

**NORTHWEST COLLEGE BOARD OF TRUSTEES
MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING**

July 8, 2026

MEMBERS PRESENT: President MS. DENISE LAURSEN; Vice President/Secretary MR. R.J. KOST; Treasurer MR. BOB NEWSOME; Trustees MR. JOHN HOUSEL, MS. TARA KUIPERS, and DR. MARK WURZEL.

MEMBERS ABSENT: MR. SHANE OGDEN

OTHERS PRESENT: MS. LISA WATSON, President; MR. DAVE ERICKSON, Vice President for Academic Affairs; MR. BURT REYNOLDS, Vice President for Administrative Services and Finance; MS. JILL ANDERSON, MS. KAREN BERCHTOLD, MS. JACQUE COBOURN, MR. DUSTIN DICKS, MS. TRACY GASAWAY, MR. MARK GRANT, MR. RYAN MANGUS, MS. CAREY MILLER, MS. SANDY MYERS, MR. DENNIS QUILLEN, DR. GREG SMITH, MS. LINDA SPOMER, MR. OSCAR TREVIÑO, MR. ZAC TAYLOR, *Powell Tribune*; and MS. KELI BORDERS, Executive Secretary to the President and Board of Trustees.

CALL TO ORDER: President Denise Laursen called the regular meeting of the Northwest College Board of Trustees to order on Wednesday, July 8, 2026, at 4:02 p.m. in the Yellowstone Building, Room 240.

A APPROVE THE AGENDA: **A motion was made by Trustee Kuipers and seconded by Trustee Wurzel to approve the agenda. Motion carried.**

A BUDGET HEARING: The regular meeting recessed at 4:04 p.m. for the Budget Hearing. After the budget business concluded, the Budget Hearing adjourned at 4:35 p.m., and the regular meeting resumed.

A CONSENT AGENDA: **A motion was made by Trustee Wurzel and seconded by Trustee Kost to approve the consent agenda.**

In response to a question related to the check register, President Watson stated that the expense for “Mama Anne” is for a nursing OB simulator that is used to teach nursing students about labor and delivery processes. It is also used by clinical partners, such as Powell Valley Healthcare, to prepare for emergencies in the delivery room. The College purchased the simulator using WIP funds allocated to Allied Health.

WIP funds have also been used to purchase a replacement for the Criminal Justice simulator and musical panels for the auditorium. Remaining Outdoor Education WIP funding will be used to replace the ropes course at the Field Camp that is at end of life, as well as to build a new ropes course north of the soccer field on campus.

In response to a question about the check register, President Watson stated that the 20HP pump installed at Trapper West is a replacement needed to run the sprinkler system.

In response to a question from Trustee Housel, President Watson stated that the report presented by the Legislative Services Office at the Interim Education Committee meeting on Dual and Concurrent programs was intended to educate Legislators about the need for student support, legislative impact, and funding in Wyoming, as well as how the programs operate in other states.

Trustee Housel expressed his appreciation for the various student internships taking place this summer, as well as the student accolades and activities highlighted in the Academic Affairs report.

Motion carried, and the consent agenda, including the minutes of the June 8, 2026, regular meeting, was approved.

**DISCUSSION/
INFORMATIONAL ITEMS:**

Adult Education

Sandy Meyers, Adult Basic Education (ABE) Manager since 2009, stated that ABE serves those most in need and most at risk, making it a life-changing program. ABE offers a year-round open enrollment format in six towns and seven locations throughout the Bighorn Basin. The main site is in Powell, at Trapper West.

All locations offer a wide range of services, including high school equivalency certificates; basic reading, writing, and mathematical skill development; college transition for English and Math; workplace preparation skills; digital literacy; financial literacy; career advising and career interest inventories; outside services referrals; and visual stress and basic vision screenings. All services are offered free of charge.

All students are met where they're at in their educational functioning levels, as well as their technological skills and accessibility needs. Each student has a unique study plan created in partnership with the instructor.

ABE partners with several local organizations and also makes referrals to services such as the Department of Workforce Services, Vocational Rehabilitation, the Department of Family Services, local high schools, and Northwest College services and program areas.

ABE serves a diverse group of students, including high school equivalency seekers aged 16 or older, college transition Math and English students, job seekers seeking to develop workplace skills, students referred by community agencies, long-term unemployed students, court-ordered students, and homeschooled students. Most of the students served are low-income, low-literacy, and low-skill level. Many students have learning and/or physical disabilities.

Student outcomes and goals vary according to need, such as demonstrating skills gained through the Test of Adult Basic Education, completing a high school equivalency exam, enrolling in postsecondary education or training, finding, maintaining, or improving employment, enlisting in the U.S. Armed Forces, or avoiding further incarceration.

Program demographics over the past five years indicate that 65% of the 643 students served are female and 35% are male. Most students served are aged 16-18 (37%) and 19-24 (35.3%). Educational functioning levels are determined by the Test of Adult Basic Education, which is an approved national standard. Most of the students served in the same five-year period entered at a 6th – 8th grade educational functioning level (41.9%), followed by 4th and 5th grade (38.6%).

