

Without Distractions: A Run-Down of Tuesday's Meeting of LCCC Trustees

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GODFREY – Lewis and Clark Community College (LCCC) Board of Trustees Chair David Heyen said recent calls for his resignation regarding anti-Islamic, anti-immigrant and pro-Confederacy posts shared on his personal Facebook page were distractions from him “asking the tough questions.”

So what follows is a story of Tuesday night's meeting of the LCCC Board of Trustees meeting without the mention of the failed measure calling for his resignation after this quick introduction.

Following the Pledge of Allegiance, the LCCC Board of Trustees voted unanimously to pass an “omnibus agenda.” This included approval of April 9's regular meeting minutes, approval of April 30's organizational meeting, financial highlights, bills, the treasurer's report, balance sheet, statement of revenue and expenditures, bids, contract change orders, personnel and gifts. Trustee Julie Johnson inquired about a bid from Kamp Electric for \$341,000. LCCC President Dr. Dale Chapman said that bid was to better light areas on campus for students who arrive early or leave late, saying it came from the school's Health/Life/Safety Bonds

The board approved a gift of studio lighting, enlarging and processing equipment for the art program from Dr. Albert Trtanj, which was valued at \$19,942.

LCCC Director of Institutional Research and Library Services Dr. Dennis Krieb gave a presentation regarding research into student learning at the LCCC library, and is going to be giving a keynote address at library analytics at the Consortium of Academic and Research Libraries at the University of Illinois to present his findings and methods.

LCCC Administrative Vice President Lori Artis then gave the board updates on construction projects across the campus, including at the George C. Terry River Bend Arena, Main Complex foundation improvement and Northeast Campus Site Lighting Improvement.

A preview of Wednesday night's LCCC Commencement followed the construction update with the highlight of that being the commencement speaker, Illinois Community College Board Director Dr. Brian Durham.

An update on the LCCC job fair followed that. Held in the Commons area, the job fair was able to bring as many as 83 local employers as many as 325 willing job-seekers. This was followed by a presentation on the 12th annual LCCC trebuchet contest, which pits high school students against each other in a competition of who can build the best Medieval weapon of mass destruction.

Action items came next. After an item discussed in this story's introduction, which failed, the board presented sweeping changes to the LCCC Board of Trustees Policies. Veteran board members Dwight Werts, Brenda Walker McCain and Bob Watson were vocally against these changes. McCain even asked for more time and motioned to table the action. This was voted down by Heyen, Hanfelder, Johnson and Kevin Rust – who continued voting in a block throughout the evening. LCCC Criminal Justice Department Head Jessica Noble later questioned if some of the policies were applicable during the section for public comment, which was moved to the end of the meeting from its usual place before the action items. Some members of the board even questioned if the policy changes were compliant with the Open Meetings Act. The other faction of the board (literally the other side of the table) said the policy changes would put the college board in more compliance with Illinois community colleges.

The changes were believed by many in attendance from the LCCC faculty to have given the board as well as Heyen more responsibilities over the college, allegedly including the board being in charge of overseeing faculty evaluations. These sweeping changes were voted against by the veteran board members, but passed with the majority from Heyen, Johnson, Hanfelder and Rust.

Contracts were the next item on the action list. As many as 56 administrative contracts were approved for one-to-three years during the April 9 regular meeting. Those were rescinded at the April 30 organizational meeting by the majority vote of Heyen,

Hanfelder, Johnson and Rust. This was strongly advised against by the board's legal counsel. The contracts were set to expire in June 2019. The board voted Tuesday to reinstate those expiring contracts.

Following that reinstatement was an action item to replace the contracts approved by the previous board members on April 9, including Heyen who said he voted in favor of them to “go with the crowd” at the April 30 meeting, was a motion to replace those contracts with one-to-two year contracts.

Despite these new proposed contracts not yet being drafted or put to the public eye, Trustee Bob Watson accused the majority block of wanting administrators to work as “at-will” employees, saying he did not expect administrators to sign these contracts when they have contracts he described as both “better” and “legally-binding.”

The majority block voted in favor of this motion as the veteran board members voted against it.

Creation of an Ad Hoc Committee to seek new legal counsel for the board was the next item on the agenda with Heyen appointing Rust and Hanfelder to do it. If more than two were appointed, it could be a violation of the Open Meetings Act. Trustee Werts protested this committee, saying it would be better if it included someone who better understood the board and an attorney. The majority block voted in favor of this committee.

Promotions were next on the agenda, and the board unanimously approved that motion. Trustee Rust offered a congratulations to the members of the faculty who were promoted.

Lease agreements were up next on the board's list of things to do. Many of those who have lease agreements with the college expressed their worry regarding what the new board would decide on those agreements. Fortunately for those folks, the lease agreements were each passed with unanimous approval – one of the few times the board was able to act in solidarity. Those lease agreements included: Inland Rivers, Ports and Terminals, Montessori Children's House, Illinois Humanities, University of Illinois, Sustainable Technology Center at Haskell Hall, Mobile Unit Storage, TRiO Educational Opportunity Center, Pride, Inc. and Riverbend Growth Association.

The board also unanimously agreed to place the 2020 budget on display through local media prior to its June meeting. The unanimous spirit continued with employee group insurance plans and inter-fund transfers.

When charitable contributions were placed on the agenda, Rust motioned to table it for the next meeting as the contributions were not budgeted for fiscal year 2019, and were instead new expenses for the yet-to-be-approved 2020 budget.

Public comment followed that meeting, and those who were given time to speak in front of the board spoke overwhelmingly against the board majority's methods, accusing them of “railroading the minority” and not being able to work as a group. Many also chastised the new board members for taking such heavy actions so soon, advising them to learn the way the college works before making such huge decisions.

No one spoke in their favor after more than 20 folks took to the podium.

