

BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION

May 18, 2021

9:30 a.m.

Livestreamed, via Zoom

Meeting Minutes

A meeting of the Board of Higher Education (“BHE” or “the Board”) was held virtually on Tuesday, May 18, 2021 on the web-conference platform Zoom.

The following Board Members were present:

Chris Gabrieli, Chair

Ann Christensen

Alex Cortez

Patty Eppinger

Paul Mattera

Secretary James Peyser

Bill Walczak

Jorgo Gushi, non-voting Student Advisor, Community College segment

Kush Patel, non-voting Student Advisor, UMass segment

Carlos E. Santiago, Commissioner and Secretary to the Board

The following Board Members were absent:

Charles Bianchi, voting student member, State University segment

Judy Pagliuca

Paul Toner

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Chris Gabrieli called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m. and announced that this meeting is being held remotely and in accordance with relevant amendments to the Open Meeting Law. Chair Gabrieli announced that the meeting is being livestreamed via Zoom and recorded, and members of the public who signed up for public comment would be allowed to join the Zoom meeting to provide comment. Department of Higher Education (DHE or Department) Chief of Staff Elena Quiroz-Livanis, then took roll call attendance (see above for attendance roster).

II. WELCOME

Chair Gabrieli welcomed everyone and noted that the Board would vote on three presidential appointments for Massasoit Community College, Middlesex Community College, and Westfield State University. He invited Commissioner Carlos Santiago to provide background on the selection process. Commissioner Santiago opened his remarks by thanking both Chair Gabrieli and the Board for

attending. He stated that selecting an institution's President bears a significant impact on its long-term stability and is the most important function of an institution's Board of Trustees. The Commissioner then outlined that the Board is being asked to approve three presidential appointments, provided an overview of the DHEs' role in the process, and clarified that DHE senior staff members are assigned to engage in every search. Once semi-finalists are selected, the Commissioner reviews the list to ensure it is a diverse pool of candidates and participates in final interviews with Secretary of Education James Peyser and BHE members. After the final interviews have been conducted, the Commissioner shares with the local board chair of each campus the strengths and weaknesses of each candidate. The local board then moves to a decision to select one to be President, which opens the discussion of contractual terms. Commissioner Santiago concluded that the contractual terms are then brought before the BHE for review and approval, prior to confirming the final appointee.

III. MOTIONS

List of Documents Used

BHE Motions 21-45 through 21-47

Links to Materials:

- [BHE 21-45](#)
- [BHE 21-46](#)
- [BHE 21-47](#)

A. Board of Higher Education

Chair Gabrieli introduced Motion BHE 21-45, Approval of Massasoit Community College Presidential Appointment. He noted that the Board would hear from Massasoit Board Chair Tom Carroll, followed by their candidate Ray DiPasquale, and then have the opportunity to ask any questions or provide comments. Chair Gabrieli turned to Massasoit Board Chair Tom Carroll to begin the discussion.

Chair Carroll opened his remarks by thanking the Board. He provided an overview of the Massasoit Community College search process. Chair Carroll stated that Massasoit's Board of Trustees initiated a search after President Gina Glickman announced her plans to retire in July 2020. Massasoit Community College created a Presidential Search Committee, led by its Trustee, Ann Sullivan, with volunteers representing the college community; Senior Deputy Commissioner Clantha McCurdy was the BHE designee on the committee. For the search, the Massasoit Board of Trustees enlisted RH Perry & Associates, which settled on five finalists to consider for the Presidency. Chair Carroll closed by noting the Board of Trustees' vote to advance Dr. Ray DiPasquale to the Board of Higher Education as their appointee for the next President of Massasoit Community College. Chair Gabrieli invited Dr. Ray DiPasquale to share his comments.

