

Minutes of the
Board of Trustees of Northern Illinois University
Special Meeting
March 19, 2020

CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order at 11 a.m. by Board Chair Dennis Barsema. Recording Secretary Liz Wright 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; and University Advisory Council (UAC) Representatives Catherine Doederlein, Jason Hanna, Sarah Marsh, Jeffrey Royce, and Kendall Thu.

VERIFICATION OF QUORUM AND APPROPRIATE NOTICE OF PUBLIC MEETING

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

MEETING AGENDA APPROVAL

Chair Dennis Barsema asked for a motion to approve the meeting agenda. Trustee Butler so moved and Trustee Wasowicz seconded. The motion was approved.

CHAIR'S COMMENTS/ANNOUNCEMENTS

Chair Dennis Barsema welcomed members of the University Advisory Council and invited them to make remarks.

UAC Representative Thu supported the move to delegate authority to President Freeman noting the nimbleness required to operate during this time. Further, he thanked all of the NIU employees across classifications for their dedication and hard work during this time.

UAC Representative Gelman also noted his support of the item on the agenda. He expressed his admiration and awe of watching his colleagues reimagine and reinvent the teaching mode across the university.

UAC Representative Hanna thanked the Faculty Development and Instructional Design center for the great work they have done during the last week.

UAC Representative Royce also voiced his support for the action item and noted his faith in the current administration.

UAC Representative Doederlein thanked the staff members required to work on campus as well as the communication and leadership that has been shown during this time.

UAC Representative Marsh agreed with the comments of her colleagues.

Chair Barsema provided a summary of the current COVID-19 situation, the seriousness of it and his gratefulness for the precautions the university is taking at this time.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Chair Dennis Barsema asked General Counsel Perry if any timely requests to address the meeting were received. General Counsel Bryan Perry responded that there was a timely request to read a statement prior to the meeting.

Perry read a statement to the Board from AFSCME Local 1890 NIU Clerical.

Good morning,

The executive board and stewards of AFSCME Local 1890 NIU Clerical, Paraprofessional and Technical Employees, on behalf of our members, wish to express our appreciation to Dr. Freeman and the entire administration team working to address the COVID-19 pandemic.

We recognize the hours dedicated to following rapidly changing directives from our National, State and Local governments in order to adapt policies and procedures such that faculty and staff can continue to support the students with their studies.

We especially appreciate efforts to not disrupt our pay and allow the use of benefits as needed. The decisions made have demonstrated this Administration's consideration for the needs of everyone involved in University operations, and it has not gone unnoticed by our members.

The flexibility provided to operating staff at this time to work remotely and outside normal work schedules has been most welcomed. Adaptations to office procedures will enable us to remain on task for meeting deadlines that will keep the University operational.

Special thanks to the technology team behind pushing necessary messaging out in a timely manner, updating the COVID-19 web page, and for all the support they are providing to those of us who have had to adapt to working from home for the first time.

The communication from Administration has been timely, clear cut, and welcomed. We feel included in the loop and valued. We especially appreciate the message from the Employee Assistance Program offering suggestions to help us through any anxiety this situation causes.

This is an extremely stressful time for everyone. Your leadership provides confidence and assurance that we will get through this together as one team.

Finally, thank you, Board of Trustees, for making it possible for this Administration to respond as necessary to sustain operations for the University through this crisis.

Respectfully Submitted by

Ellen Cabrera, President
Angie Gasero, Vice President
Claire Duvall, Treasurer
Patricia Wielert, Secretary
Beatrice Kookan, Member-at-large
Debbie Williams, Membership Chair
Tom Kapraun, Chief Steward
Patricia Liberty-Baczek, Certified Steward
Sarah Lindell, Certified Steward
Rebecca Rahe, Trustee
Kristin Sherman, Trustee

Chair Barsema thanked the administration, the faculty, and the staff for their management during this time. It is wonderful to have leadership that cares about the well-being about all of the NIU family.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT NO 141

Agenda Item 6.a. Resolution Temporarily Suspending Board of Trustees Policies, Regulations, and Authority Governing Campus Operations and Delegating Emergency Powers to the President to Ensure Continuity of University Operations.

Chair Dennis Barsema asked President Freeman to present agenda item 6.a.

