



# Muskegon Community College

## **BOARD OF TRUSTEES BOARD SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES July 31, 2013 – 4:00 p.m. Stevenson Center – Lecture Hall Room 1100**

**Present:** Chair Crandall, Vice-Chair Osborn, Trustee Frye, Trustee Lester, Trustee Mullally, Trustee Oakes and Trustee Portenga

The meeting was called to order by Chair Crandall at 4:02 p.m.

1. Agenda
2. Public Comments
  - Jonathan Seyferth, a North Muskegon resident, encouraged the Board to go back to the voters this fall for a millage and to include the Arts and the Science upgrade that had been included previously, maybe not at the same level as before. The previous millage only lost by less than a percentage point. An important thing to keep in mind is that there were six statewide ballot initiatives on the ballot last November, with a statewide push to vote “no” and Jonathan believes MCC was a victim of circumstance in that election than a pushback of MCC asking for this millage. Jonathan also encouraged the Board to consider something downtown; he indicated most communities that have a successful downtown have anchors and MCC would be a great anchor.
  - Ed Garner, President & CEO of Muskegon Area First and Board member of Downtown Muskegon Now, encouraged the Board to go for the millage and a downtown presence for MCC. He indicated Downtown Muskegon Now would endorse a downtown MCC campus.
  - The MCC Board of Trustees has received over 40 letters of support. The Cheese Lady is a community activist who is campaigning for a MCC downtown presence. Letters of support for a MCC downtown campus have also been received from several community members including Max McKee, President of West Michigan Dock and Dock Mart; Susan Cloutier-Myers, Executive Director of the Disability Connection; and Mary Fagan, a resident.
  - The Muskegon Chamber Legislative Affairs Committee approved support of the MCC millage with the downtown component and when it went to their full Board it also received support.

- Chair Crandall spoke with Chris McGuigan and discussed the rumor of the Chronicle Building being given to MCC for free. The Chronicle building is now off the table as they currently have a very interested buyer.
- President Nesbary reported a PowerPoint has been put together and updated that shows the strengths and weaknesses of why MCC is needs this millage, slightly updated from last fall. A slightly updated spreadsheet from the July Board meeting has also been made available for the Board and both were reviewed and discussed in detail. President Nesbary also presented potential state matching options: the \$1M designated by the Board and potential \$1M from the EDA Grant, which will not cover general education science space, but would cover technology, engineering type space.

### 3. Discussion of 2013 Millage Proposal

- Chair Crandall discussed whether there is a way to separate this out into separate proposals, so we can move forward with the primary objective of the Science and Health Facility on campus and then give voters the opportunity to commit to something downtown with a second proposal. He asked for the Board's opinion about separating the proposal into two issues and letting voters decide if they would like to support a downtown campus and received the following input
  - There is a lot more interest from the public on downtown than any other aspect. We should include a downtown presence and need to focus on what goes downtown; something more specific than last time. Bussing is a whole other expenditure that would need to be resolved as well.
  - If we separate it out, we need to be prepared for every possible outcome/result.
  - We need to think about if it doesn't pass what we will do?
  - We may get more bang for our buck doing something on campus, gaining economies of scale, combining activities, sharing staff, opportunities for system upgrades, infrastructure, etc., which is needed in all areas.
  - Need to think about the students; not seeing the student's excitement for downtown.
  - Would like to see all proposals in one ballot question. It puts voters at a disposition if it's too complicated, spell it out, i.e., MCC will do an art center downtown. Easy to read, easy to vote for.
  - There is concern for how we are going to operate it.
  - Definitely go back to the public for a millage. I believe they will support the original \$31M.
  - Concerned about the amount of time that it's going to take us to do a good job to educate the populous of what we're doing, how much it will cost the taxpayer, etc. Maybe go back in February.
  - Focus on the students. One of the main things the MCCA Conference focused on was to "listen to your students". We have to get student input – we must know how they feel about this.
  - The interest of MCC will be better served by a dynamic Muskegon County. A dynamic Muskegon County is very dependent on the perception of our core city.

