton. All approved. Meeting adjourned at 2:59 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Laurie Snoonian