



Essex County College
Board of Trustees

SPECIAL PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES

May 25, 2021 – 4:00 PM

Via Zoom Webinar

In Attendance: M. Bolden; I. Cruz; J. Grimes; A. Lewis; C. Morales; B. Robinson; J. Wright; J. Zarra;
A. Boakye, Interim President; M. Townes, Board Counsel

Excused: L. Guyton

Call to Order/Roll Call

The meeting was called to order by the Chair, Trustee Bolden at 4:35 pm. Following roll call, a quorum, of seven trustees was declared for the meeting. Trustee Lewis logged in a short while later making the number of Trustees present, eight.

Open Public Meetings Act Announcement

The Open Public Meetings Act announcement was read into the record by Ms. Congleton as follows:

In compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act of the State of New Jersey, adequate notice of this special meeting of the Board of Trustees of Essex County College was provided in the following manner:

Advance written notice of this virtual meeting was filed on May 21, 2021, and written notice for this meeting was provided to the Essex County College Community, indicating that the meeting will be held in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act, P.L. 1975 c 231 and the Governor of New Jersey's Executive Orders 102 and 104 regarding COVID 19 Emergency Actions. Notice of the meeting was also posted on the College website at www.essex.edu. According to records of Essex County College, we have not received written requests or prepayment from any parties for advance notice of meetings.

Communications

Trustee Grimes indicated that there were no communications.

Public Comments on the Agenda Item

Comments on the agenda item from Lev Zilbermints were read by Ms. Christina Cook:

Greetings,

It is something of a surprise that you have another meeting. Everyone who is someone already knows that we are going to have a Presidential Search Committee. So here are my comments on agenda items.

As I have said time and again, there is plenty of precedent for not having a Presidential Search Committee. Dr. Yamba was appointed in 1980, Dr. Gibson in 2013. But you still want to waste time and money on this procedure, so that is how it is going to be. All right, then.

First, are the students going to have a say? What about the faculty, staff, alumni? I think all of ECC should have a say in who should be the next president.

Second, I want to make sure that the new president is not another yes-person for the County Executive. The president of Essex County College should have the courage to tell no to politicians, whether they be city council members or the president of the United States of America.

Third, I want to be sure that President Augustin Boakye is a candidate for the position of permanent President. As Pope Zachary said in the eighth century, the wielder of the actual power, not the figurehead, should be king. So what this means is that this board should forego the presidential search procedure and just appoint Dr. Boakye permanent President. Look at everything he has done so far!! At the March meeting of this board, everyone of important standing said they wanted Dr. Boakye to be president. Only the Board does not seem to agree. Why?

Fourth, the resolution speaks of an "attached Presidential Resolution Profile" but I do not see it. Where is it? Or am I missing something here? Seems to me a Presidential Search Profile is a description of what the job is. Could you clarify that for me? Or did something not get sent out?

Fifth, what about the learning curve? As Dr. Bridgeforth and Dr. Frank said at the March meeting -- yes, I read the minutes!! -- the new president will have to learn on the job. Will this person understand the culture of Essex County College, its history, its needs, etc.? How long will it take that person to learn? Meanwhile, what situation is the school going to be in?

You need to get real. We do not have the time to spend for the new president to learn. Only way we avoid a problem is if you appoint an ECC President from among ECC insiders.

This is why I think we need Dr. Augustine Boakye now the same way we needed Dr. A. Zachary Yamba in 1980.

Each crisis requires a good leader to overcome it. I say, with thirty years of experience, that Dr. Boakye is the leader to end the current crisis.

*Lev D. Zilbermints
Class of 1993*

Presidential Search Committee Report

The Chair of the Search Committee, Trustee Bolden, presented the action for approval. She indicated that the process will be open and transparent. Any issues discussed by the Search Committee (SC) will be confidential. The SC is constituted of four (4) Trustees, four (4) faculty members and three (3) community members. She stated that there is a balance in voices are being heard.

Responding to Mr. Zilbermints comments, she acknowledged that there is a precedent for not having a search; she asked, however, that he join in making sure the search is open, transparent, that everyone has a voice in terms of how it is going to be conducted and that the search legitimizes the selection of the next President. Madame Chair asked for a motion to approve the following action:

7-3.1/6-2021 Resolution Approving Presidential Search Profile

Trustee Cruz made the motion, Trustee Morales seconded the motion. ***The motion carried unanimously.***

Trustee Bolden advised that details, such as the timeline, the constitution of the Search Committee, and other information regarding the Search are posted on the College's website. she invited everyone to visit the website to obtain information regarding the Presidential Search.

New Business

Trustee Bolden called for any new business. There was none.

Public Comments

Ms. Cook read the following public comments submitted by Lev Zilbermints:

Greetings,

Allow me to take the opportunity to say a few words about the passing of Dr. Charles Larkin and Dr. Charles Reid, both of whom we recently lost. My apologies for not making the speech last week. Here it is.

Essex County College has recently lost two dearly beloved, irreplaceable, well-known, well-educated, dedicated pillars of knowledge. Two Pillars of Gibraltar that dedicated their entire lives to the education and betterment of generations of ECC students. Both Dr. Reid and Dr. Larkin have been with the college since it opened its doors in 1968 at 31 Clinton Street. Now, 55 years later, the college has expanded. Its many alumni include former students taught by the two honorable gentlemen I mentioned, Dr. Larkin and Dr. Reid.

I have had the honor of knowing both men when I was a student here, and later, as an alumnus. Dr. Larkin was very involved with the Faculty Association. I recall him sometimes speaking at Board of Trustees meetings years earlier. Even in old age, over 90 years old, he would visit ECC and help out.

Dr. Reid was a good man who spoke his mind. He helped many students find their calling. A true educator, Dr. Reid never wavered in standing up for education. Like his colleague, Dr. Reid was very involved with the Faculty Association. He taught generations of students. Even as the alumni association is rebuilding, I can say that his former students are among the ECC alumni.

We need more dedicated faculty like Dr. Charles Larkin and Dr. Charles Reid. If anything, these two men have set the gold standard for teaching and dedication at ECC. May their memory be forever honored by future generations and their spirits rest in peace.

Finally, I will be donating a check to Essex County College to honor the memory of these two wonderful professors.

May they rest in peace.

Amen.

*Lev D. Zilbermints
Class of 1993*

Trustee Bolden thanked Mr. Zilbermints for honoring Professors Larkin and Reid.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 4:15 pm by consensus.