

Minutes of the  
**NIU Board of Trustees**  
**Of Northern Illinois University**  
**Special Meeting**  
May 10, 2018

**1. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL**

The meeting was called to order at 12:06 p.m. by Vice Chair Barsema in the Board of Trustees Room, 315 Altgeld Hall. Recording Secretary Kathleen Carey conducted a roll call. Members present were Vice Chair Dennis Barsema, and Trustees Veronica Herrero, Giuseppe LaGioia, Tim Struthers, Eric Wasowicz. Attending remotely: Trustee John Butler. Members absent Chair Wheeler Coleman. Also present Acting President Lisa Freeman, Board Liaison Matt Streb; Acting General Counsel Greg Brady; Acting Executive Vice President and Provost Chris McCord; Vice President of Administration and Finance Sarah McGill. UAC representatives Linda Saborio, Therese Arado, Barbara Andre, and Kendall Thu.

**2. VERIFICATION OF QUORUM AND APPROPRIATE NOTICE OF PUBLIC MEETING**

Acting General Counsel Greg Brady confirmed that the committee had reached a physically present quorum and that there was appropriate notifications from the university to hold the public meeting. He continued, and it is my understanding that Trustee Butler is available by phone and under the Open Meetings Act and the Board bylaws, the Board can allow Trustee Butler to attend this meeting by audio, but we need a motion and a second and a vote on that. Trustee Butler's absence today is because of his employment and purposes which is an allowable reason under the Open Meetings Act and the Board bylaws.

Vice Chair Barsema called for a motion to approve Trustee John Butler to participate in the meeting via audio conference, as he was unable to be physically present today due to employment purposes. General Counsel Brady verified that Trustee Butler was away on a business purpose. Trustee Wasowicz made a motion and Trustee LaGioia seconded. The motion passed.

**3. MEETING AGENDA APPROVAL**

Vice Chair Barsema asked for a motion to approve the meeting agenda. Trustee Wasowicz so moved and Trustee Herrero seconded. The motion passed.

**4. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF DECEMBER 7, 2017 AND FEBRUARY 15, 2018**

Vice Chair Barsema asked for a motion to approve the minutes of December 7, 2017 and indicated these minutes are up for approval under the rule that the Board may approve minutes within two meetings following the actual meeting. Trustee Wasowicz so moved and Trustee LaGioia seconded. The motion passed.

Vice Chair Barsema asked for a motion to approve the minute of February 15, 2018. Trustee Wasowicz so moved and Trustee Herrero seconded. The motion passed.

**5. CHAIR'S COMMENTS/ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Vice Chair Barsema asked if there were representatives from the UAC who would like to comment.

Barbara Andree began, I am the president of the Operating Staff Council, and so I am part of the UAC representatives. First I would like to voice a concern that I and others have encountered regarding the

treatment of some employees who are being laid off or displayed either because of college budgetary issues or because the closure of the bookstore. Several employees, people whose lives have been turned upside down have told me that getting timely responses and information from Human Resources has been very frustrating. It is a minority of people, but it has been expressed to me. We hope all employees received thoughtful and compassionate treatment as quickly as possible to reduce their stress and uncertainty. Secondly, needless to say, it is a very important day for a large portion of the Civil Service employees in Local 1890. It has been a long, winding, and sometimes bumpy road getting to this day. We are pleased that our initial bargaining agreement is on your agenda today for your consideration and approval. The bargaining unit owes a huge thank you to our unit's negotiators and the Sarah Dorner the AFSCME representative of Council 31 who is in attendance today. We hope going forward that all union locals on campus will be given the respect and consideration that they deserve and that they earn every day at NIU. Thank you for your thoughtful review and action to provide the protections and the structures that both the employer and the employee deserve. Thank you very much.

Vice Chair Barsema began, at this point, my comments will center around Kathleen Carey because this is her last meeting. She will be retiring on June 1st after 32 years here with NIU. For at least for the last year plus that I have been on the Board of Trustees, Kathleen has supported the Board of Trustees as well as supporting the Chief of Staff, Matt Streb, but no matter what job she has held here within the university she has always done it with great class and with great expertise. Therefore, Kathleen we will miss you very much. Thank you for all of the work that you have done for us and we wish you the best in your retirement. Whoever steps into your shoes will have big shoes to fill. Thank you.

## **6. PUBLIC COMMENT**

Acting General Counsel Brady indicated there were two individuals registered for public comment. Mr. Van Burer had registered earlier but was not present to speak.

