



Fitchburg State University

Minutes

Board of Trustees Meeting

Fitchburg State University Board of Trustees Meeting

Date and Time

Tuesday April 30, 2024 at 4:00 PM

Location

Presidents' Hall, Mazzaferro Center, 291 Highland Ave., Fitchburg, MA 01420

Notice of a meeting of the Fitchburg State University Board of Trustees, Tuesday, April 30, 2024 at 4:00 p.m.

The meeting will take place in Presidents' Hall, Mazzaferro Center, 291 Highland Ave., Fitchburg, MA 01420

Trustees Present

A. Turner, C. Stimpson (remote), D. Phillips, D. Tiernan, E. Gregoire, J. Flanagan, K. Spinelli, L. Barrieau, M. Fiorentino, Jr., S. King-Goodwin (remote)

Trustees Absent

None

Guests Present

A. Marini, C. Dee, C. Hughes, Campus Community, E. Takehana, F. Barricelli, G. Doiron, J. Bry, J. Hanselman, J. Murdoch, J. Wolfman, K. Jewell, K. Lundgren, L. Bayless, M. Bruun, M. Hoey, P. Marshall, P. McCafferty, R. Lapidus, R. Toomey, S. Ciccone, S. Dodd, S. Levine

I. Opening Items

A. Record Attendance and Guests

B. Call the Meeting to Order

D. Phillips called a meeting of the board of trustees of Fitchburg State University to order on Tuesday Apr 30, 2024 at 4:02 PM.

II. Presidential Candidates

A. Discuss Candidates

The Chair welcomed everyone to this important meeting. She stated that this is the most consequential meeting that this board will engage in during their tenure.

D. Phillips thanked the search committee, faculty, staff, students and community members that participated in the search process. Every member of this community participated in information gathering and without their contributions we would not be here today. She especially thanked Ms. Jessica Murdoch and Ms. Kelli Lundgren for their assistance with the organization and scheduling during this process.

D. Phillips outlined how the meeting would proceed. The candidates would be discussed in the order that they were interviewed. She stated that at the conclusion of that discussion, she will make comments regarding the vote, and transmit the Commissioner's remarks made to her yesterday (May 29th), and then proceed with voting.

E. Gregoire read brief introductions for each of the candidates. The candidates are as follows:

Dr. Karim Ismaili

Dr. Mark Overmeyer-Velázquez

Dr. Donna Souder Hodge

Board members highlighted each candidates' strengths in detail.

There was a discussion regarding the comparisons of each candidate as it relates to the Presidential Profile. The board talked about concerns that they had with each candidate.

The board engaged in discussion on which candidate would be the best fit at this point in time for Fitchburg State University. There was agreement that no candidate could have all of the attributes desired. In general, the consensus was to select the candidate that had the greatest number of desired qualifications and would meet the institutions needs at the current time. It's about achieving a balance and trying to find a leader that is someone who has the skills to build consensus across every constituency. The Board will be on hand to assist and support the next President.

D. Phillips discussed the importance for the Trustees to strive for unity and agreement. A unanimous vote signals hope and trust in the future. She read from her notes taken from the call with the Commissioner yesterday. D. Phillips reported that the Secretary and the Commissioner met that morning, and the Commissioner related the results of their discussion and impressions from their review of the candidate materials and interviews. The comments reported were: The Search Committee put forth phenomenal candidates. In evaluating the materials and interviews, 2 pulled out in front – Dr. Ismaili and Dr. Hodge. Both have compelling stories, an understanding of our higher education environment, the comprehensive university system and could transition quickly as a new president here. With both of these candidates there will be no lag in transition with the department and/or the division.

The comments indicated that he and the Secretary both thought that Dr. Souder Hodge performed at the highest level, expressing that Dr. Hodge is turn-key ready, energized, and her strengths fit the broader range of challenges

D. Phillips asked for nominations that would be considered as being made in the form of the proposed Vote in the packet.

D. Tiernan made a motion to nominate Dr. Donna Souder Hodge as the next President of Fitchburg State University.

C. Stimpson seconded the motion.

D. Tiernan provided a summation of why he nominated Dr. Hodge. He thought she would be willing to make hard decisions, was high energy, and will think outside the box.

D. Phillips asked if there were any other nominations.

E. Gregoire made a motion to nominate Dr. Mark Overmeyer-Velázquez as the next President of Fitchburg State University.

A. Turner seconded the motion.

E. Gregoire expressed his opinion that Dr. Velázquez achieves the best fit and would work best to advance the university because of his academic background, academic planning and innovation. His experience and sense of equity for all students stood out. He would be able to address barriers in the real world, and he is the only candidate that continues to teach in the classroom.

There was a discussion.

D. Phillips asked if there were any other nominations. There were none.

A roll call vote was taken:

L. Barrieau - Dr. Overmeyer-Velázquez
M. Fiorentino - Dr. Overmeyer-Velázquez
J. Flanagan – Dr. Hodge
S. Goodwin King - Dr. Hodge
E. Gregoire - Dr. Overmeyer-Velázquez
K. Spinelli - Dr. Hodge
C. Stimpson - Dr. Hodge
D. Tiernan - Dr. Hodge
A. Turner - Dr. Overmeyer-Velázquez
D. Phillips - Dr. Hodge

J. Flanagan moved for another vote to see if the Board could come to a unanimous decision. K. Spinelli seconded the motion.

A roll call vote was taken:

L. Barrieau - Dr. Overmeyer-Velázquez
M. Fiorentino - Dr. Overmeyer-Velázquez
J. Flanagan - Dr. Hodge
S. Goodwin King - Dr. Hodge
E. Gregoire - Dr. Overmeyer-Velázquez
K. Spinelli - Dr. Hodge
C. Stimpson - Dr. Hodge
D. Tiernan - Dr. Hodge
A. Turner - Dr. Overmeyer-Velázquez
D. Phillips - Dr. Hodge

D. Phillips declared the vote to nominate Dr. Hodge to the BHE. She also informed the Board of the next steps for official approval which included a state police background check and explained that the BHE and its counsel guide the rest of the process.

III. Closing Items

A. Adjourn Meeting

There being no further business to be transacted, and upon motion duly made, seconded and approved, the meeting was adjourned at 5:30 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
D. Tiernan