



MEETING MINUTES AND AGENDA
SPECIAL MEETING
CONSIDERATION OF APPLICATION FOR CREATION
OF A COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT AT GILLETTE COLLEGE

November 20, 2020
8:30 am
Capitol Complex & Online
Herschler Building, Auditorium, Room H040

8:30 a.m.

CALL TO ORDER
ROLL CALL

Commissioners

Commissioner Boal- Present
Commissioner Blikre – Present
Commissioner and Vice Chair Dooley – Present
Commissioner Frederick – Present
Commissioner and Chair Freeze – Present
Commissioner Newman – Present
Commissioner Oakley – Present

Ex Officio Members

Governor Gordon or Lachelle Brant – Present (Lachelle Brant)
Superintendent Balow or Shelley Hammel – Present
(Superintendent Balow)
Community College Commission Executive Director, Dr. Sandy
Caldwell – Present

Commission Staff

Dr. Ben Moritz – Present
Mr. Larry Buchholtz – Present
Ms. Paris Edeburn – Present
Mr. Rob Dennis – Present

INTRODUCTIONS

Commissioner Freeze noted that she would appreciate having the college presidents introduce themselves.

- Dr. Walt Tribley, Northern Wyoming Community College District
- Dr. Darrin Devine, Casper College
- Dr. Leslie Travers, Eastern Wyoming College
- Dr. Brad Tyndall, Central Wyoming College
- Dr. Joe Schaffer, Laramie County Community College
- Dr. Kim Dale, Western Wyoming Community College
- Ms. Lisa Watson, Northwest College

Those present representing Campbell County included:

- Mr. Josh McGrath
- Representative Elect Mr. Bill Fortner
- Mr. Jerry Tystedt
- Mr. Robert Palmer
- Mr. DG Reardon
- Senator Jeff Wasserburger
- Ms. Sherry Colling
- Mr. Del Shelsted
- Mr. Rusty Bell
- Ms. Carol Sieger
- Mr. Pat Davidson
- Mr. Dave Horning

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Commissioner Freeze asked for a motion to approve the meeting agenda. Commissioner Blikre moved, Commissioner Dooley seconded. Motion carried.

A. PROCESS REVIEW AND 90-DAY CALENDAR

Review Process Timeline (Presentation)	TAB 1
Campbell County Application	TAB 2
Campbell County Required Additional Documents	TAB 3

Dr. Caldwell opened the meeting and welcomed all. She proceeded to review the process and provide backstory. Dr. Caldwell was contacted by Campbell County representatives in mid-July who expressed interest in creating a new college district. She recognized that at one time the agency had agency rules pertaining to district creation. She recognized that Ms. Seiger had been wonderful to work with, yet the initial goal of the Commission was for the creation of a clear rule pathway should Campbell County want to proceed with district creation. The Commission already had a meeting scheduled for the end of August. It was determined that the Commission would proceed with rule adoption for regular and emergency rules at that meeting. By end of July, the Commission had drafted an application. The application was adopted on August 28. Both sets of rules were also adopted during the August 28 meeting. Dr.

Caldwell reflected that it was incumbent upon us to make sure that the review process did not create any unintentional barriers. The Higher Learning Commission (HLC) also helped make sure that the process did not create any barriers.

Dr. Caldwell acknowledged that back in 1985 and 1992 district creation rules were in place. However, up to August 27 and 28 the rules had been lost. But the rules were very important pieces.

Rules as per district creation pertain to one or more counties, the existence of a new community college itself, creation of a new board of trustees, and require state level approval. Regardless of whether the commission approves or not approves the application packet, the next steps would include review and approval by the state legislature and then ultimately the voters.

Once all initial approvals are complete then the next activity to kick off includes accreditation. Accreditation involves a number of important steps including issuance of financial aid, transfer of credits, and the ability to host athletics.

Dr. Moritz detailed the process further adding that all of the colleges have a taxing district and then subsequently a service area. He recognized the potential for both a new district and resulting service area. He noted today is for all to look at Campbell County and its impact on northeastern Wyoming. The Commission is also looking into how the new district will address the state's educational needs.

Dr. Caldwell added that Campbell County had created a taskforce and then submitted an application. The clock started on September 1 starting a 90-day review and consideration period. Statute requires submission of the application packet to the Legislature regardless of the Commission's decision. If the Legislature approves the application then the issue will go before the electorate for the county to conduct a special election and which would tentatively take place during the next election.

Should the county voters approve, then the new district and trustees will need to start building the administrative, student services, and academic structure. Students would already be available to continue. Then begins the long process of Accreditation after state approval of three components: Eligibility, Candidacy, and eventually Accreditation. During that time they would be building the internal capacity. Faculty and student services are currently in place.

The district creation application borrowed heavily from former applications and heavily supported accreditation. There are sections including statement of purpose, demographic and educational need, educational and student support, and institutional accreditation.

Dr. Caldwell detailed the 90-day timeline. She noted that when the Commission received the application, Campbell County also provided additional required information including a petition of 500 or more of the electorate. Additional required documents came to the Commission until August 5th. After reviewing the calendar it was final determination

meeting was scheduled for November 20, 2020. The Commission then verified enrollment and potential impacts which needed to be done so within 30 days of receiving the application. Within a 60 day requirement, the Task Force would acknowledge proceed with outlining certain recommendations to the new district board.

The Commission initiated a needs assessment survey recognizing that there are few entities capable of doing this type of work. The Western Interstate Commission on Higher Education (WICHE) was hired to complete the assessment survey. WICHE is recognized within Wyoming statutes. Dr. Caldwell acknowledged WICHE's level of expertise, noting they would be objective and provide clear information so that a decision could be made. WICHE subcontracted with NCHEMS. She suggested NCHEMS as the knife for higher education data.

The process overview is public and on the Commission website. Anyone can see all phases. The next tab of information is the Campbell County Application which is publically available. The Commission sent a letter confirming a complete application the day after receiving the application. Tabs link to the application, additional documents including the valuation, a higher education study, the petition signature documents, and a great overview map of the facilities. The Taskforce had previously submitted a notice of intent along with additional documents.

