

Minutes of the
NIU Board of Trustees of Northern Illinois University
Special Meeting
November 14, 2019

1. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order at 8:32 a.m. by Board Chair Dennis Barsema in the Board of Trustees Room, 315 Altgeld Hall. Recording Secretary Karen Campbell conducted a roll call. Members present were Rita Athas, John Butler, Montel Gayles, Veronica Herrero, Madalynn Mershon, Bob Pritchard, Vice Chair Eric Wasowicz, and Board Chair Dennis Barsema.

Also present: President Lisa Freeman; General Counsel Bryan Perry; Board Liaison Matt Streb; Vice President for Administration and Finance Sarah McGill; and University Advisory Council (UAC) Representatives Catherine Doederlein, Kendall Thu, Janson Hanna, Alex Gelman, and Sarah Marsh.

2. VERIFICATION OF QUORUM AND APPROPRIATE NOTICE OF PUBLIC MEETING

General Counsel Bryan Perry indicated the appropriate notification of the meeting had been provided pursuant to the Illinois Open Meetings Act. Mr. Perry also advised that a quorum was present.

3. MEETING AGENDA APPROVAL

Chair Dennis Barsema asked for a motion to approve the meeting agenda. Trustee Montel Gayles so moved and Trustee Bob Pritchard seconded. The motion was approved.

4. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF SEPTEMBER 12, 2019

Chair Dennis Barsema asked for a motion to approve the minutes of September 12, 2019. Trustee John Butler so moved, and Trustee Rita Athas seconded. The motion was approved.

5. CHAIR'S COMMENTS/ANNOUNCEMENTS

Chair Dennis Barsema welcomed the members of the University Advisory Committee.

UAC Representative Catherine Doederlein stated that the collaborative work that resulted in the collective bargaining agreement to be voted on shortly was exciting. The faculty are vital to the university and the heart and core of the institution.

Representative Doederlein then spoke on behalf of the last body that has no collective bargaining agreement, the Supportive Professional Staff (SPS). She stated that many people from within her SPS constituency say that the faculty now have a lot with their salaries and increases which will officially be codified today, and SPS members are nervous. Representative Doederlein has explained that she feels confident with this administration and this Board, who have shown a willingness and interest to ensure fairness. Considering increases and things of that nature should apply for everyone.

UAC Representative Kendall Thu told a story about his father's being fired from a junior college for trying to organize faculty and students into having a greater voice in the direction of the junior college. Because of that experience, Representative Thu said that the Collective Bargaining Agreement for Faculty to be considered at this meeting has a special, personal meaning. He went on to congratulate President Lisa Freeman and her leadership team, as well as his colleagues in the union, for their work on the agreement. He noted that it was a good day for NIU.

UAC Representative Alex Gelman agreed with Representative Thu that it was a great day for NIU. He expressed his excitement for the increased faculty compensation. He also said that the new arts fee would make artistic events on campus more accessible to students, contributing to their overall education and growth as well as creating a smart, knowledgeable citizenry that will lead us forward to brighter days.

Chair Barsema announced his agreement that it was a wonderful, great and historic day for NIU.

Chair Barsema went on to applaud the efforts of the Student Association for declaring this “No Plastic November.” In support of that, the Board of Trustees will now use reusable containers for water.

Chair Barsema further thanked the Holmes Student Center (HSC) Starbucks for the delivery of coffee to the Board of Trustees. He also noted that the opening of the new HSC had gone very well, especially for the Starbucks and The Grill in the Huskie Den. The HSC is being well used by faculty, staff, and students.

Chair Barsema mentioned that this meeting was the first time that a Board of Trustees Meeting was live streamed. This will be the practice going forward. All the information about where to go and what to do to watch the live stream is available on the Board of Trustees website.

Finally, Chair Barsema congratulated the Huskie football team for beating Toledo, and thanked everyone for their presence on a historic day for NIU.

6. PUBLIC COMMENT

General Counsel Bryan Perry indicated that no timely requests for public comment were received.

7. PRESIDENT’S REPORT NO. 137

Agenda Item 7.a. Collective Bargaining for United Faculty Alliance

President Lisa Freeman introduced Agenda Item 7.a. She said that this is a special board meeting in every sense of the word and emphasized her pleasure and pride in putting forward the collective bargaining agreement between NIU and the United Faculty Alliance University Professionals of Illinois, Local 4100 IFT, AFT, AFLCIO. The collective bargaining unit represents approximately 580 tenure and tenure track faculty and it is an exciting day to bring this forward for approval by the Board of Trustees. The incredible value of NIU’s faculty cannot be overstated. Their research, artistry and scholarship; their compassion and dedication for students, and their commitment to NIU’s mission, vision and values is immeasurable. NIU faculty’s diverse talents and expertise contribute to the region, to the nation, and to global society. From start to finish, negotiating this new contract was a lengthy process. But more importantly, it was a thoughtful process on both sides that resulted in a fair contract that supports faculty, that respects shared governance, and that will be used to retain and recruit talented and diverse faculty going forward.

