

**DRAFT**

**New River Community College Board (Region 10)  
Meeting Number Three Hundred Seventy-Three**

**MINUTES**

**March 2, 2026**

Meeting number three hundred seventy-three of the New River Community College Board was held on Monday, March 2, 2026, at New River Community College, Dublin.

**BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT**

Mr. Christopher Calfee (Radford City)  
Mr. William (Bill) Cunningham (Pulaski County)  
Dr. Margaret (Peggy) Dewald-Link (Floyd County)  
Mr. John Hale (Giles County)  
Dr. Richard (Dick) Harshberger (Radford City)  
Mr. Eric Johnsen (Montgomery County)  
Mr. Chris McKlarney (Giles County)  
Ms. Jessica Littlejohn (Montgomery County)  
Mr. Cameron Peel (Pulaski County)  
Mr. Jonathan Sweet (Pulaski County)

**BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT**

Mr. Craig Chancellor (Floyd County)  
Ms. Bobbie Potter (Montgomery County)

**STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT**

Ms. Melissa Anderson, Vice President for Finance and Administrative Services  
Dr. Peter Anderson, Vice President for Instruction and Student Services  
Mr. Brian Bolling, Chancellor's Staff Advisory Committee Representative  
Ms. Debbie Bond, Interim Dean of Health Professions  
Dr. Robert Brandon, President  
Dr. Pam Hanks, Dean of Instructional Services and Innovation  
Dr. Deborah Kennedy, Executive Director NRCC Educational Foundation  
Mr. Tim Jones, Director of Information Technology and Facilities Services  
Ms. Lori Lavery, Dean of Business and Technologies  
Ms. Tammy Smith, Interim Dean of Student Services  
Dr. Tammy Parks, President of Faculty Assembly  
Ms. Kathy Ridpath, Administrative Assistant, President's Office  
Dr. Mark Rowh, Vice President for Workforce Development and External Relations  
Dr. Fritz Streff, Director of Institutional Effectiveness and Research  
Dr. Sarah Tolbert-Hurysz, Dean of Arts and Sciences

**GUESTS PRESENT**

Ms. Linda Claussen, NRCC Retiree  
Mr. Ray Wurzbarger, NRCC Retiree

**1. Call to Order**

Mr. Bill Cunningham, Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. A quorum was present and due notice had been mailed and published.

**2. Welcome and Introductions**

Mr. Cunningham welcomed everyone in attendance.

**3. Agenda for Approval**

Mr. Cunningham asked for a motion to approve the agenda.

**Motion:** Mr. Cameron Peel made a motion to approve the agenda. Mr. Eric Johnsen seconded the motion.

**Action:** The motion carried unanimously.

**4. Minutes for Approval**

The minutes of meeting number three hundred seventy-two, held on Monday, December 1, 2025, were disseminated in the meeting packet. No questions were posed. Mr. Cunningham asked for a motion to approve the minutes.

**Motion:** Mr. Peel made a motion to approve the minutes. Dr. Dick Harshberger seconded the motion.

**Action:** The motion was approved.

**5. Retirement Resolution**

Ms. Linda Claussen retired in 2025 but was unable to attend the board meeting in December when retirees for 2025 were recognized. Ms. Claussen was recognized by Mr. Cunningham and received a framed resolution recognizing her years of service to the college.

**6. President's Report**

Dr. Robert Brandon recognized Dr. Tammy Parks, Faculty Assembly President, who provided information on a recent competition. Dr. Parks reported that VCCS Poet Laureate and Visual Art Luminary competitions were recently held. Two NRCC students were winners in these competitions. The state competition will be held at Virginia Western Community College March 27-28. She noted that a gallery exhibition will be held soon. She invited the board to attend.

Dr. Brandon introduced Mr. Brian Bolling, who was appointed by the college to the Chancellor's Staff Advisory Committee (CSAC). Mr. Bolling reported he was appointed as the college's CSAC representative to the VCCS since the local staff assembly committee had been inactive for the past few years. Plans are underway to reinstate the committee and elect an official CSAC representative.

Dr. Brandon provided a summary report of actions in the General Assembly in the 2026 session as they affect the VCCS. The VCCS had six goals for the year for the General Assembly. They felt they were successful with meeting five of the goals. Goals included:

- Maintain base funding for the VCCS
  - Included in both House and Senate proposed budgets
- Provide ongoing access and affordability funding
  - Included in both House and Senate proposed budgets
- Increase FastForward funding
  - Both House and Senate proposed budgets show an increase in funding
- Provide new funding to expand high-cost, high-demand CTE programs
  - Some funding is included in the House but not in the Senate proposed budgets
- Eliminate tuition freeze
  - Both House and Senate included in proposed budgets
- Provide new dual enrollment funding
  - Not included in either budget

Dr. Brandon noted that no capital projects will be approved this year. The Advanced Manufacturing Credentialing Center is number two on the capital project list.

Dr. Brandon reported that he, along with others from the college leadership team, took three students to Richmond recently. They visited local legislators on issues concerning support for the overall agenda of the VCCS.