Commissioner Freeze reminded all emergency rules were created to create annexation and creation of a new district. The emergency rules will be finalized and become regular Commission rules to prevent future searching for a process.

- B. PUBLIC COMMENT (Comments should be limited to 3 minutes duration for each agenda item. Please state your name, affiliation, locale, and agenda item to address)

Jeff Wasserburger, State Senator - Spoke on behalf of his constituents representing Campbell and Convers County. He noted he is present to speak about an issue vital to the community. He humbly asked for an "Aye" vote. He noted he is an advocate for Gillette College. He suggested the road to an independent district is rocky. The bill must be signed before the house and senate and ultimately before the voters. A new district within the state has not been started since 1968. Today Campbell County has a population of 30,000 and a county population of 50,000. Today, the same school has an enrollment of 1,200 with an additional high school and the alternative high school Westwood. Clearly the community and the students meet the statutory requirements. Gillette College meets the community's overall needs.

For any college district created, statute requires the assessed valuation must be \$1.2 million, Campbell County has an assessed valuation of \$4 billion. The valuation would have to drop by 80% for the county to be unable to provide the needed support for the college district. Gillette's economy continues to thrive, prosper, and grow.

The Citizens of the area have invested \$90 million in capital construction. The tax payers are proud as is the local community.

The question is about local control. Campbell County has outpaced Sheridan in population and valuation. It is time for Gillette College to be a separate community college with its own Board of Trustees. On behalf of the citizens we respectfully request an “Aye” vote. He thanked all for their time and service.

Tracy Wasserburger – Noted she is available to speak and happy to do so if it pleases the board. As a part of the Gillette College Advisory board, she echoes those sentiments and has been a center point for the community. She noted the community growth and investment, and that it would be best to have our own Board of Trustees who know this as their own board. I can speak how critical it is to have these active workers representing our community. Forth seven percent of enrolled students are representative of the community.

D.G. Reardon – Thanked all for the hard work that had previously been done. He also wanted to thank those who made the effort to visit Campbell County and the Gillette Campus. He noted that the Taskforce concurs with the overall outcomes and conclusions outlined in the survey. The Taskforce is very appreciative of the thoroughness of the document. Campbell County is a community and city of doers. He thanked the Commission and all the task force members.

Commissioner Freeze – Noted her appreciation of the Taskforce’s work as well.

Mr. Bill Fortner, Representative Elect - spoke suggesting he wanted to bring to everybody’s attention that the Governor had issued an order to limit 15% of educational funding. He thought this was the worst time in the world to bring forward an application.

C. REGULAR AGENDA:

I. PRESENTATION BY THE CAMPBELL COUNTY COMMISSIONER TASK FORCE FOR THE FORMATION OF THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT AT GILLETTE COLLEGE [TAB 4](#)

Mr. Robert Palmer, Head of the Campbell County Community College District Task Force approached the podium and thanked all for their time and commitment, noting that last July all were not expecting this project to be on their schedules. He also offered his appreciation to WICHE and NCHEMS staff. He reflected that he had previously given a formal presentation at least twice which included handouts. As such he would prefer to defer the presentation and proceed through the rest of the agenda.

Commissioner Freeze asked for to complete the formal presentation. Mr. Palmer continued that Gillette College has been a campus for 50+ years earning the right to form a district through evolution. He recognized a wonderful

partnership with NWCCD all while celebrating the opportunity to have a unique community college. It Gillette College is almost 47% of the NWCCD headcount inclusive of almost 1,400 students.

Gillette College is a full fledged campus with all programs and student services. He noted their appreciation of the Commission taking a tour of the campus. Gillette College is a beautiful campus because of the facilities built through partnerships.

Commissioner Blikre asked if Mr. Palmer could explain how each building was built and funded. Mr. Palmer provided a brief synopsis of each building:

- Old Main was approved by the Legislature and citizens of Campbell County about 17 years ago. It is owned by Campbell County citizens and includes a sinking fund/maintenance fund.
- The Carter Nursing facility was a partnership with the city, hospital, and more it is owned by the citizens of Campbell County.
- Tanner Village was built with a bond issued between the City of Gillette and the Commission and is owned by the City of Gillette in partnership with the college.
- The Tech Ed Center is a partnership between the State of Wyoming, State Legislature, and Industry Partners. County Commissioners asked for help building the facility and was able to levy 12 mills to pay off the building. At the end of the project, industry lowered the levy back down to 11. Campbell County owns the majority of the building.
- The Pronghorn Center, the AG Complex, and inspiration hall, which includes a nursing lab and student services facility, all was done in a partnership with the City of Gillette who is currently paying off the respective bonds.
- The Rodeo Agriculture Center is owned by the Gillette College Foundation.
- The Area59 center building was purchased by an anonymous donor and then dedicated to the College.

Commissioner Blikre asked how many of the buildings have maintenance funds to be used for ongoing maintenance to the facilities. Mr. Palmer noted that Old Main, The Pronghorn Center, the Tech Center all have maintenance fund accounts with a combined total of about \$7 million. Commissioner Dooley asked if the anonymous donor who took the old building and totally remodeled it had also paid for the remodel creating the Area59 center. Mr. Palmer noted the facility is

used by a number of people and is also paid for by an Economic Development Authority grant. He also confirmed the district did not own the facility but that it is owned by the foundation. Commissioner Freeze acknowledged that Gillette College is a beautiful and well maintained facility. Mr. Reardon confirmed that both the residence hall and area 59 is owned by the foundation with sinking maintenance funds.

Mr. Palmer provided a slide showing a brief overview of the finances. Gillette College's budget through the NWCCD is about \$11 million. The NWCCD budget was a little over \$30 million. The slide shows again where they receive their state appropriation, tuition and fees, BOCHES money, etc. An additional significant component is city and county funding.

The next slide is similar to the handout capturing a one page series of data. The important aspect is the headcount and FTE impact. One of the things not previously listed was the pronghorn soccer field. This was a partnership between the school district and the Campbell County Recreation Board. It is a beautiful NCAA and NJCAA field. It is also used by the high school and the community. That field is managed by the recreation district. The community has a vested interest in the facilities.

