

Board of Trustees of Northeastern Illinois University

Board Meeting Minutes
February 23, 2021

A meeting of the Board of Trustees of Northeastern Illinois University was convened on Thursday February 23, 2021 via video conference. Trustee Jim Palos, Chair of the Board, called the meeting to order at 10:08 a.m.

The following Trustees were in attendance: Carlos Azcoitia, Sherry Eagle, Barbara Fumo, Ann Kalayil, Gabriela Loreda, Jim Palos, Charlie Serrano, and Jonathan Stein

Trustees not in attendance: Marvin Garcia and George Vukotich

Others in attendance: Dr. Gloria Gibson, President; Mary Pat Burns, Board Counsel; Karl Voigt, Assistant Secretary to the Board; vice presidents, and members of the University community.

Chair Palos made an announcement that today's proceedings are being held by video conference in accordance with the recently renewed Disaster Proclamation by the Governor of Illinois effective February 5, 2021, and in accordance with Public Act 101-0640 that requires a roll call vote on each matter acted upon.

Opportunity for Public Comment

Chair Palos announced the Opportunity for Public Comment. 1 request was received to address the board. Another requestor asked to share a correspondence to President Gibson with the board which the Chair asked to be entered into the minutes and is presented below as an exhibit.

1. **Dr. Olivia Perlow:** faculty member
Topic: Enrollment, leadership and action

EXHIBIT

Dear President Gibson,

I am writing again to express my disappointment in what I perceive as a continued total lack of support for the NEIUPD. I expressed my opinion in an email I sent to you on October 28, 2020. I felt then as I feel today that a small very vocal group of faculty have continued to push the "Defund the NEIUPD" agenda. I have waited patiently for you to make a public statement supporting our department but as of this moment I have heard nothing. I was hoping at the Budget Hearing last Friday, I would hear some support. What I heard was the opposite. The question on eliminating officers was not answered directly and instead the usual "it's under review and no decision has been made" was given.

I continue to hear the same loud voices pushing their anti-police rhetoric. On January 28th I attended the Zoom meeting, "Campus after cops: Reimagining safety after policing Teach-in". I remained silent during this meeting so as not to interfere or cause any disruption but what I heard was very concerning to me as a member of the NEIUPD. A slide on the presentation was "YES WE MEAN ABOLISH THE POLICE". Various speakers expressed their displeasure with any police on campus. The written goal shown on another slide was to "REDUCE THE SIZE, SCOPE, POWERS AND WEAPONS OF THE NEIUPD AND ULTIMATELY ELIMINATE THE DEPARTMENT AND TO SUPPORT INVESTMENT IN REAL SAFETY". I won't go through the

other misrepresentations and flat out false statements made for the sake of brevity here. Let's just say that it is not conducive to good police community or employee relations on any campus or organization.

As the Operations Lieutenant here at the department I take our interactions with all members of the community seriously, recognizing how important good relationships are to good policing. Having the support of the administration is equally important. Recently a report, "NEIU Campus Safety UPBC Funding Study and Recommendations" was published and circulated. This report as I am sure you are familiar with, calls for the elimination of more than HALF of the officers in the NEIUPD. As you would expect this report sent shock waves through the department. Officers are now very concerned for their jobs and livelihoods. All have families and during this particularly difficult time with COVID the personnel here now have to worry about their jobs being eliminated. Morale is at an all time low. I have tried to boost their morale and let them know that the vast majority of NEIU faculty, employees and students support us and are happy we are here on campus to protect them. I am having difficulty even saying these words now due to the total silence from you on this very important subject.

The officers here at the NEIUPD have continued to work 24/7 during the pandemic while most other employees have worked remotely. The thanks they get is silence? I have thought long and hard about what to say and do. It is not easy for me to write the President of the University and express this but I feel I have no choice. I owe it to the members of the department to speak up. I have lost countless hours of sleep over this issue and have decided that it is in my best interest to retire from the NEIUPD. While there are a variety of factors that have gone into this decision, one of the most important considerations is working for an organization that does not support me or its members. I urge you to talk to the silent majority in the university who support the NEIUPD. I have heard from some staff that they agree with me but are afraid to express their opinion for fear of retribution. Let their voices guide you not the few vocal "defunders".

