

**COCONINO COMMUNITY COLLEGE  
DISTRICT GOVERNING BOARD**

**WORK SESSION**

**OCTOBER 27, 2021**



**COCONINO COMMUNITY COLLEGE  
MINUTES OF A WORK SESSION  
OF THE  
DISTRICT GOVERNING BOARD  
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A Work Session of the Coconino Community College District Governing Board was held via interactive videoconferencing (Zoom). Board Chair Dr. Nat White called the meeting to order at 4:05 pm.

PRESENT: Eric Eikenberry  
Patricia Garcia  
Patrick Hurley  
Joseph R. Smith  
Nat White

ABSENT: None

Also Present: Dr. Colleen Smith, CCC President; Ms. April Sandoval, Mr. Bob Voytek, Mr. Brian Harris, Ms. Carolyn Christianer, Mr. Cheyenne Grabiec, Ms. Colleen Carscallen, Ms. Dianna Sanchez, Mr. Dietrich Sauer, Ms. Giovanna Macry, Dr. Jami Van Ess, Ms. Janel States, Mr. Joel Fritzler, Ms. Kay Leum, Mr. Keith Becker, Mr. Larry Hendricks, Dr. Michael Merica, Dr. Nate Southerland, Mr. Nathan Schott, Ms. Randi Axler, Ms. Robin Jarecki, Ms. Sarah Benton, Ms. Sonni Marbury, and Ms. Suzzanna Rodriguez.

Reports, summaries, background material, and other documents referred to in these minutes can be found in the October 27, 2021 documents file.

**Follow Up**

- The Board would like to hold a Work Session on November 10, 2021, with an agenda item focused on options for the primary property tax election and answering Board Member's questions.

**1. DISCUSSION/INFORMATION ITEMS**

**A. Possible Ballot Initiative to Reset the Primary Tax Rate – Dr. Colleen A. Smith**

Dr. Colleen Smith gave a presentation concerning the proposed ballot initiative. Please see the October 27, 2021 documents file for details on the presentation. Questions/discussion on the presentation included the following topics:

- If equalization funding is included in the tax rates mentioned for schools that receive equalization funding.
- Clarification on the size of schools mentioned in the three smallest schools.
- If the College could offer the voting public a choice between a 1.5 and 2.0 increase and what happens if the vote is split between those options and neither option garners enough votes.
- The requirement in the legislation for this to be a May election, that the College only has five more years to complete the process, and if it is not successful, the College must wait two years before trying again.

- The College has been working with several companies to try and find one to help with the election process. However, before moving forward with selecting one, Staff wants to know if the Board is supportive.
- The packet for tonight's meeting included information to help the Board prepare for a possible decision in December and a draft resolution calling for an election that would have to be passed at that time.
- Legal Counsel, Mr. Nathan Schott, was also available to answer the Board's questions.
- The Board asked questions about the consulting company, how their work would be different from others interviewed, and if they had the experience and track record to help the College through the election.
- If there was a bidding process conducted for the consulting company.
- How the College could hire a company to help us without compromising neutrality. The firm would be hired to help with general marketing for the initiative and general information about the College. However, that information would not ask them to vote for the College.
- There is still a political action committee in existence from the last election that could handle information requesting people to vote for the initiative and may be able to use the same company to help with those initiatives.
- Mr. Schott recommends that as long as it's explicit about where the money is coming from, the College could use the same company, but it must be clear about what funds are being used for what purpose.
- The Board discussed the roles Foundation and Board Members could play in the election process and how that differs from College staff and those paid by the College.

Dr. Michael Merica presented his and Mr. Larry Hendricks's work to reach out to the recommended consultants and their backgrounds. Dr. Merica also discussed some of his recommendations for strategy and voting behavior related to a possible election. For details on the presentation, please see the October 27, 2021 documents file.

Questions on the presentation included what this approach would cover.

Dr. Nat White, Mr. Patrick Hurley, Mr. Eric Eikenberry, and Mr. Joseph Smith all voiced support for moving forward.

Mr. Smith asked if this timeline gave the College enough time between now and May or if the College should wait until 2023. Dr. Merica has discussed this with the consultant, and they do not seem to be concerned with the timeline and instead see it as advantageous in certain aspects.

Moving forward with an election is not an action item, but the Board can express consensus and give direction to College staff.

Ms. Patricia Garcia asked the Board to consider the difference between 2016 and 2018. 2016 would have given a temporary secondary property tax increase, 2018 would have continued a secondary property tax and kept taxes the same. She is not hearing anything that would lead her to believe the College would be successful in a new effort.