Dr. Brandon reported that NRCC made the Aspen top 200 community colleges in the nation and was eligible to apply for 2027 Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence. In the application process, Aspen asked for an interview and sent college data. Some interesting college data Aspen collected included:

- Students at NRCC are 37.5 percent more likely to graduate than the national average of community college students.
- Students who choose to transfer from NRCC are more likely to earn a bachelor's degree than the national average for community college students.
- Students who choose to go into the workplace earn more than the living wage for the area.

Dr. Brandon referred to the document "College Focus Areas and Priorities" that was previously distributed. He stated that after his conversations with the board, faculty, staff, students and community, these areas of focus were created. He noted that some are ongoing projects, but the college has achieved or are progressing with everything on the list. The list included:

- Honoring a legacy of care
  - Review and improve hiring and onboarding
  - Launch as staff assembly
  - Boost student life participation
  - Ensure professional development exists for all employees
  - Create an employee engagement plan

- Develop and implement a strategic plan to enhance safety and security
- Looking toward the future
  - Modernize at least four learning spaces
  - Launch two new programs
  - Enroll more students in high-wage careers
  - Develop new enrollment pipelines for adult, career-seeking, FastForward, and transfer students
  - Establish a College Innovation Fund
- Deepening our commitment of student success
  - Increase early credit momentum
  - Improve transfer rates
  - Improve retention rates
  - Improve graduation rates
  - Meet VCCS credential goals
  - Close gaps for part-time students

Dr. Brandon provided information on the president's evaluation process. Information containing highlights of college work along with a link to the survey were emailed to the board recently. Surveys need to be completed by April 11.

Dr. Brandon provided a report of the lockdown on Friday, February 20. The college received a threatening call that morning. Law enforcement found the threat credible to move to a lockdown. They searched the buildings and found no evidence of a threat, so the lockdown was cancelled. He noted that the college has regular drills and was prepared to respond quickly and effectively. Law enforcement commended the speed and skill of the response. The incident did provide the college with an opportunity to review the processes in action to assess what went right and find ways for improvement. A suggestion was made by the board to send a letter of commendation to law enforcement for the way they handled the incident. Mr. Cunningham will write the letter on behalf of the board expressing their gratitude.

Dr. Brandon reported that work has begun on the college's master plan that is required every ten years. He reported that faculty have already engaged in some of the work and have had some good ideas for the plan. He noted that the college will ask for the board's feedback at a future meeting. On another note, Dr. Brandon reported that work is being done on a strategic enrollment management plan. This is a structured, multi-unit approach to identifying program opportunities, assessing market demand, and prioritizing initiatives that can produce sustained enrollment gains.

The reception for Dr. Pat Huber, honoring her as President Emeritus, will be held on March 31 at 3:00 p.m. Invitations have been sent.

## **7. Finance and Administrative Services Report**

### Tuition Revenue Deficit Reserve Fund Status

Ms. Melissa Anderson referred the Board to Exhibit B, Tuition Revenue Deficit Reserve Fund Status. No questions were posed.

## 2024-2025 Local Funds Statements of Receipts and Expenditures

Exhibit D, 2024-2025 Local Funds Statement of Receipts and Expenditures, was distributed and reviewed. No questions were posed.

Ms. Anderson presented two items for action. The Budget and Finance Committee met prior to the meeting to discuss these exhibits.

- (1) FY2027 Local Funds Budget (Exhibit D) – On behalf of the Budget and Finance Committee, Mr. Chris McKlarney discussed and recommended approval of the local funds budget.

**Action:** The FY2027 Local Funds Budget was approved by unanimous vote.

- (2) Student Activities Budget 2026-27 (Exhibit E): The sources of funds for the budget are local funds and student activities fees. The total budget request is \$106,000. On behalf of the Budget and Finance Committee, Mr. McKlarney recommended approval of the Students Activities Budget. Questions were posed and discussed.

**Action:** The Student Activities Budget was approved by unanimous vote.

## **8. Technology and Facilities Services Report**

### Student Entrance Plaza

Mr. Jones informed the Board that the student entrance plaza is nearing completion. The remainder to complete are hanging the entrance sign and installing remainder of capstones on the walls. The project should be completed in two weeks. Questions were posed and discussed.

### Covered Walkways

Mr. Jones provided an update on the covered walkways that connect all the buildings of the college. The walkways are completed with the exception of fascia that will be installed on the sides to match the trims on the buildings. This project should be completed after the fascia is received and installed by the contractor.

### Campus Safety Update

Mr. Jones informed the board that the cameras and the wireless projects for the parking lots are moving along well. These projects should be completed by June. On another note, he reported that an informal campus safety audit was conducted last year. One finding was to keep the high-risk instructional areas locked. Electronic locks are being installed on the three interior doors of the Instrumentation classroom. Faculty will be issued key cards for access to the classroom. Students needing to work on class projects will also be issued a key card for access to the classroom. He noted that this will be a prototype project before installing electronic locks on other high-risk classrooms.

### Parking Lot Plan

The Parking Lot Plan (Exhibit F) is required by the VCCS to be approved every two years by the Local College Board. The Building and Site Committee of the Board met

prior to the Board meeting to discuss the Parking Lot Plan. On behalf of the Building and Sites Committee, Dr. Peggy Dewald-Link recommended approval of the Parking Lot Plan as presented.