Mr. Palmer continued because we are not part of the taxing district. The community has stepped forward indicating the importance of higher education. BOCHES has also contributed annually. Part of the BOCHES half mill goes to Gillette College. And an optional 1% is contributed to the college. Those dollars are approved by the citizens. The hospital also contributes to the college and to the nursing program.

Commissioner Blikre asked where the money came from to purchase the land for the campus? Mr. Palmer responded that the land, approximately 40 acres, was donated by the City of Gillette.

Mr. Palmer closed with noting they have had a mutually beneficial relationship with NWCCD. Yet they want to be able to determine our relationship, and future.

II. PRESENTATION AND REMARKS BY NORTHERN WYOMING COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT

Dr. Walt Tribley, President of the Northern Wyoming Community College District was joined by Mr. Walt Wragge. He noted he certainly appreciated all the time and effort contributed to the process. In his opinion the only contextual issue is funding. He shared his thought that he wanted to give Campbell County a toe hold and then the state would not adequately fund.

He also pointed out what the NWCCD Trustees have done to bridge the two communities. The Trustees had approved various capital requests, the last of which was the Tanner Village project.

Dr. Tyndall noted regarding our mutually beneficial partnership and moving forward. He wanted to read something included in the accreditation criterion 5 speaks to a district's ability to approve its educational opportunity to respond to be fiscally solvent enough to take advantages of opportunities. He added that NWCCD stands to lose roughly \$3 million from the loss of a new district. He asked how can the NWCCD district continue to be fully solvent to continue to provide service, noting NWCCD will need to have separate line item funding.

Commissioner Boal asked if the NWCCD Board of Trustees had taken a formal position on the issue. Dr. Tribley noted that there was a range of thoughts, but the Board has not taken a stance. Commissioner Boal commented that when he read the assessment that NWCCD would take a hit in FTE. Dr. Tribley noted that it would be made up in weighted FTE and possibly through redistribution and recapture. Additionally there are concerns for capital construction. He proposed if we were to bring in a new college, let's do it with the intent of bringing in the right financial resources. But let's not do this within the current funding situation.

Commissioner Freeze asked about the \$3 million estimate as a net loss or picking up some of Campbell County's additional costs? Dr. Tyndall reflected that the \$3 million is simply money coming into the district lost upon creation of the new district. Dr. Tyndall noted the making of this decision without consideration of the funding impacts. He thinks the whole report does not emphasize the impact to Sheridan College. Commissioner Blikre suggested that the district stands to lose about \$3 million. Dr. Tyndall added that the district is set up in an efficient way. Commissioner Blikre reflected that the income received from Campbell County is more. Dr. Tyndall noted that the amount of overhead the district has at Gillette College is very little. Because the district is very efficient and that the new district will rely on NWCCD to continue overall services. Commissioner Blikre clarified that the amount of revenue is more, but the district does not have to spend as much because Campbell County is already funding so much? Dr. Tyndall noted the revenue generated at Campbell County is a very efficient part of the district. Commissioner Blikre recognized that if Campbell County is able to operate that efficiently then perhaps Sheridan College could operate as efficiently as well. Commissioner Freeze reminded that the funding formula is run based on the FTE. NWCCD will look a little different if this happens. She asked if the board had considered how that goes forward? Dr. Tyndall noted that as you consider approving the new college, there is also a need to consider approving some additional funding or directing of funding to limit the impact on the other colleges.

III. ASSESSMENT REVIEW AND PRESENTATION - WESTERN INTERSTATE COMMISSION FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

- Need Assessment Presentation

[TAB 5](#)

Commissioner Freeze noted the next topic for review was the assessment review presentation.

Dr. Caldwell added she had already provided a brief overview about WICHE at the beginning of the meeting. She then introduced Patrick Lane, V.P. for Policy and Analysis at WICHE. She added that WICHE will outline the process and then go into detail on the needs assessment survey.

- Executive Summary

[TAB 6](#)

Dr. Lane reintroduced himself and noted he was joined by Dr. Brian Prescott, who is Vice President for the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS).

He also acknowledged some of the members of the team Lillian Adiaz who is a Policy Analyst, Demaree Michelau who is WICHE President and Christina Sedney who is WICHE's Director of Policy Initiatives and State Authorization.

Dr. Lane recognized that this has been a difficult topic to discuss with strong feelings across the board. He also thanked all those who had provided assistance noting Dr. Tribley and his colleagues had been extremely generous with providing data and information.

Robert Palmer and Carol Seiger from the Gillette College advisory board and Campbell County helped arrange numerous interviews and provided numerous documents. Who also set up a site visit and tour of the campus. He also recognized Commission staff who have assisted as well. Numerous others gave freely of time.

He recognized that the conclusions and findings may give rise to future questions. Not all may agree with the findings. Ultimately the discussion differs from others as many of the questions raised result from subjective questions rather than relying on objective data. This is due to the fact that Gillette College already exists as part of an outreach district site. Our question here is whether there is a need for Gillette College to become an independent district. Dr. Lane welcomed further discussion.

Dr. Lane pulled up slides from his screen. WICHE is an interstate compact organization focused on enhancing education in all areas of the west. Wyoming adopted the compact and joined in 1953. NCHEMS, who WICHE is partnering with, has its focus on improving strategic decision making in postsecondary education systems and institutions.

Both organizations have a history of working with Wyoming stakeholders on a range of efforts to serve the state's students.

The objectives of the survey are laid out in statute specifically W.S. 21-18-312. After an application has been submitted to create a new district, the Community College Commission shall cause a survey to be conducted covering five areas:

1. Including the need for the community college in the proposed district.
2. The need for the college in the state.
3. The financial ability of the proposed district to support the college.
4. The educational soundness of the proposed community college plan.
5. Any other matters which might assist the Commission in the disposition of the application.

WICHIE and NCHEMS have payed particular attention to potential financial impacts to other institutions in the state.

Not included in the survey is that the need for a college in Gillette is well established including strong community and employer demand, history and a substantial existing campus. The analysis focuses instead on the need for an independent community college district in Campbell County.