Dr. DiPasquale opened by thanking Chair Gabrieli, Commissioner Santiago, Secretary Peyser, and the Board of Higher Education. He stated that it is a real privilege and an honor to be elected President. Dr. DiPasquale provided an overview of his work history at community colleges in Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and New York. He also highlighted the significance of the programs at Massasoit, and their diversity and sense of community. Dr. DiPasquale noted that with President Joe Biden and Dr. Jill

Biden as proponents of community colleges, it is the best time to be in higher education. He concluded by stating that we've learned a lot during the pandemic, and as we come out of it, we are going to be better prepared to help all our students be successful in ways we hadn't thought of before. Chair Gabrieli thanked Dr. DiPasquale and opened the floor for questions from the Board.

Student Segmental Advisor Kush Patel commented that Dr. DiPasquale's response during his interview with the Commissioner and Secretary Peyser stood out. In response to his question regarding meeting with students to ensure they are heard, he said that Dr. DiPasquale expressed a strong desire to meet with various student stakeholders. Mr. Patel noted his excitement to see Dr. DiPasquale as the finalist for Massasoit. Dr. DiPasquale thanked Student Segmental Advisor Kush Patel for his comments. He stressed that those who choose to work in higher education do so to help prepare students to achieve their dreams through providing a quality education regardless of their needs. Dr. DiPasquale continued that he looks forward to meeting more students in person this Fall. Chair Gabrieli commented that he was fascinated to have someone with Dr. DiPasquale's experience coming to this position, and highlighted the success of the Massasoit Dual Enrollment partnership with New Heights. Chair Gabrieli asked what strategic considerations Dr. DiPasquale thinks are important top priorities to address college enrollment challenges. Dr. DiPasquale noted that he would like to ensure students graduate, and that Massasoit's ability to identify future needs through partnerships with public schools and the business community plays a critical role in their students' success. He also emphasized the priority and importance of listening to Massasoit's faculty, staff, students, and community stakeholders to determine where the campus is and how to move it forward post-pandemic. Chair Gabrieli thanked Dr. DiPasquale and turned to Chief of Staff Elena Quiroz Livanis for the roll call vote.

Chair Gabrieli asked for a motion of approval for BHE 21-45. On a motion duly made and seconded, the motion was approved unanimously by all Board members present, as follows:

- Ann Christensen – Yes
- Alex Cortez – Yes
- Patty Eppinger – Yes
- Chair Chris Gabrieli – Yes
- Vice Chair Sheila Harrity – Yes
- Paul Mattera – Yes
- Secretary James Peyser – Yes
- Bill Walczak – Yes

BHE 21-45

MASSASOIT COMMUNITY COLLEGE PRESIDENTIAL APPOINTMENT

MOVED:

The Board of Higher Education hereby approves the April 15, 2021 recommendation of the Massasoit Community College Board of Trustees recommending Mr. Ray DiPasquale as President of Massasoit Community College. Such appointment is effective on or before May 4, 2021, is subject to the successful and satisfactory

completion of a State Police background check and is subject to and in accordance with the attached Terms of Appointment.

Authority: Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 15A, Section 9(q) and 21

Contact: Constantia T. Papanikolaou, General Counsel

Chair Gabrieli congratulated Dr. DiPasquale on his new role as Massasoit's President. Dr. DiPasquale thanked the Board and Massasoit Chair Tom Carroll for their support.

Chair Gabrieli next turned to Middlesex Community College Chair Jim Campbell to provide background before introducing Middlesex Community College's presidential candidate, Phil Sisson.

Chair Campbell opened by thanking the BHE. He provided an overview of his history with Middlesex Community College and expressed gratitude to Commissioner Santiago and Deputy Commissioner Pat Marshall for their guidance throughout the search. Chair Campbell noted that it was a transparent process: a 15-member search committee of community stakeholders, the local board of trustees, students, and other school members held public meetings to engage candidates with questions from the community. Through this process, the local Board of Trustees selected Phil Sisson. Chair Campbell closed by noting Mr. Sisson's strategic leadership and his advocacy to provide students with equitable access to opportunities contributes to his ability to move Middlesex Community College into the future. Chair Gabrieli invited Phil Sisson to share comments.