Here's an example for you. One of the authors of the NEIU Campus Safety UPBC Funding Study and Recommendations report was Erik Howenstine. Recently, as a result of the accreditation process we are going through a Targeted Announcement was sent to allow public comments about the department. Professor Howenstine submitted a letter that stated, "I have worked closely with Chief Escalante, and after more than 30 years on campus I have also come to know many officers and staff members from Campus safety. I have always had a positive impression. We also learned that NEIU is one of the safest campuses in the entire country. The 2019 Climate Study, fewer than 1% of 2,727 respondents had ever felt their safety was threatened for any reason at any time during the previous year. Just 15 respondents (0.55%) felt they had a negative interaction with campus police during that time. There were no citizen complaints against NEIU security personnel the entire year. From my view this is a professionally run division". I find it curious that on one hand Professor Howenstine is complimenting the department for being so professional, while at the same time authoring a report that calls for elimination of more than half of its members. The first time a serious incident occurs on campus and the police are not around to respond will cause a major uproar. Suddenly safety will be a priority.

I have to ask with the report and different meetings discussing reductions in the department's budget, is it because of the financial crisis going on due to the pandemic, State funding and decreasing enrollment or is it because of the "defund the police" agenda. I am convinced it is the latter. What happened to shared sacrifice? Are there any other departments in the university that have had recommendations to cut their budget by 50%? Are there any other departments that are going to layoff/fire numerous employees? Is NEIU going to cave to these few loud voices and fire dedicated employees simply to pacify these activists?

I am going to end my letter by saying I have enjoyed my 9 and a half years here at NEIU and worked with many fine officers who are dedicated and thoroughly committed to make NEIU the safest and best campus in the country. The officers and civilian members of the department have earned and deserve your support. By remaining silent you have shown to me and the members that you are NOT supporting the NEIUPD. I hope I am wrong in this feeling but whatever your motivation for remaining silent on this issue, the result is a feeling of being abandoned by the most important person in the university - the President. I am more than happy to discuss any issues raised either in person or virtually at any time in the future. ~ Lt. John J. Schulz

Closed Session

At 10:16 a.m., Trustee Eagle, seconded by Trustee Loreda, moved to convene in Closed Session.

Discussion: there was no discussion

Roll was called and the vote was as follows:

Azcoitia - Yes	Fumo - Yes	Kalayil - Yes	Palos - Yes	Stein - Yes
Eagle - Yes	Garcia -	Loreda - Yes	Serrano - Yes	Vukotich -

The motion carried.

Return to Open Session

At 11:16 a.m., Trustee Eagle, seconded by Trustee Stein, moved to re-convene in Open Session. The motion was approved by acclamation.

Action Item

Action to Recommend a Slate of Committee Members and Chair for the 2021 Ad Hoc Committee on the President's Evaluation

Recommended committee slate: Carlos Azcoitia, Chair; Sherry Eagle; Marvin Garcia; and Ann Kalayil.

Trustee Eagle, seconded by Trustee Serrano, moved to approve the slate of committee members and chair.

Discussion: Trustee Eagle has agreed to serve as an advisor to the committee. In the absence of a confirmation to serve, Trustee Stein has agreed to serve on the committee in the event Trustee Garcia cannot.

Roll was called and the vote was as follows:

Azcoitia - Yes	Fumo - Yes	Kalayil - Yes	Palos - Yes	Stein - Yes
Eagle - Yes	Garcia -	Loreda -	Serrano - Yes	Vukotich -

The motion carried.

Old/New Business

Chair Palos asked if there was any old or new business to bring forward. No old or new business was presented.

There was no further business.

Motion to adjourn

At 11:19 a.m. Trustee Serrano, seconded by Trustee Eagle moved to adjourn the meeting. The meeting was adjourned by acclamation.

Respectfully submitted,

Jim Palos, Chair
Karl Voigt, Assistant Board Secretary
Approved April 15, 2021