- Want to see a scaled down proposal and don't want to delay later than November. Combine it all in one package, one vote, encourage something downtown be a part of it.
- It was questioned whether Art would be more contained than Health? Dr. Nesbary indicated the original proposal included a self-contained Art Center with wrap around services.
- A faculty member from the Visual Arts Department of MCC indicated when originally discussing an art facility being off by itself downtown, they were hesitant because they are already isolated in their current location. The majority of the visual arts students are taking their general education requirements and taking one art class and would not want to go back and forth. Visual Arts, Music and Theater are very facility specific and need a particular kind of space. It was suggested MCC could have a neutral area for disciplines like accounting, philosophy or other general education requirements that aren't so facility specific downtown, so a student could spend a whole day downtown. Dr. Nesbary indicated there would be other wrap around services offered, they wouldn't be alone.
- Toby Moleski, a Faculty and GVSU Alum, indicated if we do a downtown campus, we must have a shuttle service. He loved commuting by bus from downtown Grand Rapids to Allendale, which allowed him more time to study (on the bus); students can use commute time to study. If we figure out shuttle service, it won't be a problem.
- Gary Nonnemaker, Math and Physical Sciences Department Chair, indicated he doesn't want to lose the new science center because 10 people think going downtown is a good idea. Specify what we want to do – Question #1 do you support a \$21M bond for all three upgrades; Question #2 are you willing to pay \$X to support a downtown presence?
- The operational piece would be key.
- Erin Hoffman suggested polling the students.
- I feel strongly that everything we asked for we do need. We were buried in all the proposals and the voters were well educated to vote "no" on everything. I believe the voters will support us.
- Kelley Conrad, a MCC Counselor who works with students all the time indicated one student commented she would not want to go downtown for only one or two classes. Students are going to take their lead from us; if we present it as "here's what's exciting; here's what's in it for you", they will relate to that. Transportation back and forth must be put together properly with all the services needed. Have enough services to make it worthwhile for the students.
- Would like to go with a proposal that we let the voters know we heard them with a reduced amount.

Three proposals were suggested to the Board and supported as follows:

**Proposal 1:** \$27M – Trustee Osborn (something could go wrong with the state money); Trustee Frye; Trustee Oakes; and Trustee Lester.

**Proposal 2:** \$21M – (\$14.4M proposal + \$7M for downtown or expanded art facility somewhere) – Trustee Mullally; Trustee Portenga \$21 + a little, telling the voter we have reduced our request by x%; Chair Crandall \$21M or a 25% reduction.

### Proposal 3: \$14.4M

- MCC will go back to the voters and say, we need all of the things we asked for last year to be a successful, vibrant community college. We've been awarded \$4.9M from the state, decreasing the amount needed by 13%.
- Assuming we go for \$27M, what are we going to tell the public about downtown facility? Be honest; somewhere the wording needs to reference a downtown presence, but not tying ourselves to what will be downtown.
- Many Trustees indicated their preference to go on the November ballot and for one ballot proposal.
- Vice-Chair Osborn indicated something MCC hasn't looked at in a long time is increasing the operation millage. It's been the same for a very long time because of the Headlee rollback; but we've struggled for a very long time in operational costs. Maybe there's a point at which we need to go back and say we need more monies to operate. Maybe not now; it's a very difficult thing to do, but we need those operating monies.

The Board **indicated a preference for** placing a ballot on the November election for either a \$27M or \$21M ballot proposal. **They asked for additional information on these two alternatives**, for voting purposes for the August meeting, and will vote on the amount and approve ballot language at the August Board meeting. We will specifically state that MCC will have a downtown presence. MCC will not ask for the operating millage at this time and will not conduct a phone poll prior to the election.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:55 p.m.

Minutes submitted by Secretary, Nancy Frye.

/csd