WICHIE and NCHEMS have collected data from various sources including enrollment and budget data, including the allocation formula and state revenue projections. They have also utilized readily available data from the Integrated Postsecondary Data System (IPEDS). Additionally they have conducted numerous interviews and focus groups including approximately 50 people. And WICHE has presented at and attended public listening sessions. They have completed an extensive document review including labor market demands, proposed budgets, Wyoming statutes and Strategic and master plans. WICHE also completed a site visit and campus tour.

WICHE's intention was not to develop a fully balanced sample that equally represents all points of view. Further work is not an attempt to adjudicate events or disputes, but instead understand particular viewpoints from all stakeholders.

Methodology at a general level is a review of qualitative and quantitative data. The interview process used snowball sampling where interviewees are asked to share contacts of other potential interviewees who can share additional information. There were a couple of models used that were more complicated. The analysis was based on existing statutes and

regulations. WICHE is fully aware of some of the proposals that would impact some of the conclusions presented.

He provided a quick overview of the presentation. Commenting that he has been working through the background and introduction. Upcoming presentation items include a summary of the application, findings, alternative options and conclusions. The conclusions will restate what is provided in the report executive summary.

Dr. Lane transitioned to a summary of the application emphasizing the points made include the views and opinions of Campbell County. Key themes as WICHE focused on the application surround governance, facilities, educational plan, and financial resources. The fundamental point made is the current governance is not meeting the needs of the community. The approximate cause of the application focuses on the 2020-2021 budget cut decision that eliminated sports and other extracurricular programs across the district. The application notes the issue raised additional budget cut concerns on the horizon. Concerns are summarized as,

“An independent community college district will be better equipped to address the educational demands of Campbell County. Establishing the Gillette College Community College District would prevent having to compromise and be detrimental in not being able to provide essential services or programs, because of an external perspective that does not always recognize and align with the uniqueness of the area, the workforce, and citizens”.

Dr. Lane specifically noted that the concerns raised in the application are that the NWCCD Board of Trustees is not responsive to the electorate in Sheridan County and not fully to the residents of Campbell County.

The application also gives an overview of the collective facilities and their ownership on the campus which includes a preponderance of facilities owned by Campbell County and the City of Gillette. For some of the facilities jointly owned there are clauses in place which provide for the transfer of ownership at a prorated price.

The educational plan in the application is pretty straight forward. If approved by the commission, Legislature, and electorate, a new Board of Trustees would hire an executive team and pursue accreditation. Appendix D of the report includes more information about the accreditation process. Educational offerings and support services are expected to continue. Accreditation is expected to take approximately 5 years.

In the finance section the application notes the property values in the county are expected to decline from current levels to \$3.6 billion and remain steady into the future. The overall aim for the new institution is derive revenue with: 34% state support, 33% local revenue, and 33% tuition and fees. Transition expenses for community college management information system are acknowledged and revenue collected within one year after voter approval would cover such expenses.

- Needs Assessment Outcomes

[TAB 7](#)

Dr. Lane transitioned into the findings of their analysis. He noted the findings differ slightly based on the fact that it is not trying to identify the need for a college in Campbell County but is trying to establish the need for an independent community college district serving the Campbell County community. Findings is divided into several buckets.

To analyze the need for an independent district in Campbell County, they began with the qualitative and subjective question of defining need. Which is difficult to objectively define. They examined the state's interests as defined in statute identifying economic diversification and growth as a key goals. Also there is a desire for efficiency leading to oversight by WCCC. Balancing local control and statewide efficiency has been a long running tension within Wyoming's postsecondary system. Finding the meeting of local needs has been hard to determine. By most accounts Gillette College has been successful in meeting local needs. Local stakeholders disagree with recent budget decisions and hold significant concerns about the future. Thoughts are that if local stakeholders had more oversight of the budget, they would have made a different decision.

WHICHE's role is to clarify that the Board of Trustees made the best decision possible based on its view and based on its responsibilities. And that local stakeholders would have decided differently in a similar situation.

Additional concerns were raised about meeting workforce needs and obtaining approval from NWCCD to offer programs. NWCCD leadership continues to note that they have and will continue to support all justified programs. WICHE's role is to identify areas of disagreement. The key question boils down to local governance. Campbell County residents must be aware that the Community College Commission holds review and approval authority. Independence would not mean immediately that any and all programs can be immediately started. Overall, local stakeholders disagree strongly with previous programmatic decisions.

Another area of concern is the issue of program duplication this was heard from numerous individuals including state legislators. If the district were to move forward the Community College Commission would maintain its important role through program review and approval authority as defined in statute (W.S. 21-18-202) and Chapter 6 of regular rules.

To sum up the analysis of need for an independent district in Campbell County, while there is clear disagreement about the past related to the district the focus should be on the future. All indications are that the NWCCD Board acted responsibly within the existing governance structure, making decisions that it believed were in the best interest of the district as a whole. A locally elected Campbell County board may have approached the decisions differently which would have been just as valid and correct.

For this section the WCCC must focus on three key questions.

1. Would an independent district better meet local and state needs than the existing governance relationship?
2. Would an independent district lead to program duplication?
3. What value does WCCC place on local control?

WICHE does not offer an opinion on the value that the WCCC should place on local control.

Dr. Lane next turned to the financial sustainability of an independent community college district. WICHE relied more heavily on data in this section of the analysis. The analysis was broken into short and long term sustainability questions. Short term questions easier to answer with property value projections. Used were property valuations provided by the Consensus Estimating Group at a four mill rate and used the rate that property valuations may change throughout Campbell County. Some valuations could fluctuate more or less than statewide averages. Valuations were calculated at the statutorily required four mill rate. They then added potential revenue from state support and tuition and fees. The analysis begins on page 26 of the report.

Two revenue assumptions were provided by CREG and used which focus on low-range and mid-range numbers. They added in \$3.4 million in tuition and fees revenue and added in just under \$1 million in auxiliary revenue along with a ½ mill assessment for BOCHES. The mid-range estimates provide for just under \$21 million in revenue. And \$17.6 million for the low range revenue. State support was not included in either estimate as per the WCCC allocation model. Districts with more revenue per student receive less state support per student. State funds would not be provided to a hypothetical district.