James Lawson: I'm and NIU employee in Undergraduate Admissions Processing. I felt compelled to use my lunch hour today to come comment on the collective bargaining agreement for AFSCME Local 1890 that's before the board today. I don't expect you all to do anything but approve it, but I would actually encourage you to vote to postpone the vote so that you can investigate some of the things that have happened in regard to what has been put before the bargaining unit and what the options of employees were in terms of thinking about this contract and being able to see it. I've worked here for almost a year and in that time I've never been contacted by AFSCME about membership or about anything related to their status as my exclusive bargaining agent. Recently I received an e-mail from HR telling me about a tentative agreement and contract information and if I had questions. So I sent an e-mail and I received a nice reply that said they would get back to me later in that afternoon and never heard anything. Someone else in my office got a nasty reply saying they were insulted because she had said she didn't think the deal was a good deal. I don't know why you would want to be a union representative who represents the workers if the workers can't tell you they think that it's a bad deal. What do we know about this deal? Well we know the workers in the bargaining unit many of them haven't had a raise for a long, long time and at the same time a different AFSCME union for food workers on campus had negotiated a nice set of raises after six months, a year, three years, so that you could move as a maid from \$9.25 when you started to \$15.29 after four years. A commitment to getting better at your job meant that you might be able to make a little bit more money and that sounded great. My position as I understand it started at \$12.48 an hour and that's where it remains today. I heard about many workers who have been here five, seven, nine years and hadn't had a raise. So the workers who choose to organize believed they couldn't do any worse by seeking help with the university administration that seemed to only give raises to unionized employees and leadership level executives. We now know believing AFSCME was a grave mistake for members of the union and the non-members of the bargaining unit who are now collateral damage of their decisions. We know that by approving this contract the Board of Trustees will be approving a 1.2 to 1.5 million dollar transfer of wealth from its underpaid employees to the union that negotiated this travesty. I said 1.2 to 1.5 million because we don't know how many members have actually signed cards. In fact, some of the people

thought they were members in my department, showed up to vote and were told they weren't on the rolls so they didn't even get to vote. We don't know how many members actually voted in the election. We don't know what the tally was. All inquiries to the union, by many different people, have gone unanswered. Because of the high turnover in some positions covered by this bargaining unit, I'm now the second longest serving person in my position after only a year, and three people have been hired since I started. It's completely conceivable that fewer than half of the 580 members of this unit are actually union members or actually wished have AFSCME as their exclusive bargaining agent. We know the only opportunity voters had to review the contract was in the room, the day of the voting, when it took place in the presence of union representatives who were explaining the benefits of the deal as a limited number of copies were available for perusal. These copies could not be removed from the room we were told because it was only a draft. Well that language is exactly what you all are approving today. I don't know what the secrecy was, but I know that that room was loud, public, people were not allowed to see the contract, discuss it with their families. These are important decisions. Should I vote for this five year deal or should I not? Maybe you want to discuss that with your husband or wife. We don't know what the effect of making the agreement in public in time to allow people to discuss such an important decision with their families and co-workers would have been. We do know the union was unwilling to afford us that courtesy. Teachers and others I've spoken to in regard to this lack of openness say they never had fewer than a couple of days at least to look over a contract and discuss it before they voted on it. We think we know, I have yet to see it writing, that dues will be \$43.83 a month. \$525 per year for members and around eighty percent of that for non-members for so called fair share fees. So that means anyone hired after January 1, 2017 not eligible to receive the three percent raised from President Freeman, will actually take a pay cut this year. It will small because of the \$500 bonus, but anybody who starts tomorrow or the next day or the next day and isn't eligible for that bonus, is now taking a pay cut. Well I'm eligible for my first three percent raise on July 1, 2019, a union member will make, when I'm eligible, a union member will make \$204 more per year after dues are considered. \$393 a week assuming dues don't go up. We know this deal does nothing to change the base hourly rates of any of the positions covered in the bargaining unit. Anyone lucky enough to start tomorrow will make \$43.83 less a month than they would have without a union. Anyone unlucky enough to start July 2, 2019 will make a least, depending on whether dues go up, \$43.83 per week less than they would have without a union and will be guaranteed only one three percent raise during the duration of the contract. We know that most of this contract is a recapitulation of already existing Civil Service protections or existing university policy; and in some cases is worse. For example, current university regulations give an employee forty days to file a grievance. This contract cuts it to ten. Finally, we don't know what the long term effects of this agreement will be. There's already a significant amount of mistrust between employees who support the union and those who don't understand how they could have been betrayed. We don't know if crushing this bargaining unit's hopes that a collective bargaining would put its wages in line with cost of living and peer institution comparisons will also crush the loyalty to NIU that so many of the long term employees have shown to this institution. We don't know if NIU will continue to get by amid high turnover and poorly paid position or if we are witnessing the long, slow death of a once proud institution. Look around DeKalb. It's in decline. Who would want to start a business here when the institution that employs most of its residents doesn't pay those employees enough to go out to a restaurant or a movie or to see music, or to buy anything except the essentials? If you want a better future you need to leave DeKalb. That's what people have learned and it's slowly sinking in to the many of us that had hoped we could make this place our home for many years. We know that parents and perspective students visit DeKalb and end up on campus and they see these workers who are part of the bargaining unit and they're the ones that interact with on a face-to-face basis every day. We do our best to try to make NIU an appealing and exciting place for their perspective students and I hope that one day we can be rewarded accordingly and I thank you all for your time.