Mr. Eric Eikenberry asked Dr. Van Ess if, as a Board, they could guarantee that specific programs would be funded if this initiative passed. Ms. Van Ess responded that we have been able to start some programs, so

would be able to continue them with this funding. The College would also watch the community's needs so could scale up and scale down programs as needed to allow us to keep promises in the resolution.

Dr. Colleen Smith responded to criticism in the last election that people weren't sure what they were getting, so she is trying to be clear in this resolution. However, the College can also do a lot with little funding, so the Board will be amazed at what can happen.

Dr. Nat White started his thinking with the need the College has for this funding and the cost of having an election. He also considered the future of the College for expansion and growth. The cost for the election is not likely to change, no matter when it's held. The only way it would be reduced is if someone else decides to hold an election simultaneously. The opportunity to do this is limited. He would rather take a chance to do it now, given all the information we've had, statistics, and consultant information, and have another chance rather than waiting and missing a chance. He feels we need to move ahead and think about voting strategy and planning.

Mr. Patrick Hurley felt that Dr. White stated that very well. He does think that statistically and time-wise, if we go now, we have two more chances.

The statute is unclear, and it is possible the College could go out again in the thirty-fifth year but, Mr. Schott would need to research to confirm that.

Mr. Hurley stated that if the College goes out now, we get at least one more and maybe two more chances, so he favors going now. He would push to calculate what it would be like to say no tuition increases for five years to give the community guarantees about programs we intend to create with this. Not programs to explore but ones the College is prepared to create. He would also support finding another carrot for students to benefit them with more scholarships or something that benefits the community also.

Mr. Eikenberry would like to see the College go out immediately and go for the double amount and push for that amount. However, he feels that time is of the essence and sees, and there is an advantage to going sooner rather than later.

Ms. Garcia would like to hear legal counsel's opinion about promising not to raise tuition because it may be considered binding a future board. Dr. Smith asked Mr. Schott to help with the answer to this question.

Ms. Garcia is still not seeing anything leading her to believe that there would be a high probability of success for a primary property tax increase when the College has not been able to get a temporary secondary tax increase. Taxpayers have been clear that they want the College to operate within the financial constraints we have.

Ms. Joseph Smith agrees that the voters have spoken on several occasions but feels like we have to try. He hopes that a different approach will have enough of an impact to get passed and that the College needs to try. He thinks that since the voters have said no in the past, it would be less likely for voters to say yes if we come with a large amount. Therefore, he would support going for a lower amount.

Dr. Merica and Mr. Hendricks feel that the strategy proposed is so different from what the College has used in the past that this is an entirely different election process.

Mr. Hurley understands the feeling that voters have spoken, but the statistics don't show him overwhelmingly that they want us to live within our tax rate and were not in favor of an override. He felt

this wasn't a mandate to never ask for more money. His opinion is that it would be a disservice to the County as a whole and the College to overlook the people who voted yes.

Dr. White stated that as chair, he sees four board members in consensus to go to the next step with the expectation that the Board would be in favor of voting to move forward at the December meeting. Trustee Garcia has expressed hesitancy, but there is consensus to move forward.

Dr. Smith will help us know how to move forward and have an action item in December related to the election. In addition, she will research different amounts and specific things that will be part of the resolution and ballot language. All of the discussion tonight reflects the Board's passion and willingness to serve the community.

Mr. Hurley suggested another meeting in November. However, he is not comfortable going to a workshop in December and then deciding on the issue at the meeting afterward.

Dr. White thinks that is a good suggestion but suggested that board members send questions on strategy and ideas to Dr. Smith to prepare information before that meeting.

Mr. Hurley would like to see how much revenue could be generated and what the College can do within that revenue every year that is sustainable.

Dr. Smith will be on extended leave starting next week. Please work with Dr. Van Ess or Ms. April Sandoval on what information the Board would like to see at the November meeting.

Mr. Hurley left the meeting, but a quorum was maintained so the meeting could continue.

The Board would like to hold a Work Session on November 10, 2021, with an agenda item focused on options for the primary property tax election and answering Board Member's questions.

ADJOURNMENT: The Work Session Adjourned at 5:48 pm.

**MINUTES PREPARED BY:**

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Ms. April Sandoval  
Board Recorder

**ATTEST and APPROVED:**

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Mr. Joseph R. Smith  
Vice Chair/Secretary of the Board

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Dr. Nat White  
Board Chair