Mr. Bill Fortner, Representative Elect noted he was in a recent House leadership meeting who met with a fellow Legislator who is contesting property tax increases. Mr. Fortner suggested Crook County provides a little over \$200,000 per mill. He asked if the economy goes south, and about \$200,000 is generated per mill would the new district be functional. Dr. Lane acknowledged the question noting some of the topic he would get to in the long term sustainability section. But at \$200,000 per mill, this amount would not be sustainable. \$800,000 for a four mill assessment would not provide sufficient revenue for the institution. This outcome was not considered in the analysis. Dr. Lane further noted how far the existing valuations would have to decline to get to a critical point.

Dr. Lane detailed the long term sustainability there is much less certainty about long term projections and valuations. Instead of trying to estimate actual valuations in the future, the question was flipped, asking how far land valuations would have to fall to cause major concerns. The table presented revenues would have to fall significantly to not meet the funding threshold. Initial estimates place the County's four-mill assessments at \$17.7 million. Weighted credit hours currently produced at the Gillette campus of 29,472. The top number is divided by the bottom number arriving at \$600 per weighted credit hour. The local revenue per weighted credit hour across the system is \$96.94. To meet the required level of support the required local revenue would be \$2.86 million. As Senator Wasserburger had previously noted that would be a fall to approximately 80% of the current valuation. Even that level would not support the institution.

The next slide illustrated a property valuation of \$712 million and an 80% decline or so. In this current scenario Gillette College would begin to receive support under the current allocation model. But holding all other numbers constant the property valuation must stay above \$1.67 billion in order for the new district to meet its estimated expenses and budget.

Ms. Colleen Faber, Campbell County Commissioner asked if WICHIE had taken a look at the sources that made up the mill value and where the revenue percentages lie as far as mineral extraction, personal property, and agriculture? Yes they did. They took data from the CREG by category. Dr. Lane referred to page 26 of the report. In table 7 he noted the assessed valuations by category. Then he noted the projected declines by CREG and then used math to run out to determine how far the different categories would increase or decline. Dr. Lane clarified that they are not expecting Campbell County's revenue to decline to these levels. The question they tried to address was how far the revenues would have to drop before they impacted the new college district's budget. We are not providing any data to suggest that the County's valuation would decline to the \$2 billion range. We are not aware of any longer term projections to confirm that the valuation would decline.

Dr. Lane reviewed the draft budget prepared by the taskforce. This is absolutely a draft budget and not anything final and it was provided under that assumption. Across the four columns the budget is divided into a per full time equivalent student amount for each of the categories that were listed in the draft budget. The numbers were compared to other colleges in the state, the national average for similarly sized community colleges (IPEDS data source). The comparison reveals that the proposed budget is lower than what is included in national similarly sized community colleges and lower by a significant amount than other Wyoming Community Colleges on average. Data is taken from IPEDS. Data used here is from the national IPEDS data set. There may be some local differences. He acknowledged this as a much more efficient budget.

The Campbell County stakeholders believe they can provide education much more efficiently. Drawing firm conclusions on this statement would require substantially more financial analysis.

WICHE's conclusions on financial sustainability are based on current statute. Based on the large property valuations for Campbell County, and successful passage of an election measure to pass a 4-mill levy there is not concerns about financial sustainability in the short term. The longer term is more complex, but holding all factors constant except the valuation, the valuation would have to decline significantly before the new district would be unable to meet its budget. To clarify WICHE does not expect property values to decline. There are numerous policy influences that might go into this figure. It should definitely be seen as a range and not an absolute figure.

Bill Fortner, Representative Elect asked if we were to run short on the funding model, would the state tap into the emergency funds like what might happen in K-12. Dr. Lane responded that this was not a question looked at and it would be beyond the scope of the report.

Dr. Lane also reiterated that in no way does WICHIE expect property values to decline to this level. And WICHIE does not have any data about the long term trajectory.

Mark Christensen noted he was a Campbell County Commissioner for seven years. He asked if WICHIE had analyzed the assessed valuations from all other districts. He felt that the analysis is also important. The Campbell County assessed valuation is probably ten times that of other counties or districts currently. WICHIE did not go into that level of detail. However it is evident in the funding formula discussion that Dr. Prescott will go through. Dr. Lane also noted, because of the high level of local revenue, the new district would receive very little if any state support

under the current funding model. Existing state support received by students at Gillette College currently would be spread throughout the system and districts.

Fiscal Impacts to the State

WICHIE operated under the assumption given that state allocations and the way Gillette would operate there is nothing inherent which would lead to a substantially larger budget request to the state by the Wyoming Community College Commission. There would be a couple of small exceptions.

If a new district becomes accredited the WCCC would request funds to cover the information systems for the schools just as it does for the other districts. The new district would be responsible for those costs until it receives HLC accreditation. Campbell County has acknowledged the expense in the application.

As employees transition to working for the new district, the new district would be responsible for employee benefits currently paid for by the state. That is until the district becomes independently accredited. There would be a modest savings for that period, until a modest HR plan is developed.

Mentioned once or twice already is the State's major maintenance funding. Current process, consistent with W.S. 21-18-235 notes the community college facilities are eligible for maintenance support from the state. The state has previously provided funding on the basis of a couple percentage points of the calculated replacement value based on the formula. The fiscal impact to the state would be dependent on the disposition of the facilities at Gillette College. The facilities have a variety of ownership arrangements.

Fiscal impact on the state would be dependent on the condition of the facilities and would greatly impact the fiscal request. They would fall under the major maintenance provision. If all facilities were transferred to the new district the total request would be \$2.1 million or 7 percent higher if all buildings are eligible for major maintenance. Newer facilities have established major maintenance funds. It is not clear if the new facilities would be transferred to the district. The impact to other institutions depends on the legislative approach to maintenance funding. Using a set percentage increase the impact on the state. Using a set funding level decreases funding available to institutions.

Educational Soundness of the Plan.