**Action:** The Parking Lot Plan was approved by unanimous vote.

## **8. Institutional Effectiveness and Research Report**

### Enrollment

Dr. Fritz Streff provided a report on enrollment for the spring semester. The semester shows a decrease of 2.3 percent in headcount and 1.4 percent in FTEs from this point in time last spring. Discounting dual enrollment, there is an increase of 2.1 percent in FTEs and 2.2 percent in headcount. The college was 16<sup>th</sup> overall in the VCCS in terms of FTE change rank. He discussed reasons for the slight decline in enrollment. Questions were posed and discussed.

## **9. Instruction and Student Services**

### Paramedic Training Lab

Dr. Peter Anderson referred to Exhibit G - renderings of the college's paramedic training classroom renovation. The lab will be used for the EMS-Paramedic program. The program will offer credit and non-credit offerings. He noted that funding for the program was earmarked by the General Assembly from Workforce Pipeline funds. At this point, over 30 students are enrolled in either EMT, Paramedic, or Advanced EMT courses. Instruction is being conducted now, but the lab should be completed by fall of this year. A suggestion was made by a board member to reach out to Carilion for training opportunities.

Dr. Anderson informed the staff that Ms. Debbie Bond was named the Interim Dean of Health Professions. The process of hiring a new dean is underway.

## **10. Workforce Development and External Relations Report**

### Workforce Development Update

Dr. Rowh stated that he is excited about the opportunities for both credit and non-credit offerings in certain programs at the college. On another note, he commented that Workforce Development is ready and excited about growing its programs with the additional funding from the General Assembly for the upcoming year.

### SACSCOC Update

Dr. Rowh informed the Board that the college's compliance certification report is due in 2027 with reaffirmation scheduled for 2028. Work has begun on this report that will be submitted early next year. The SACSCOC review team will visit the college in the fall of 2027. More information will be forthcoming on this process.

### President Emeritus Information

Dr. Rowh referred to the college's mission statement that was distributed. He asked the board to review the statement and let him know if there are suggestions for edits.

## **11. NRCC Educational Foundation**

### ACCE Update

Dr. Deborah Kennedy provided an update on the ACCE program. Currently there are 223 ACCE students enrolled for the spring semester – Floyd County – 18, Giles County – 23, Montgomery County – 113, Pulaski County – 51 and Radford City – 16. She noted that there are an additional 63 students who are part of the ACCE group but receive full financial aid. These students still completed their community service. She also provided an update for the fall semester. There are 728 students who have applied for ACCE – Floyd County – 63, Giles County – 65, Montgomery County 379, Pulaski County – 168 and Radford City – 53. These students have completed the ACCE application and also completed (or in the process of completing) the FAFSA application. ACCE acceptance announcements will be sent out on April 1 with the deadline to accept by April 15. On another note, Dr. Kennedy reported that the Lunch Pail Defense Foundation made a global presentation of \$150,000, of which ACCE will receive a significant portion of that contribution. Questions were posed and discussed.

### Scholarships Update

Dr. Kennedy reported that 457 scholarships were awarded this spring. The average age of scholarship recipients for spring was 27.6. Scholarship recipients enroll in an average of 10.4 credits. 60 percent of these students will be returning for the fall semester; 24 percent will graduate, and 10 percent have not responded at this point. She reported that this year the Foundation has added seven endowed scholarships.

Dr. Kennedy provided an update on the Pathways to Professions initiative. The goal was to create an endowment large enough to pay for licensing and credentialing fees in perpetuity for students. She noted that these fees create a barrier for some students. At this point, the endowment has reached \$100,000.

## **12. NRCC Board Terms of Appointments**

Referring to the chart of appointments, Mr. Cunningham encouraged members to make note of expiration of terms. Three terms will expire this year with one being eligible for reappointment. The college will send letters to the respective localities.

## **13. Appointment of the Nominations Committee**

Mr. Cunningham appointed Dr. Dewald-Link and Mr. Eric Johnsen to the Nominations Committee for 2026-2027. The committee will need to present a slate of officers (Chair and Vice Chair) at the June meeting of the NRCC Board for the board's approval.

## **14. Open Discussion/Q&A Session**

Mr. Chris Calfee opened the floor for discussion. He expressed his appreciation to the staff. He also stated it is always nice to hear about employees retiring and the resolution reading is very appropriate.

Mr. Peel talked about an alternate location for the June board meeting. He invited

everyone to join him on his boat on Claytor Lake. Mr. Jonathan Sweet discussed a possible location for the official meeting to be held at the Claytor Lake Meeting Center and then convene to the boat afterwards. Dr. Brandon asked board members to send their thoughts on these suggestions.

Recognition was given to Dr. Kennedy who was recently officially named Executive Director of the NRCC Foundation. She had been serving in an interim capacity since July 2025.

The next regular meeting of the New River Community College Board is scheduled for Monday, June 2, 2025. The location of the meeting will be announced at a later date.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Mr. Bill Cunningham, Chair

Dr. Robert Brandon, Secretary