NORTHWESTERN MICHIGAN COLLEGE
BOARD OF TRUSTEES
MINUTES
Monday, October 19, 2026
Timothy J. Nelson Innovation Center
Room 106/107

CALL TO ORDER—Chair Mark B. Keely called the regular meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Trustees present:	Mark B. Keely, Kennard R. Weaver, Kenneth E. Warner, Andrew K. Robitshek, Jody N. Lundquist, Pamela T. Horne
Trustees absent:	Laura J. Oblinger
Also present:	President Nick Nissley, Lynne Moritz, Diana Fairbanks, Troy Kierczynski, Hollie DeWalt, Stephen Siciliano, Jason Slade, Lindsey Lipke, Kyle Morrison, Megan Bylsma, Lindsey Dickinson, Molly Norville, Laura Kingman, Laura Stevens, Dan Goodchild, John Dancer, Barb Garza, Tony Sauerbrey, Alex Bloye, Scott Dennis, Becca Richardson

REVIEW OF AGENDA—The agenda was accepted as presented with no conflicts of interest noted.

REPORTS AND PRESENTATIONS

Faculty Report–Stewert Jack, Business Instructor, spoke to why a course on learning with AI is necessary, with nearly 80% of community college students already using AI in their coursework. Data from employers indicates AI is impacting all fields, not only IT. Students overwhelmingly registered for the online format and registration for the course was so successful, a second section was opened. Jack stressed that in this course, AI is a learning partner, not a shortcut. Students learn to write prompts to get useful results, check AI answers before trusting them, spot bias, and use AI ethically and responsibly. Board Chair Keely noted this cohort of students can provide useful data related to AI in the future.

Program Focus: Uncrewed Aerial Systems (UAS) – Tony Sauerbrey, UAS Program Coordinator, who oversees all drone programs, and Scott Dennis, Certified Flight Instructor, shared the vision for the region and NMC to grow into a premier program for Beyond Visual Line of Sight (BVLOS) and a national hub for UAS and Advanced Aerial Mobility (AAM). The Traverse City region is unique in that there is low density airspace with access to rural and urban environments and with Camp Grayling designated as a National Army Drone Test Center. Partners in the program include Traverse Connect, 20 Fathoms, and the US Coast Guard. For NMC, Sauerbrey spoke of how the college can be an integral part in this growing industry since it is adding to what the Aviation program already does. New courses, including BVLOS, are planned for Fall 2027.

FY26 Audit Presentation–Barb Garza, Senior Partner, Andrews Hooper Pavlik PLC, presented the draft audit report and a clean, unmodified opinion for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2026. All reports were reviewed in detail with the appropriate committees. Garza reviewed the new and future audit and accounting standards. Trustee Weaver, Chair of the Audit Committee, thanked Garza for communicating with the Audit Committee before, during, and after the auditing process. There was discussion regarding the draft format of the audit report and confirmation of items to be resolved.

PUBLIC INPUT—There was public input offered by Abigail Kowalski.

UPDATES

President's Update—NMC has been awarded a $630,876 state grant to modernize its research vessel, a key asset for the college's Great Lakes Water Studies Institute.The funds will be used to update the R/V Northwestern's propulsion and power systems and to acquire and install new equipment, including a new commercial multibeam echosounder system. Terri Gustafason, Director of Academic Affairs, and Gail Kurowski, Director of the Policy Academy, have been recognized as Influential Women of Northern Michigan. The Technical Division hosted 400 middle and high school students for their Building Tomorrow event. On October 15, the 2nd International Affairs Forum Gala was held at the NMC Hagerty Center. The event featured former CNN correspondent Candy Crowley. In late September, the college hosted the MCCA Fall Board of Directors meeting with presidents and trustees from colleges throughout the state in attendance. The Public Relations, Marketing, and Communications team won 9 awards from the National Council for Public Relations and Marketing. The brand launch and 75th anniversary projects each won gold.

Board Chair Update—Chair Mark Keely noted the importance and relevance of AI and the upcoming Association of Community College Trustees Leadership Congress in Chicago, Illinois. Keely thanked fellow trustees for their time today, noting additional time this afternoon regarding a study session, and the upcoming ACCT conference.

CONSENT ITEMS–On a motion by Jody Lundquist, seconded by Kennard Weaver, the following items were approved by a unanimous vote as a group without discussion:

Minutes of the September 28, 2026, study session and regular meeting
Enrollment Report—*Todd Neibauer, Vice President for Student Services and Technologies*
Financial Report—*Troy Kierczynski, Vice President of Finance and Administration*
Public Relations, Marketing, & Communications Report—*Diana Fairbanks, Associate Vice President, Strategic Communications and Change Initiatives*
Advancement Report—*Megan Bylsma, Acting Vice President, Advancement*
Building & Site Committee—*Kennard Weaver, Committee Chair*
Executive Committee—*Mark Keely, Committee Chair*
Audit Committee—*Kennard Weaver, Committee Chair*
Policy Committee—*Pam Horne, Committee Chair*

ACTION ITEMS

Acceptance of NMC Audit–Kennard Weaver made a motion, seconded by Ken Warner, recommending acceptance of the financial audit of Northwestern Michigan College for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2026, as presented in draft form subject to resolution of the open items identified by the Audit Committee and issuance of a final report. The motion passed unanimously.

FY28 Five-Year Capital Outlay Plan–On a motion by Ken Warner, seconded by Pam Horne, the Board unanimously approved the FY 2028 Capital Outlay Plan for submission to the Michigan Office of the State Budget as presented.

WNMC Federal Communications Commissions (FCC) Request–Pam Horne made a motion,

seconded by Jody Lundquist, to authorize application for a Federal Communications Commission (FCC) signal expansion for WNMC. The motion passed unanimously.

Osterlin Architect–On a motion by Kennard Weaver, seconded by Pam Horne, the Board authorized for administration to enter into a contract with Cornerstone Architects for an amount not to exceed $662,110, which includes base fees of $575,000, a 10% budget contingency of $57,500, FFE coordination of $14,500, and estimated reimbursables of $15,110. The motion passed unanimously.

Discontinuation of the AAS Degree in Engineering Technology--Computer Technology–Jody Lundquist made a motion, seconded by Pam Horne, recommending authorization to discontinue the AAS Degree in Engineering Technology-Computer Technology. The motion passed unanimously.

New Jobs Training Agreements-On a motion by Kennard Weaver, seconded by Pam Horne, administration was authorized to enter into the following agreements under the Michigan New Jobs Training Program (MNJTP):

- Stone House Bread (new)
- Great Lakes Stainless
- Hayes Manufacturing
- RJG Inc.
- Shoreline Power Services
- Superior Physical Therapy

REVIEW OF FOLLOW-UP REQUESTS—Confirmed requests made by the Board that require administrative follow-up for information to be provided to the Board at a later date.

- *UAS Labor Market Data*
- *Walk for Health & Housing event details*

ADJOURNMENT—The meeting adjourned at 6:46 p.m.

Recorded by Lynne Moritz, Executive Director of the President's Office and Board Operations.

SIGNED_____
Mark B. Keely, Chair

ATTESTED_____
Pamela T. Horne, Secretary