The proposed approach would be to maintain the existing programs while steps are taken by a new executive administration to obtain accreditation through an agreement with an existing institution. This is the general approach likely advised. WICHE did have conversation with HLC staff who noted in this path has been followed by institutions and is the generally accepted approach. Dr. Lane presented a possible timeline for approval and accreditation. GCCCD would be looking at 2025 or later to complete the accreditation process. We were asked if it would be possible to speed this up, WICHE acknowledged they had not seen that as a possibility in other cases.

There seems to be broad support among the community and employers for the existing programs. Dr. Lane noted that transition planning is not an area that is fully explored in the application. If the process were to move forward there would be sustained dual governance in place for some time. Partnering with the NWCCD would be the recommended approach. Partnering with another district would be repetitive and duplicative, adding time and expense to an already complex process.

Mr. Bill Fortner asked if WICHE had done funding model on the new district with receiving less than 4-mills. Noting if they requested four mills they may not get that full amount. Dr. Lane responded. In the analysis WICHE did not include the additional 1% in the funding. It was solely the 4 mill with ½ mill BOCHES Funding and tuition and fees funding.

Financial Impacts on Other Community Colleges

This topic will also explore additional modeling done on other revenue sources for a potentially independent community college. This section is critical enough to know if and how the creation of a new district would impact the other colleges.

One concern raised was for potential shift in enrollment patterns. WICHE by no means is saying that if the independence goes forward that the enrollment patterns would shift. Colleagues at NCHEMS have used the allocation model to determine what would happen if the enrollment patterns were to shift. They are showing what the impact would be if the enrollment should shift.

Other concerns shared include current economic conditions and reduced state support for state institutions.

Dr. Lane turned it over to Dr. Prescott to walk all through the models that they have developed. Dr. Prescott noted that NCHEMS role was to model some different outcomes of how an independent community college would affect the other institutions. They also provided some of the data and

analysis previously presented by Dr. Lane. He had no definitive estimates on how many students might relocate Gillette College given that the institution is already functioning. NCHEMS used a great deal of data that had come from WCCC data, IPEDS, and gathered population projection data provided by the State of Wyoming. NCHEMS also looked over a variety of budget documents provided by the district. And they had reviewed the application and the draft budget. They also have a copy of the current funding model, which was “rewired” to include the new district and allowing for the tweaking of some underlying assumptions.

Some basic notions about enrollment in Wyoming. Enrollment patterns especially for the community colleges is heavily localized. There is not a lot of evidence that people will pack up and move long distances to enroll in alternate colleges. About 45 to 47% of NWCCD students are enrolled at the current Gillette campus. The enrollment shifts that might most impact the other institutions are from students from Cooke and Weston counties. This is also under the assumption that Campbell County students will attend courses at the new district. Data presented is reported from the Commission and supports that all the students enrolled from Campbell County 91% of which are enrolled in the NWCCD. Small additional numbers are in Casper and at Eastern. Residents of Crook and Weston counties tend to enroll in large numbers at Casper College and Eastern with even small proportions go to Gillette currently and even fewer at Casper.

When NCHEMS built models a set of assumptions were built into place and a set of adjustable assumptions. We would assume all Campbell County residents attending NWCCD once independence was established would then subsequently attend Gillette College Community College District. Crook and Weston County residents would all attend NWCCD. For Crook and Weston County residents attending anywhere but NWCCD, Casper, or Eastern there would be no enrollment shifts. Adjustable assumptions were related to what might happen to Crook and Weston County might shift to GCCD. They also did some modeling to the rate of participation rate might change for all age groups. Current rates relative to the 18 – 44 year old population by county. And they made adjustments to make the largest potential impact by increasing the rate of participation. Modeling was built to look at the impacts in 2020 and 2040.

The WICHE prepared document includes table 12, the red boxes highlight the next segments of the presentation as it relates to Casper, Eastern, Northern and the proposed Gillette district. There are impacts that will be felt on the other institutions from the reallocation of state resources as well.

In the first case, if GCCCD was created and students moved as previously described, Campbell County students move to the Gillette campus, all other students remain in their previous location. NWCCD and Sheridan would lose about 1,000 students that Gillette would gain, translating to about \$3.4 million of lost tuition from those students. State appropriation funds based on the weighted credit hour production would equate to almost \$2.9 million in state appropriations. Those dollars would then be redistributed to the other colleges in the system. This is under the assumption that Gillette would be ineligible to receive no state appropriations as previously mentioned because of Campbell County's larger property tax base.

The highlighted lower half of table 12 presents the same data in terms of the changes. The impact would have about a -47% loss of tuition revenue, -18% loss of state appropriation and an overall loss of -24% of revenue. The two institutions that would most likely be impacted under the assumption that none of their students would move would each receive slightly more in state appropriations (4.2% and 8.9%).

Table 13 includes the outputs of the four scenarios that we ran. Scenario one is applied data from 2020 and assumes no changes in the participation rates at the county level. It also assumes that half the students from Campbell, Crook, and Weston counties who attend Casper and Eastern campuses currently would be induced to move to GCCCD. Under those conditions Casper would lose about 1.4% in FTE, 1.6% in tuition revenue and Eastern would lose almost 14% of FTE enrollment and 11.5% of revenue. For Casper since GCCCD would bring in so much local revenue, it would allow for the redistribution of the state appropriation such that Casper would receive more state appropriation per student and Eastern slightly less. The \$2.9 million at NWCCD would be redistributed away to the other campuses.

Scenario two assumes that all of the students attending Casper and Eastern are induced to attend GCCCD. The impact would be significantly greater on Eastern in particular. Casper because of the reallocation would be basically unaffected for their overall budget.

Scenario three looks at 2040 and includes half of residents from Campbell, Crooke, and Weston moving using population projections provided by the state. The districts served by both Western and Gillette are the only two areas in the state projected to see declines. Assuming no other data changes, Casper would see an increase in students because of the increase in population. Eastern would see a smaller decline, Northern would see an increase in students due to projected population growth, and Gillette would have more students as a result of the 50% of students who decide to relocate to Gillette.

The final scenario four assuming that between now and 2040 that participation rates rise and the population rises, all institutions would wind up with relatively better overall budgets.

