

# Meeting Minutes

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## **MECC Local Advisory Board**

*Tuesday, November 17, 2020, 4:30 p.m.*

**Meeting held via Zoom due to Declared Emergency COVID-19 Pandemic**

### **MEMBERS PRESENT**

#### **SCOTT COUNTY**

Rodney Baker  
Freda Starnes  
Adrienne Hood  
Keith Wilson

#### **WISE COUNTY**

Bonnie Elosser  
Mike Abbott  
Betty Cornett  
Teresa Adkins

#### **LEE COUNTY**

Gail Elliott  
Emily Kinser  
Gary Perdue

#### **CITY OF NORTON**

#### **DICKENSON COUNTY**

Burl Mooney

### **MEMBERS ABSENT**

Tim Cassell (Norton)  
Peggy Gibson

### **OTHERS ATTENDING**

Dr. Kristen Westover - President  
Dr. Vickie Ratliff – Vice President of Academic and Workforce Solutions  
Mr. Ron Vicars – Vice President of Financial and Administrative Services  
Dr. Amy Greear – Vice President of Institutional Advancement

### **CALL TO ORDER**

The Mountain Empire Community College Advisory Board met on Tuesday, November 17, 2020 at 4:30 p.m. via Zoom meeting due to the ongoing situation with the coronavirus (COVID-19). The meeting was called to order by Mr. Rodney Baker, Chair.

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

A motion was made by Mr. Gary Perdue to accept the September 15, 2020 minutes as presented. The motion was seconded by Ms. Bonnie Elosser and passed unanimously. **(Exhibit 1)**

### **ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS**

Mr. Baker reported on the following information items:

- Mr. Baker shared with members of the Board that MECC Advisory Board Member, Ms. Helen Chadwell, had resigned from our Board due to some ongoing health issues. Ms. Chadwell represented Lee County. A letter from the President's office has been sent to the Lee County

Board of Supervisors requesting that a representative from that county be appointed to fulfil Ms. Chadwell's term. Mr. Baker also mentioned that we are also waiting for the Wise County Board of Supervisors to appoint someone from Wise County, replacing Ms. Alane Lovern whose term expired in July.

## President's Report – Dr. Kristen Westover

Dr. Westover reported on the following items:

### Activities Report

- Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, all travel has been cancelled at this time and most meetings are held via Zoom.

### Updates

- Dr. Westover shared Governor Northam's announcement last week regarding COVID-19 restrictions. Effective Sunday, November 15<sup>th</sup>, the governor is limiting all public and private in-person gatherings to 25 individuals, down from the current cap of 250 people. She mentioned that as of right now we have had 23 students and 2 employees that have tested positive for the virus since the fall. Approximately 88 students have reported through our contact person, Ms. Lelia Bradshaw, that they have been impacted in some way with either quarantine or exposure. Most of these students are in our Health Sciences program.
- Majority of our courses this fall are online with the exception of health sciences, workforce programming at the CWIA and this week, the addition of some welding, biology labs, HVAC and other performance based courses.
- Spring semester will likely look much like the fall with as much as possible being pushed to online instruction.
- Red Fox Grill is now running with limited hours. There have been no layoffs.
- Recently, all employees were awarded a day of recognition leave. Part-time employees typically don't fall under the same opportunities, however, PT employees were given ½ day's pay added on to the day before Thanksgiving.
- Dr. Westover mentioned that she plans to make an announcement tomorrow to all employees regarding a bonus. She mentioned that she was recently informed that the VCCS colleges will be awarded additional CARES Act funds by the Governor in order to assist MECC employees with extra expenses and to partially offset personal costs related to the mandatory transition to telework and distance learning required due to the pandemic. All active full-time MECC employees will receive a \$550 stipend, and ALL active part-time employees will receive a \$397 stipend.
- Dr. Westover shared with Board members some information regarding the new Re-employing Virginians (REV) program. She mentioned that that the VCCS is allocating \$27 million in federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act dollars as part of the new Re-Employing Virginians (REV) initiative which will provide scholarships to eligible individuals who lost their jobs due to COVID-19 and are now working in low-wage part-time jobs (unemployed or underemployed individuals). These eligible Virginians will be enrolled in essential and high-demand stackable credential G3 programs. Individuals will enroll in a workforce or community college program in five essential industries, including health care, information technology, skilled trades, public safety, and early childhood education. MECC will receive approximately \$782,000 to assist residents of Lee, Wise, Scott, and Dickenson Counties and the city of Norton who are interested or currently enrolled in high demand fields and have been impacted by COVID-19.