Mr. Sisson opened by thanking Chair Gabrieli, Commissioner Santiago, Secretary Peyser, and the BHE. He expressed that it as an honor to be selected and shared gratitude for a supportive community. Mr. Sisson provided an overview of his background as a first-generation college student, paralleled by his focus on students' struggles and the Commonwealth's obligation to serve them. He highlighted increasing enrollment, safely returning to on-campus learning, and raising equity as some of the institution's priorities. The College's new strategic plan will focus on these issues with a particular focus on racial equity, student-guided pathways to completion, and the power of community colleges. Mr. Sisson shared Middlesex Community College's national projects, including *The American Association of Colleges and Universities Guided Pathway to Equity and Student Learning*, *The American Association of Community Colleges Equity and Transfer Project*, *the New England Board of Higher Education High-Value Credentials*, and the *American Association of Colleges and Universities Truth, Racial Healing and Transformation Centers*. He concluded by noting Middlesex Community College has the state's largest concurrent Early College enrollment operation. Chair Gabrieli thanked Mr. Sisson and opened the floor for questions from the Board.

Member Paul Mattera commented that given his knowledge of Chair Campbell's character and the credentials of candidate Phil Sisson, he is delighted to support Mr. Sisson's candidacy. Chair Gabrieli thanked Mr. Sisson for modernizing systems already in place to better serve students from high school pipelines, adults in need of lifelong learning, and local business needs. Commissioner Santiago

commented that Phil Sisson is a very thoughtful partner in the Board's academic policies and shared his appreciation for the Middlesex Board of Trustees' decision. Chair Gabrieli thanked everyone and turned to Chief of Staff Elena Quiroz-Livanis for the roll call vote.

Chair Gabrieli asked for a motion of approval for BHE 21-46. On a motion duly made and seconded, the motion was approved unanimously by all Board members present, as follows:

- Ann Christensen – Yes
- Alex Cortez – Yes
- Patty Eppinger – Yes
- Chair Chris Gabrieli – Yes
- Vice Chair Sheila Harrity – Yes
- Paul Mattera – Yes
- Secretary James Peyser – Yes
- Bill Walczak – Yes

BHE 21-46 MIDDLESEX COMMUNITY COLLEGE PRESIDENTIAL APPOINTMENT

MOVED: The Board of Higher Education hereby approves the May 4, 2021 recommendation of the Middlesex Community College Board of Trustees recommending Phillip Sisson as President of Middlesex Community College. Such appointment is effective on or about July 3, 2021, is subject to the successful and satisfactory completion of a State Police background check and is subject to and in accordance with the attached Terms of Appointment.

Authority: Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 15A, Section 9(q) and 21

Contact: Constantia T. Papanikolaou, General Counsel

Chair Gabrieli congratulated Mr. Sisson on his new role as the Middlesex Community College president. Mr. Sisson thanked the BHE and shared that he was looking forward to working with everyone.

Chair Gabrieli then turned to Westfield State University Chair Kevin Queenin to provide background before introducing Westfield State University's presidential candidate, Linda Thompson.

Chair Queenin opened his remarks by greeting Chair Gabrieli, Commissioner Santiago, Secretary Peyser, and the Board members. He provided an overview of the search process but first acknowledged Dr. Robert Martin, the Westfield State University Search Committee Chair, and his work

on navigating a successful presidential search. Chair Queenin noted the Westfield State search began in July 2020, following the selection of WittKieffer as their search agency. On August 21, 2020, the Board met and approved the composition and charge of the Presidential Search Committee, as well as a budget, following the BHE guidelines for search and selection of a president. The Search Committee included DHE Deputy Commissioner of Administration and Finance Tom Simard, representatives from both internal and external constituencies of the university, and community stakeholders. During the Fall of 2020, the Search Committee conducted public meetings to engage the community and promote transparency. They used subsequent discussions in the Fall semester to develop a shared understanding of leadership qualities desired in the next President.