In conclusion and as in doing any modeling there are a number of assumptions. But under current statute and assumptions the existing allocation model operated by the Commission as well as existing state appropriation levels. An independent GCCCD would lead to increased revenue for the other institutions on a per FTE basis with no changes in current enrollment patterns.

Impacts on NWCCD would be rather significant including a substantial loss of tuition revenue and a reallocation of state support which would go to the other institutions. Yet overall NWCCD would have more revenue per enrollment than it currently has. Because NWCCD is currently providing services to students attending Gillette College. The need to hire an executive staff and other programs is likely to lead to some loss of efficiency from a multi campus perspective. The loss to Northern would create some transition challenges and loss of business. Any assumptions regarding enrollment shifts are very uncertain. But a series of scenarios have been produced to detail possible impacts. Impacts are likely to be felt by Eastern Wyoming College as the most vulnerable apart to what happens to Northern.

Mr. Fortner asked if a model was completed if there is a significant energy bust like what occurred in the 1980's. At that time communities became complete ghost towns. Could Gillette join back up to Sheridan? Dr. Prescott responded that in order to build some of the capacity and the degree to which local revenue would drop in Campbell County before there would be impacts on local tuition. There was also a lever added to adjust potential state appropriations. Analysis can be run out on potential impact. Dr. Prescott's perception is that once an independent district is created a re-merger of the districts would be a significant process.

Commissioner Freeze clarified that it is difficult to try and forecast everything that could potentially happen in the future. She invited Mackenzie Williams from the Attorney General's Office to provide perspective. Mr. Williams noted his belief that there is no mechanism for dissolving or unmerging a community college district currently in the law. Thus requiring a legislative change.

Commissioner Boal noted that the estimate for what he called Sheridan College (NWCCD) will take a hit of about \$3 million. And Dr. Tribley found the offset for FTE to be difficult to understand. He asked for Dr. Prescott's reaction? Dr. Prescott responded that the impact on the NWCCD budget given the allocation model is likely to be \$3.4 million in

tuition revenue and about \$2.9 million in state appropriation. NWCCD would continue to have \$5 to \$6 million dollars less in their top line budget. Since they will lose approximately 47% of their student population, their revenue per student would be higher. This is also under the assumption the Gillette campus would not receive any state appropriations. Yet under the period of time that Gillette College is operating under NWCCD's accreditation, Gillette College would have to pay tuition revenue towards NWCCD. The money will change hands but ultimately winds up in the same place. The indicated \$2.9 million is equivalent to the weighted loss of state appropriation. That money would be redistributed to other institutions across the state.

Commissioner Blikre noted his understanding of the decrease in income because of the loss of students. He asked though how much of a decrease in expense would there be because of the student enrollment decrease? Dr. Prescott responded that it is easy and not easy to answer. Colleges and University's tend to spend as much money as they raise. There would be a reduction in expenses commensurate with the reduction in FTE. Substantial reorganization of NWCCD's budget would occur to determine the impact of reduced expenses. NWCCD is providing a set of services to students who are attending the Gillette Campus which GCCCD would have to create or duplicate on its own. Commissioner Blikre clarified his question that there should be some corresponding savings on the part of NWCCD because they no longer have to serve those students. NWCCD's costs would have to go down as they are no longer serving the Gillette College campus. Dr. Prescott acknowledged the question but noted there is a policy decision needing to be made from the state to follow students who are now enrolled at Gillette versus staying in NWCCD. The assumption is that none of the state dollars would go to Gillette. Dr. Lane clarified they were not able to model exactly what the reduction in expenses would be at NWCCD but he did note there would be reduction in expenses at Northern.

Mr. Palmer added that this is a critical element as he sees a lot of questions posed about this area. The table shows that Gillette is not currently showing any FTE. Gillette College has about 45 to 47% of the headcount. The district receives from the state approximately 45% as a direct allocation. A huge part of that allocation is faculty and expenses of which NWCCD would no longer have those expenses. The Gillette campus is currently only receiving only about 23% of the actual allocation which would be a prorated share of tuition and fees but only about half of the state appropriation. That amount goes towards the IT arena. The true expense to NWCCD is the overhead expense. Based on the model, the new GCCCD would receive no state appropriation. Dollars passed through are going towards faculty, operations, and student services. Gillette College sees tuition and fees but not a full prorata share of the

state allocation. Real difference is the cost of IT. The budget shows efficiencies.

Commissioner Freeze reiterated that none of the Community Colleges within Wyoming are fully funded. The Colleges do not have all the funding needed to do business. An allocation model is available with limitations. There will be a finite amount related to the formula.

Other Relevant Matters

Dr. Lane added that transition planning deserved its own discussion. The transition must maintain all services to students without interruptions. Transition would require substantial planning and formal agreements. Transition planning for accreditation is critical. The new GCCCD and NWCCD boards would have to develop collaborative working agreements over a period of reduced state support and before independence. NWCCD has noted openness to assisting with the transition process. Such collaboration is essential. Facilities, maintenance, and their condition would have to be addressed.

Current economic context has been brought up regularly. The prospect of additional property taxes on industry and individuals could add burdens. Passage of an increased tax levy is uncertain. Would ultimately be up to the voters. Lastly the depth and length of the downturn is uncertain.

Alternative Options

Dr. Lane noted that annexation was the only statutory alternative W.S. 21-18-310 which is a process by which a county can be incorporated into an existing community college. The process would include a petition and a new property tax levy. Respondents to WICHE's interviews noted this was not a viable option.

An additional alternative not laid out in statute is changing the role and authority of the advisory board. This again was not viewed by stakeholders as a viable alternative.