Those choosing to pursue a career studies certificate, or an associate degree would receive up to \$1,500 as a part-time student or up to \$3,000 as a full-time student, which would cover the full cost of tuition for one year.

Individuals must self-certify that they are a Virginia resident and received unemployment benefits on or after August 1, 2020 or that they are working in a part-time job with an hourly wage under \$15 after losing a full-time job due to COVID-19 and must enroll in an eligible program before December 14, 2020.

- Dr. Westover mentioned that the recent Virtual Home Craft Days event was a huge success and thanked all those involved. The virtual event will air on PBS.
- The college received notice from SACSCOC this fall that we now have substantive change approval for the Center of Workforce and Innovation at Appalachia (CWIA) as an approved site and also the dental assisting program was approved.
- Dr. Westover mentioned that the college has been working on the following economic development projects:
  - "Project Thoroughbred" better known as the grain terminal grant
  - Project Oasis-
  - Project Energizer
  - As part of a Solar project, MECC was recently awarded 50K as a sub-award of our Lonesome Pine Solar and Energy Technology program to provide workforce training for individuals in solar and energy technology. Dr. Westover mentioned that she is working with Tommy Clements in planning a virtual solar opportunity fair sometime in February.
- Dr. Westover mentioned that as previously discussed during our last Board meeting in July, the VCCS State Board had unanimously voted and approved a resolution instructing community college advisory boards to review the appropriateness of the names of our colleges, campuses and facilities. After sharing this information, a team was appointed/volunteered (Dr. Amy Greear, Mr. Kody Whitt, Dr. William Bott) to review the appropriateness and history of the naming of MECC's buildings. She shared that as of right now, Mr. Kody Witt, team member is currently waiting on some verification regarding Holton Hall.  
 Dr. Westover suggested to the Board that once the document is reviewed (Summary of MECC Building Name Review) by MECC Advisory Board members that formal action be taken at the next Board meeting in January, 2021; either a decision to make changes or make no changes through either an action item or resolution.  
 Dr. Westover shared that she felt most of our buildings were named after influential members of our community or Virginia.  
 After some discussion, it was decided that this item would be placed on the agenda as an action item for the January 2021 Board meeting.

### **Vice President of Financial and Administrative Services – Mr. Ron Vicars**

#### **Updates:**

- Mr. Vicars shared that the finished work of the General Assembly was that we would be held harmless with very few changes to our budget. He mentioned that they are adding some additional monies for the next biennium year but not sure how the coronavirus will affect this year's revenue. Right now, we will continue to monitor what the General Assembly is done and any amendments.

Local Funds Expenditure Report – Mr. Vicars reviewed with Board members the Local Funds Expenditure Report ending October 31, 2020. **(See Exhibit 3 with details)**

Personnel Report – Mr. Vicars reviewed the personnel report ending October 31, 2020. **(See Exhibit 4 with details)**

There were no questions or comments regarding these reports from Board members.

## Vice President of Academic and Student Services – Dr. Vickie Ratliff

### Information Item(s):

- Dr. Ratliff shared that most days are spent in trying to get our students through this semester and commended our faculty and staff for all their involvement in doing so. She mentioned that the college has been working feverishly to try to align our students with the different funding sources that are available to them right now. Beyond the REV funding, she mentioned that we also have the Virginia Ready Program which is another program for those that are unemployed that leads to a stipend of \$1,000 for students that have completed their program. Dr. Ratliff also mentioned some additional state financial aid that we have been able to award that was given to us by the Governor intended more for the credit side and has helped some students with the purchase of books and some things that they would have otherwise struggled to pay for.
- In addition to that, we, of course, had the CARES funding that was a pass through directly to students in which each student that was eligible received \$750 last spring and were able to award some emergency funding for others in the summer and fall. There were also some leftover funds available for students that met the criteria and those students should receive an additional \$250.00 in December.
- Classes for Spring will mostly be online classes with the exception of our health sciences area and heavy labs. Those will continue to meet in small group sessions as much as possible. In addition, Dr. Ratliff mentioned that we are trying to be very careful in keeping our faculty and students safe while we do this.
- Dr. Ratliff mentioned they continue to work with faculty who are new to the online environment, making sure they have the professional development opportunities that they need to be able to translate well to transfer in person classes to an online setting and in having what they need.
- Dr. Ratliff shared that we are now in the middle of our planning processes again for the year and that our faculty program leads are working on their program plans. She mentioned that our curricular review process is ongoing - should wrap up at the end of the year and should be able to report out in our January meeting.
- There are some in-person advising sessions planned for December but will not know if these will take place due to the ongoing COVID-19 situation - may have to be moved to virtual.