President Freeman thanked the NIU campus, the faculty and staff for their hard work during this challenging time. She read the following item to the board for approval:

On March 9, 2020, the Governor of Illinois declared a state of emergency to ensure that the effects of COVID-19 were mitigated and minimized and that residents and visitors in the State remained safe and secure. Because of the continued spread of coronavirus (COVID-19) nationwide, Northern Illinois University ("NIU") extended Spring Break through Sunday, March 22, and modified courses replacing face-to-face instruction as of March 23, 2020. NIU's top priority is the health and well-being of our campus community. In order to minimize the impact of the emergency on our employees or student workers, NIU is offering multiple work options for our employees to use through April 5 and potentially beyond, if circumstances dictate. These include working remotely, flexible schedules, use of personal benefits and combinations thereof. Some of the personal benefit options that can provide employees with the most flexibility require the Board of Trustees ("BOT" or "Board") to temporarily suspend regulations (For example, §II: Faculty and Administrative employees and §III: Civil Service Employees) contained in Regulations of the Board of Trustees. The COVID-19 public health emergency is a fluid situation, and further operational decisions affecting employee benefit usage and maintaining continuity of university operations may be needed without sufficient time to convene a meeting of the Board to deliberate and vote on the requested change to BOT policy, regulation, or authority. This resolution, limited in scope and authority, will temporarily suspend BOT policies, regulations, rules, or any other authority currently granted to the Board, governing campus operations, and delegate those inherent powers to the President until the sooner of the state of emergency being lifted or the executive committee meeting of the Board of Trustees on May 14, 2020.

March 19, 2020

WHEREAS, COVID-19 is a novel severe acute respiratory illness that can spread among people through respiratory transmissions and present with symptoms similar to those of influenza; and,

WHEREAS, certain populations are at higher risk of experiencing more severe illness as a result of COVID-19, including older adults and people who have serious chronic medical conditions such as heart disease, diabetes, or lung disease; and,

WHEREAS, the State of Illinois is continuing efforts to prepare for any eventuality given that this is a novel illness and given the known health risks it poses for the elderly and those with serious chronic medical conditions; and,

WHEREAS, the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a Public Health Emergency of International Concern on January 30, 2020, and the United States Secretary of Health and Human Services declared that COVID-19 presents a public health emergency on January 27, 2020; and,

WHEREAS, the CDC has advised older travelers and those with chronic medical conditions to avoid nonessential travel, and has advised all travelers to exercise enhanced precautions; and,

WHEREAS, a vaccine or drug is currently not available for COVID-19; and,

WHEREAS, in communities with confirmed COVID-19 cases, the CDC currently recommends mitigation measures, including staying at home when sick, when a household member is sick with respiratory disease symptoms or when instructed to do so by public health officials or a health care provider and keeping away from others who are sick; and,

WHEREAS, despite efforts to contain COVID-19, the World Health Organization and the CDC indicate that it is expected to spread; and,

WHEREAS, there are currently confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Illinois; and,

WHEREAS, based on the foregoing, the circumstances surrounding COVID-19 constituted a public health emergency under §4 of the Illinois Emergency Management Agency Act; and,

WHEREAS, these conditions provided legal justification under §7 of the Illinois Emergency Management Agency Act for the issuance of a proclamation of disaster;

WHEREAS, beginning March 18, 2020, all public and private gatherings in the State of Illinois of 50 people are prohibited for the duration of the Gubernatorial Disaster Proclamation.

WHEREAS, in the interest of aiding the people of Illinois and the local governments responsible for ensuring public health and safety, JB Pritzker, Governor of the State of Illinois, found that a disaster exists within the State of Illinois and specifically declare all counties in the State of Illinois as a disaster area.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of Trustees of Northern Illinois University in an emergency meeting assembled, that:

The Board hereby temporarily suspends BOT policies, regulations, rules, or any other authority currently granted to the Board, governing campus operations, and delegates those inherent powers to the President until the sooner of the state of emergency being lifted or the executive committee meeting of the Board of Trustees on May 14, 2020.

Adopted in an emergency meeting assembled this 19th day of March.

**Board of Trustees of
Northern Illinois University**

Dennis L. Barsema
Chair

Chair Barsema asked for a motion to approve the recommendation. Trustee Athas so moved and Trustee Herrero seconded.

Trustee Gayles noted he did not take this decision lightly and noted his confidence in the President and leadership of NIU. He asked the Board of Trustees continue to be kept informed.

Chair Barsema asked for the President to report to the Board any changes or decisions made under this authority on a regular schedule. He suggested bi-weekly reports on how this new regulation is being utilized.

President Freeman confirmed that decisions under this authority will be communicated in a timely fashion.

Trustee Butler noted his interest in policy related to finances with respect to accounts receivable and tuition management during this time, as well as items related to employment in efforts to properly delegate this authority.

The motion was approved.

OTHER MATTERS

Trustee Wasowicz thanked Governor Pritzker for suspending the in-person requirement of the Open Meetings Act (OMA) during this time. Chair Barsema echoed the sentiments.

There were no other matters.

NEXT MEETING DATE

The next regularly scheduled meeting of the Board of Trustees will be held June 18, 2020.

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Dennis Barsema asked for a motion to adjourn. Trustee Gayles so moved and Trustee Athas seconded. The motion was approved. Meeting adjourned at 11:30 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Liz Wright
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.