Chair Queenin also noted that committee meetings were held in November and December, which focused on the discussion and final approval of a presidential leadership profile and search guidelines of the Committee. On February 24 and March 3, the Committee met and identified 13 candidates to advance to the semifinal stages for initial interviews. He continued that the Search Committee met on March 23 and identified five final candidates to recommend to the Board of Trustees; and following the campus visits, the Presidential Search Committee met on April 22 to review the community feedback results and develop a list of strengths and areas for growth and development for each of the two final candidates. The Westfield State University Board voted to advance Dr. Linda Thompson to the Board of Higher Education as their selection for the next President of Westfield State University. Chair Queenin closed by highlighting Dr. Thompson's professional accomplishments in addition to community feedback in support of her candidacy. Chair Gabrieli thanked Chair Queenin and invited Dr. Linda Thompson to share her comments.

Dr. Thompson opened her remarks by thanking Chair Queenin and deemed it an honor to be selected to serve as Westfield State's next President. She expressed her gratitude to the Search Committee and its Trustees. Dr. Thompson noted that as the first coeducational college in America to offer an education without barriers to race, creed, or economic status, in support of democratic principles and citizen participation in governance, Westfield State University has a strong history of inclusive excellence in education. She closed by sharing her excitement to lead in the Commonwealth to address some of the challenges facing higher education in the nation. Chair Gabrieli expressed his appreciation for Dr. Thompson's appointment and opened the floor for questions from the Board.

Member Patty Eppinger commented that Westfield State and the Massachusetts public higher education system would benefit from having Dr. Thompson on their team. Chair Gabrieli commented on the importance of the healthcare field and the many career paths within it and asked if Dr. Thompson had identified opportunities in Massachusetts to help students pursue career pathways in nursing. Dr. Thompson commented that UMass Boston recently launched a second career program in nursing, where the program is only one year. She noted that it would be great to design a pathway to expand to other universities around the Commonwealth as a statewide model. Chair Gabrieli shared his excitement and commented that as a state, Massachusetts could improve on becoming more innovative in developing opportunities that benefit multiple campuses. Member Paul Mattera commented on Dr. Thompson's career and congratulated her on her success as the new President of Westfield State University. Chair Gabrieli thanked everyone and turned to Chief of Staff Elena Quiroz Livanis for the roll call vote.

Chair Gabrieli asked for a motion of approval for BHE 21-47. On a motion duly made and seconded, the motion was approved unanimously by all Board members present, as follows:

- Ann Christensen – Yes
- Alex Cortez – Yes
- Patty Eppinger – Yes
- Chair Chris Gabrieli – Yes
- Vice Chair Sheila Harrity – Yes
- Paul Mattera – Yes
- Secretary James Peyer – Yes
- Bill Walczak – Yes

BHE 21-47 WESTFIELD STATE UNIVERSITY PRESIDENTIAL APPOINTMENT

MOVED The Board of Higher Education hereby approves the April 28, 2021 recommendation of the Westfield State University Board of Trustees recommending Dr. Linda Thompson as President of Westfield State University. Such appointment is effective on or about July 1, 2021, is subject to the successful and satisfactory completion of a State Police background check and is subject to and in accordance with the attached Terms of Appointment.

Authority: Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 15A, Section 9(q) and 21

Contact: Constantia T. Papanikolaou, General Counsel

Chair Gabrieli noted that it took a lot of work to get to this date, and he hoped the local board chairs recognized the BHE's gratitude for their work and the Commissioner and his team for the engagement of the staff and Board. He thanked everyone and moved to adjourn the meeting.

IV. OTHER BUSINESS

None.

V. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 10:41 a.m.

*Respectfully Submitted,
Carlos E. Santiago
Commissioner and Secretary to the Board*