

**SPRINGFIELD TECHNICAL COMMUNITY COLLEGE
BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

**Board of Trustee Regular Meeting
Monday, September 23, 2024 at 5:00 PM
Rubenzahl Student Learning Commons / Building 19, Forum**

Minutes of Meeting

Present: Michael Knapik, Chair & Trustee
Zoya Plunkett-Brown, Student Trustee
Laurie Martin '90, Alumni Trustee (joined at 5:11)
Tonia Butler Pérez, Trustee
Dr. William Dávila, Trustee
Samalid Hogan, Trustee (joined at 5:04)
Anthony Moore '15, Trustee
Elizabeth Oleksak-Sposito, Trustee
Norman Roldan, Trustee
Jeff Sattler, Trustee

Unable to Attend: Bill Johnson, Trustee

Also Present: Dr. John B. Cook, President
Gina Yarbrough, Esq., Chief Legal Counsel, Mass CCs
Darcey Kemp, Vice President of Student Affairs
Dr. Chris Thuot, Vice President of Academic Affairs
Andrea Nathanson, Vice President of Administration and CFO
Nanette Flores, Executive Assistant to the President & Board Clerk

I. Call to Order & Roll Call

Board Chair Michael Knapik called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

The following Trustees were present at roll call: Trustee Chair Michael Knapik, Trustee Elizabeth Oleksak-Sposito, Student Trustee Zoya Plunkett-Brown, Trustee Tonia Butler Pérez, Trustee William Dávila, Trustee Anthony Moore, Trustee Norman Roldan, and Trustee Jeff Sattler. Eight Trustees present at the time of roll call constitutes a quorum.

After roll call, at 5:04, Trustee Samalid Hogan joined the meeting; and at 5:11, Trustee Laurie Martin joined the meeting.

II. Approval of Minutes

a) Board of Trustee Annual Meeting – Monday, June 24, 2024

Trustee Norman Roldan moved to approve the minutes from the June 24 Board of Trustees meeting, seconded by Trustee Tonia Butler-Perez. Trustee Chair Michael Knapik and Trustee Anthony Moore abstained since they were appointed after the June 24 meeting. Otherwise, unanimously approved by all other Trustees present.

III. Committee Reports (none)

Note: As a Sub-Committee of Ways and Means, The Report of the August 8 Investment Sub-Committee meeting will fold into the October 17 Committee on Ways and Means meeting report.

IV. Welcome Remarks by Michael Knapik, Chair, STCC Board of Trustees

Recently appointed STCC Board Chair, Michael Knapik offered welcoming remarks to new and longstanding Trustees.

V. Committee Assignments & Committee Chair Appointments (Chair Knapik)

Chair Knapik referred to the Board of Trustees Committees information/list included in the meeting packet for feedback or comments. With no further comments regarding committee assignments, President Cook shared that Committee assignments are aligned to the updated bylaws, and how each Trustee member was appointed to one Committee. The Committee on Ways and Means has two sub-committees (Audit & Investment) of one individual; the Chair, Trustee Laurie Martin. A question came up related to non-Trustee members of Committees; clarification was that the Investment Sub-Committee has historically included/invited a financial/investment expert to serve in an informal capacity, and is not a voting member of the Committee.

VI. Elections: Vice Chair & Secretary (Chair Knapik)

Chair Knapik called for nominations for the Vice Chair position. Nomination included:

- Trustee Jeff Sattler; accepted and seconded by Trustee Samalid Hogan
- Trustee Elizabeth Oleksak-Sposito; accepted and seconded by Trustee Jeff Sattler
- Trustee Dr. William Dávila; accepted and seconded by Trustee Norman Roldan

Elected Vice Chair via secret verbal vote: Trustee Elizabeth Oleksak-Sposito (with 7 votes/majority). Chair Knapik called for a motion to declare Trustee Oleksak-Sposito as the Vice Chair of the STCC Board of Trustees. The motion was seconded by Trustee Samalid Hogan.