## **7. PRESIDENT'S REPORT 122**

Vice Chair Barsema indicated that first item we will discuss agenda item 7.a.1 which is the Collective Bargaining Agreement for AFSCME Local 1890 and turned the microphone over to President Freeman.

## **Items Directly from the President**

### **Agenda Item 7.a.1. Collective Bargaining Agreement for AFSCME 1890**

Acting President Freeman presented Agenda Item 7.a. Northern Illinois University respects all of its employees and respects the right of those employees to organize. We negotiate with seventeen collective bargaining organizations representing different employee groups. Salary increases and other terms of conditions of employment for bargaining unit members are subject to negotiation and final agreements are submitted for approval to the Board of Trustees. As we've heard, a number of times this morning the AFSCME Local 1890 Council 31 representing approximately 580 employees in clerical, paraprofessional, technical and administrative roles as Civil Service classifications across the university have, after prolonged negotiations, reached complete initial agreement covering wages, hours and conditions of employment. That agreement has been ratified and the tentative agreement is presented for Board action today. This is a five-year agreement with an effective date of approval by the NIU Board of Trustees and an expiration date in June of 2023. The contract has been provided. In terms of our recommendation, the terms and conditions of this agreement are consistent with university policies and guidelines. The Academic Affairs, Student Affairs and Personnel Committee earlier this morning endorsed this collective bargaining agreement and asked that the president should forward it by means of the president's report to the Board of Trustees for approval at this meeting. The university is recommending approval of this agreement and I know we have a number of 1890 members who have come to this meeting to see this vote and I would ask them to stand so that we could recognize their presence.

Vice Chair Barsema called for a motion to approve. Trustee Wasowicz so moved and Trustee Herrero seconded. The motion passed.

### **Agenda Item 7.a.2. Collective Bargaining Agreement for MAP 291**

Acting President Freeman continued to Agenda Item 7.a.2., a collective bargaining agreement that was discussed this morning in the Academic Affairs, Student Affairs and Personnel Committee. It is Agreement for Metropolitan Alliance of Police, AFSCME Local 292 representing approximately 30 employees in the police officer's Civil Service classification. It is a five-year agreement effective July 1, 2016 with an expiration date of June 30, 2021. The Committee earlier today endorsed this collective bargaining agreement and asked the president to forward it by means of this report to the Board for approval at this meeting and the university recommends approval of the agreement.

Vice Chair Barsema called for a motion to approve. Trustee Struthers so moved and Trustee Herrero seconded. The motion passed.

### **Agenda Item 7.a.3. Request for a New Degree Program – B.S. in Mechatronics Engineering**

Acting President Freeman indicated that the final action item for this morning, agenda item 7.a.3. was discussed in Academic Affairs, Student Affairs and Personnel Committee this morning. At that point the recommendation was to bring the item forward to the June meeting, but we are taking it up today to advantage the proposal and to facilitate or accelerate approval by the IBHE. There is a cue for proposal approval at the Higher Ed Board and by getting approval today, we may be able to move this important degree request forward. The request is for a new degree program, a Bachelor's of Science in Mechatronics Engineering. It was discussed, the content were discussed in detail this morning. The Academic Affairs, Student Affairs and Personnel Committee endorse the collective bargaining agreement, asked that it be forwarded by means of the president's report to the Board of Trustees. We are asking for approval at this meeting. The university is enthusiastic in this recommendation.

Vice Chair Barsema called for a motion to approve. Trustee Wasowicz so moved and Trustee Herrero seconded. The motion passed.

**8. OTHER MATTERS**

No other matters were discussed.

**9. NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the Board of Trustees is scheduled for June 14 beginning at 9 a.m.

**10. CLOSED SESSION**

Vice Chair Barsema stated there would be no close session today.

**11. ADJOURNMENT**

Vice Chair Barsema asked for a motion to adjourn. Trustee Struthers so moved and Trustee Wasowicz seconded. The motion passed. Meeting adjourned at 12:29 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen Carey  
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.*