Chair Dennis Barsema responded that the Board is very pleased about Dr. Freeman’s recommending this contract move forward for approval, and echoes her statements on how just incredible NIU faculty are.

Chair Barsema next shared a story of mentoring a student who chose NIU over other schools because she felt at home at NIU. The student said that her best friend at another university complains often about her professors. The student mentee said that she has never had a bad experience with an NIU professor and loves every one of her professors. So, when people think about the strengths of NIU and the reasons why students not only come to NIU, but stay at NIU, the top of the list is faculty. Chair Barsema thanked the faculty and stated that it is a pleasure for the Board of Trustees to be a part of this vote on such a historic day for NIU. It was important to

the Board to hold this special meeting early enough that as many of the faculty who wanted to be here who could join in this day and still get back to teaching schedules.

Chair Barsema called for a motion to approve agenda item 7.a. Trustee Rita Athas so moved, and Trustee Montel Gayles seconded.

Trustee John Butler noted that he works in the labor movement, so this is a special day for him personally. The best agreements clearly contend with issues and address the concerns of the bargaining unit and also express the values shared between labor and management in a clear and ideally bold manner. Trustee Butler was pleased when reading this contract that both those components were present. At the heart of any labor movement is a quest for justice, and this is a sign that the quest was joined by the university administration in a serious effort. This agreement also differentiates the working terms and conditions of NIU faculty from the working terms and conditions in place at other universities and therefore, the contract will serve as an instrument of sustainability and enhancement of faculty life at NIU. That should be the goal and this contract moves the university in that direction.

President Freeman stated that she wanted to recognize not only the faculty but also the administrative representatives on the bargaining team. She especially commended Provost Beth Ingram, and Vice Provost Bill Pitney, who played a key role in completion of the agreement.

Chair Barsema said that this is a very fair and competitive contract that speaks to the needs of faculty, students, and NIU. The Board echoes the words already said and is very thankful for the efforts not only of those who worked to get to this day, but for those who will work going forward to implement this new contract.

Chair Barsema called the vote for Agenda Item 7.a. The motion was approved.

8. OTHER MATTERS

There were no other matters.

9. NEXT MEETING

The next regularly scheduled meeting of the full Board of Trustees is December 5, 2019 at 9am.

10. RECESS FOR ACADEMIC AFFAIRS, STUDENT AFFAIRS, AND PERSONNEL COMMITTEE AND FINANCE, AUDIT, COMPLIANCE, FACILITIES AND OPERATIONS COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Chair Dennis Barsema stated that the Board needed to recess for committee meetings and asked for a motion to do so. Trustee Montel Gayles so moved, and Trustee Eric Wasowicz seconded. The motion was approved.

The Board recessed at 8:55a.m.

(Trustee Veronica Herrero joined the Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, and Personnel Committee Meeting at 9:00am)

11. CLOSED SESSION

The Board returned from recess at 12:37p.m.

Chair Dennis Barsema asked for a motion to move to closed session. Trustee John Butler so moved, and Trustee Montel Gayles seconded.

Roll Call Vote:

Trustee Rita Athas: Yes

Trustee John Butler: Yes

Trustee Montel Gayles: Yes

Trustee Veronica Herrero: Yes

Trustee Madalynn Mershon: Yes

Trustee Bob Pritchard: Yes

Vice Chair Eric Wasowicz: Yes

Board Chair Dennis Barsema: Yes

The Board closed the public meeting at 12:40p.m.

The meeting reconvened from closed session at 4:00p.m. Chair Barsema asked for a roll call. Trustees present were Rita Athas, John Butler, Montel Gayles, Madalynn Mershon, Bob Pritchard, Vice Chair Eric Wasowicz, and Chair Dennis Barsema.

Roll Call:

Trustee Rita Athas: Present

Trustee John Butler: Present

Trustee Montel Gayles: Present

Trustee Veronica Herrero: Absent

Trustee Madalynn Mershon: Present

Trustee Bob Pritchard: Present

Vice Chair Eric Wasowicz: Present

Board Chair Dennis Barsema: Present

12. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Dennis Barsema asked for a motion to adjourn. Trustee Veronica Herrero so moved, and Trustee Montel Gayles seconded. The motion was approved. Meeting adjourned at 4:01p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Campbell
Recording Secretary

In compliance with Illinois Open Meetings Act 5 ILCS 120/1, et seq, a verbatim record of all Northern Illinois University Board of Trustees meetings is maintained by the Board Recording Secretary and is available for review upon request. The minutes contained herein represent a true and accurate summary of the Board proceedings.