Chair Knapik called for nominations for the Secretary position. Nominations included::

- Trustee Dr. William Dávila; accepted and seconded by Trustee Oleksak Sposito

With no further nominations for the Secretary position, Chair Knapik called for a motion to declare Trustee Dávila as Secretary of the STCC Board of Trustees. The motion was seconded by Trustee Oleksak-Sposito and unanimously approved.

VII. Trustee Orientation: Outlook & Role / Legal Counsel, by Gina M. Yarbrough, Esq., Chief Legal Counsel, Mass Community Colleges

General Counsel, Gina Yarbrough walked Trustees through a presentation that was provided to the Board in advance as part of the meeting packet. Also included for reference was the “Presidents and Trustees Resource Manual.” She encouraged Trustees to review the Resource Manual for additional details given the topics discussed.

Summary of points/topics/points of conversation:

History of the Community Colleges Office of the General Counsel dating to 1980, including exclusive legal representation & support to all MA 15 Community Colleges and its 15 Boards;

The Office works directly with Presidents, Board Chairs, Senior Administrators and designated staff;

Review of public higher education governance structure including Board functions and duties as described under Mass state law (MGL Chapter 15A, Section 22);

Fiduciary responsibility of Trustees, as well as Delegation Authority to President (personnel as well as operations) was described/discussed;

Open Meeting Law was reviewed including deliberation, quorum, as well as open and executive sessions. Noted that even with an executive session, minute-taking occurs and when the situation deliberated is resolved those are made public. Gina proceeded to discuss a difficult area, which is communication outside of a posted meeting. Legal Counsel advice: avoid electronic communication, particularly with email (including because of Public Record requests). If question arise: please confer with Board Chair or the College President:

Trustee Tonia Butler Perez noted that since her appointment, the Board has not gone into Executive Session. As a hypothetical, if there is a complaint about the President, what next? Gina shared that executive session rationale is clearly delineated in the Open Meeting Law regulations, and this is an example of when to confer with the Board Chair.

Trustee Dávila asked about who serves in a Parliamentary role as needed; the Board Chair, with assistance from the Clerk to the Board. Gina encouraged Trustees, especially given operational scope across 15 colleges: before a Trustee would seek to contact the Office of Legal Counsel, please go through the Board Chair.

VIII. President’s Report – Dr. John B. Cook, President

President Cook welcomed Trustees, Gina Yarbrough, and acknowledged Cabinet Members present at the meeting. Congratulated Trustee Jeff Sattler; recognized as one of the 2024 Pynchon Medal Award winners for notable community service (ceremony takes place on October 17, which regrettably, conflicts with a Ways and Means Committee meeting).

Also highlighted:

(September 22) Annual Appeal/Campaign with STCC Foundation event at the Big E

(September 11) Opening/Fall Student picnic with over 500 students

(September 16) Ribbon-cutting event: Richard E. Neal Cybersecurity Center of Excellence

(September 23) Ribbon-cutting event: Head Start on campus

Also shared that he and CFO & Vice President Andrea Nathanson are members of the management team (state-wide) engaged in collective bargaining for the next “Day” (full-time faculty & professional staff) contract; all 15 community colleges bargain together.

a) MassEducate / Enrollment & Fiscal Outlook

Vice President of Academic Affairs, Dr. Chris Thuot shared a Fall 2024 enrollment perspective: focused on data for selected programs and modalities. Headcount on enrollment Day 161 for the fall of 2024 is up 24% compared to the fall of 2023 at the same point in time. Programs with the highest percentage of increase include: in LAPS - Business Administration +33%; in SHPS - Health Science +94%; and in STEM – Energy Systems +48% and Laser Optics/Photonics +159%. Also discussed the Health Science degree pathway and Laser/Photonics program used by Early College students.

Also highlighted: a shift to more in person classes, but still with a heavy online presence. STCC is about 42% online, and there are clear differences in “modality” by School (Health vs. STEM vs. Liberal/Professional Studies). Noted that “lecture” based courses/programs are more apt to land online, than programs with labs-equipment/ clinics (Manufacturing/Nursing as examples). Also highlighted: evening is still modest (less than 10%).