Sandy stated that the program has been named the top-performing program in the State 9 of the last 10 years, based on measurable skills and gain percentages. Exit-based primary indicators of performance over the past five years show that 63% of students served were employed in the second quarter after exit; 68% were employed in the fourth quarter after exit; 71% attained their high school equivalency and were employed or enrolled in post-secondary education or training within one year; and 76% attained a recognized secondary or post-secondary credential.

The program faces a variety of challenges, both from a student perspective and a funding perspective. Student challenges include motivation and persistence, learning disabilities, reliable transportation, access to and familiarity with technology, access to and cost of childcare, unstable housing, unsupportive family members, and inflexible employers.

In 2025-26, the program lost 5.9% of federal and state funding, with another 2.9% cut in 2026-27. Operating expenses continue to rise even as funding declines. With the end of the America Rescue Plan Act in October of this year, the program will be unable to offer the current level of services beyond June 30, 2027. In 2025, the federal government moved ABE from the Department of Education to the Department of Labor. The program will compete with other services, such as Workforce Services and Vocational Rehabilitation, for the same pot of money.

Sustainability is vital to continuing to serve all sites. The Community College Commission has been asking the State for increased support for ABE and has been educating Legislators on the program's value in helping citizens become more employable. A statewide ABE Sustainability Committee has been created, comprising community college vice presidents, deans, ABE directors, and instructors.

Sandy concluded by noting that the College's ABE program continues to provide life-changing educational services throughout the Bighorn Basin for members of our community who are most in need.

In response to a question from Trustee Kuipers, Sandy stated that the program's instructors must be able to teach all subjects, including Math, English, college and career readiness, and workplace skills. All instructors hold at least a bachelor's degree; most hold a master's degree and are excellent at what they do, as evidenced by the program's student success.

In response to a question from President Watson, Sandy stated that the program's budget is \$216,000, including funds from the College. The College covers approximately 60% of her salary and benefits.

In response to a question from Trustee Housel, Sandy stated that the number of students from each community varies annually. Students under 18 must have a parent or guardian sign the paperwork.

BOCES Budgets

President Watson presented the approved BOCES budgets for Park County School District #1, Big Horn County School District #2, and Big Horn County School District #3 for review. She noted that the Park County BOCES approved the continuation of PVCE.

Policy Update Review – FY2026

President Watson presented the annual Policy Update Review, which outlined all policy work completed during FY2026.

Policy Review – 2120 Restriction Of Individual Authority

Trustees reviewed Policy 2120 Restriction of Individual Authority. There were no suggested changes.

CITIZENS' OPEN FORUM

The Citizens' Open Forum convened at 5:00 p.m. No citizens requested to address the Board; therefore, the Citizens' Open Forum adjourned.

A UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

There were no unfinished business items on the agenda.

A NEW BUSINESS:

There were no new business items on the agenda.

**FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS
FEEDBACK TO CITIZENS'
OPEN FORUM TOPICS:**

August 10, 2026, upcoming:

- GEAR UP
- Review vendor contracts
- Review Residence Life Master Plan
- Big Horn Basin High School Report
- Review Citizens' Open Forum procedure
- Policy Review – Policy 2130 Board Communications
- Schedule fall Board Retreat
- Other TBD

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

President Watson expressed her appreciation to the employees who participated in the Lovell Mustang Days Parade and the Cody Stampede Parade.

President Watson stated that Northwest College will sponsor the Pig Wrestling event at the Park County Fair and give away T-shirts celebrating the College's 80th year. She also plans to host an open house in the Orendorff Building, combined with an 80th birthday party, later this fall.

President Watson announced that Carey Miller, Communications and Marketing Director, will be leaving the College to further her education at the University of Wyoming. President Watson expressed appreciation to Carey for her years of service and the genuine care she has for the College.

Trustee Housel echoed President Watson's sentiments and expressed his appreciation for Carey's work and marketing efforts, especially the detailed analytics reports to the Board. He wished Carey well in her future endeavors.

New Student Orientation, July 21, 2026, NWC
EMS Coining Ceremony, July 24, 2026, 3:00 p.m., Yellowstone Bldg.
Next Board meeting, August 10, 2026, 4:00 p.m., Yellowstone Bldg.
State of the College Address, August 24, 2026, 8:30 a.m., Yellowstone Bldg.
Kick-off Weekend, August 22-25, 2026, NWC campus
First day of fall classes, August 26, 2026, NWC
Paint the Town Red, August 28, 2026, Powell
WCCC meeting (special), August 21, 2026, 8:30 a.m., Riverton
WCCC meeting, October 8-9, 2026, 8:30 a.m., Rock Springs

A ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting adjourned at 5:54 p.m.

R.J. KOST, Vice President/Secretary

Date