## Vice President of Institutional Advancement – Dr. Amy Greear

Dr. Amy Greear shared with the Board the following updates:

### Information Item(s)

- Dr. Greear reported several positive activities for the MECC Foundation since our last meeting. Since September of this year, the Foundation has received pledges which include one legacy gift, one grant award that will fund our Title III endowment and one estate gift valuing more than 1M. She mentioned that they have also successfully met our entire Title III endowment fundraising challenge within the first year of the award, which is just incredible. She acknowledged that the Foundation could not raise funds for scholarships and programs without the everyday actions of our staff and faculty who do incredible work with our students and the community. They have built the foundation for the solid reputation of our college and mentioned they also could not support our students without the generosity and care of many, many individuals in our community who love this college and this region. MECC, as small in our size and located in part of the state that is often forgotten, is many ways, the envy of every college in the VCCS.

- The Foundation hosted the annual Buccaneer reunion here at the college during the weekend of October 11, hosting several of our Board members as well representatives of the Slemp Foundation on campus. Sunday's activities allow members of the Buccaneer group to meet the recipients of their scholarship and present them with certificates honoring their award. She reported that they had a wonderful weekend and believed the event was a success. The Slemp Foundation committed to supporting another 30,000 match for our scholarship program and we are very grateful to them. She also reported that they have sent out this week the Buccaneer year end solicitation letters to more than 400 alumni and will send out the annual report and year end solicitation for the Foundation next week.
- To date, Dr. Greear reported that they had raised more than \$909,000 this year. This exceeds last year's total, including the loss of our special events which is great news for our college and our community.
- A few other things the Foundation has been involved in includes the development of a history lecture series with Dr. Lawrence Fleenor and Board Members Buzzy Witt and Bill Kanto. Dr. Greear mentioned that she had a small part to play in developing the first video presentation, which took place during our virtual Home Craft Days weekend. She reminded Board members to view these presentations on the college's youtube channel at MECCedu. Foundation also helped coordinate the distribution of 2,500 trees at our local state parks with the help of MECC's environmental club.
- Dr. Greear also mentioned that they are trying a very different type of fundraiser during October. The Foundation has partnered with MECC Haunted Forest to host Scare Night at the drive in. The event featured characters from the haunted forest during two scary movie showings on Saturday night. All proceeds benefited the MECC Emergency Student Assistance Fund and raised more than \$500 in donations to the student emergency assistance fund.
- The Foundation has mailed out their annual reports with our annual gift request. The employee giving campaign has been launched this week to raise funds to purchase a refrigerator and freezer for the college food pantry. They will also host our Day of Giving online campaign on December 1 benefitting the Food Pantry.
- Dr. Greear mentioned that the John Fox Jr. event will most likely be a virtual event for next year.

## **COMMITTEE REPORTS - no reports**

## **OLD/NEW BUSINESS - none**

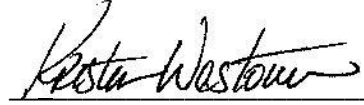
## **PUBLIC COMMENTS - none**

## **ADJOURNMENT**

With no further business to discuss, the meeting adjourned at 5:28 p.m.

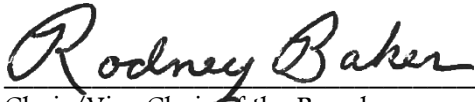
Peggy Gibson, Recorder

Respectfully Submitted,



\_\_\_\_\_  
Kristen Westover, President & Secretary to the Board

APPROVED:



\_\_\_\_\_  
Chair/Vice Chair of the Board

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date