Regarding a question about enrollment goal:

In response, the budgeted enrollment projection was -2% - rationale for a conservative approach discussed, including how free community college is a year-to-year legislative authorization, and the new trend of enrollment increases after 10 years of declines. Also asked was how STCC is staffed in relation to the increase. Discussion talked about use of adjunct faculty on the instructional side, and forecasting on the staff side how many advisors and other positions are needed not just this year, but can be supported for many years.

A question was also asked about retention: Darcey Kemp, Vice President of Student Affairs, led the next part of the presentation describing components of the enrollment cycle: recruitment, enrollment, and retention Darcey spoke about how each component contributes to successful outcomes and provided example of best practices, systems, procedures, and support systems used for each step of the process. Regarding the retention cycle, VP Kemp pointed out the importance of a holistic approach, providing wraparound support (exampled described) and resources based on individualized needs – whether it is food insecurity, housing, mental health, transportation, amongst other.

Also presenting was Andrea Nathanson, CFO/Vice President of Administration & Sustainability:

Fiscal/budget perspective, including FY25 projection, credit/enrollment historical view, and the two largest sources of revenue: State appropriation and Fee revenue. Outlook and discussion of both elements were provided including scenarios – Net Fiscal Impact from free community college (every 1% increase in credits per semester generates \$70K-75K of net income). Given the higher state appropriation relative to budget, there is a net increase of \$1.22M, which means the college will not need to utilize Reserves.

President Cook recapped noting the Unrestricted Net Position, and historical and “healthy” position the college enjoys given diligence over a number of years. As noted, the original plan endorsed by Trustees called for a support of \$10M in Reserves over four years to help the college sustain. To date, none of those funds have been needed given how administration has managed college finances, in combination with free community college. The FY27 projection is well ahead of pre-Covid figures: unrestricted net position of \$6.3m in FY19, compared to \$21.9m projected for FY27.

b) \$1 million gift from MassMutual Foundation

Dr. Cook announced an upcoming event celebrating the largest philanthropic gift in the past 15 years: \$1 million from the MassMutual Foundation (Tuesday, October 22).

IX. Chair’s Report – Chair Knapik

a) Discussion of 2024-2025 Presidential Evaluation process

The topic of the Presidential Evaluation process was added per Trustee request at the June meeting. Chair Knapik called for a motion to table this item; Trustee Tonia Butler Pérez moved the motion, seconded by Trustee Elizabeth Oleksak-Sposito, and unanimously approved.

X. New Business/Old Business

In this section, Dr. Cook shared upcoming forums/conferences that would interest Trustees, with a particular focus on the February 2025 Legislative Summit hosted by ACCT (Association of Community College Trustees), which typically includes a large Massachusetts contingent.

- October 2024 ACCT Conference for Trustees (Seattle, WA)
- February 2025 Legislative Summit with Trustees (Washington, DC)
- November Trustee Meeting: Tentative to be held at the Neal Cyber Center/Union Station

Trustee Tonia Butler Pérez, as Board Liaison to the the STCC Foundation Board, to attend college and advancement events, and encouragement for Trustees to also give.

XI. Concluding Remarks, Chair Michael Knapik

At his first meeting as Trustee and Chair of the Board, Mike Knapik concluded with appreciative remarks to all Trustees present.

XII. Campus/Program Tour

Reminder as noted on the agenda, upon conclusion of the meeting, Trustees are invited to an informal tour of Dental Sciences (quorum likely remains and tour is open to the public); the Board will not reconvene to otherwise adjourn.

XIII. Date of Next Meeting: Monday, October 28, 2024

XIV. Roll Call & Adjournment

At 6:40 p.m., Chair Knapik called for a motion to adjourn the meeting, Trustee Norman Roldan moved the motion, seconded by Trustee Elizabeth Oleksak-Sposito, and unanimously approved.


Michael R. Knapik
Chair, STCC Board of Trustees


Dr. William Dávila
Secretary, STCC Board of Trustees