- Concluding Observations and Clarifying Questions from WCCC

Full conclusions are noted in the executive summary and in the final report. First it is clear stakeholders strongly believe an independent GCCCD would better meet community needs. Local stakeholders are clear in their desire to voice future directions of GCCCD. The financial sustainability of GCCCD would be strong given current valuations. Longer term projections are uncertain. Financial impacts to NWCCD would be significant when examining total budgets, but an independent GCCCD would lead to increased state support per FTE revenue. Impacts to other institutions would be positive under current conditions. If

enrollment shifts occur, Eastern Wyoming College would feel the most impact. The framework for maintaining the educational soundness of the plan seems significant, but a concern is that it is just a framework. Additional formal planning is necessary to ensure a smooth transition. GCCCD would best be served by continuing its relationship with NWCCD throughout the transition. Annexation is not seen as a viable option. Last there is no dispute about the long term need for a college in Gillette. Part of the decision rests on the value of local control and representation.

Commissioner Freeze thanked Dr. Lane and Dr. Prescott for the thorough presentation and all the work put in during such a time intensive manner. She recognized how it really does help to inform the decision making.

III. ADDITIONAL SUBMITTED DOCUMENTS FOR REFERENCE

Dr. Caldwell provided a brief introduction and then noted that several presidents do not wish to add to this section because they had previously provided information. She noted a few things seen that are listed here. The Commission did conduct listening sessions at a time when health orders were in effect because of the COVID pandemic. Gillette College, the Campbell County Task Force, and Central Wyoming College, as a second site, are all to be thanked for their hosting effort. The Task Force also extended an invitation for a campus site visit and tour by the Commission which occurred on November 7, 2020. A special thank you to Carol Seiger for assisting with the arrangements.

Additionally there were some 30 day requirements. And the listening session notes are presented. The Commission held additionally an opportunity for people to submit written comments which are also presented.

Once the needs assessment was published the public comment period was re-opened for any follow up remarks.

Commissioner Freeze provided an opportunity for any of the college presidents to make comments. Dr. Travers noted that she had previously provided written comments. No other presidents shared comments at the time.

A. Statutorily Required Submissions

- 30 Day Requirements

[TAB 8](#)

Mr. Dennis proceeded to review documents solicited in accordance with the 30 day timeline. The timeline included the opportunity to receive public input from all seven colleges and the University of Wyoming. Six responses were received and letters are included in the packet. The responses are consolidated in the Commissioner packet

along with responses received from the office of A & I regarding population and economic forecasts. The State Board of Equalization responded to our inquiry confirming the assessed property valuation. The Department of Workforce Services provided occupational projections for Campbell County and the Wyoming Department of Education confirmed Campbell County School District grades 9 – 12 enrollment.

- Statement of Recommendations [TAB 9](#)

Also received as part of the Commission series of requests was a signed Statement of Recommendations, which was initiated at the August 28 Commission meeting. This statement included signatures from the task force that they would make a series of recommendations for cooperation between WCCC and the yet to be established future board of trustees.

B. Public Comments Received

- Listening Session, October 10, 2020 [TAB 10](#)
- Listening Session, October 14, 2020 [TAB 11](#)
- Written Submissions October 9 to 23, 2020 [TAB 12](#)
- Other Received Comments [TAB 13](#)

Transcripts or minutes from the two listening sessions are included inclusive of approximately 42 pages covering the listening sessions which occurred on October 10 and 14, 2020. Also included are the 34 written responses received during the October 9 to 23, 2020 open public comment period. The public comment period was reopened on November 10, 2020 and the only additional submission received was a letter from Senator Enzi. Remarks provided by the taskforce were submitted separately.

Commissioner Freeze reminded all that Commissioners did have full access to these documents as they were conducting their independent review. She noted her appreciation of all of the submissions, letters, and comments from people.

IV. CLOSING REMARKS BY CAMPBELL COUNTY COMMISSIONER [TAB 14](#)
TASK FORCE FOR THE FORMATION OF THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE
DISTRICT AT GILLETTE COLLEGE

Dr. Palmer noted his desire to emphasize a few points after he has recognized the Task Force's full response. He confirmed chairman Reardon in noting that they do concur with the overall conclusions. Hats off to all and everyone who has done a phenomenal job in terms of coming together in the 90 day timeline. From the WICHE NICHEMS survey it is easily acknowledged that the Gillette College survey meets or exceeds the criteria required to become an independent district. Quoting the survey,

“As is described below the history of enrollment, community engagement, and facilities at Gillette College offer robust evidence that there is a need for a community college in Campbell County and that Gillette College meets important needs for the State's overall provision for postsecondary education. This conclusion does not appear to be in dispute.”

Based on very preliminary budget and revenue estimates, and according to the survey, the levels of local support will exceed the local revenue support offered to any other community college in Wyoming. Should the district receive local support on this scale, it would not require any additional state appropriations. Which will then provide additional support to the other institutions. It has always been the goal to not adversely impact any community college partners. . As one of Wyoming's most populace counties with an economy focused on extraction there is strong demand for technical degrees. There is also demand for information analytics and healthcare degrees. There are quantitative distinctions between the two communities served by NWCCD. An independent college can best understand these crucial distinctions of Campbell County.

As indicated in the general rubric for the application, it was definitely difficult to assess the need criteria and ascertain the specifics, due in large part to Gillette College already being an established campus. The application process developed has to work for those in existence and those being formed. We don't think that we should be penalized for having a presence, but instead consider accomplishments over the past 17 years. Until this last year with the onset of budget reductions and the pandemic Gillette College was one of the fastest growing campuses in the state. Even greater opportunities await. With program research we see opportunities for additional nursing, health care technology and services, education, fiber technology, coal gasification, business management and robotics, STEM services. He noted that it is never a good time. However there is a need to reflect on our history that we, because of our partners, have fully supported the college over the last couple of decades. Funding has been there locally. I think our community will step up again.

Of greater importance is to achieve the educational attainment goals recently adopted under the Wyoming Community College Commission Strategic Plan 2021 to 2025. Facilitating the percentage of working adults 25 to 64 with a postsecondary degree or certificate to 60% by 2025, and to 70% by 2040. According to the NCHEMS WICHE survey, in Campbell County the current rate

is 30%. An independent Gillette College can mobilize to address this disparity. The college is asking to continue our efficiencies, provide revenue back to the state, as well as have representation. GCCCD will give our slice back under this model. Campbell County has a way of getting things done. An independently governed district will embody the mission of the Community College Commission and result in a win for all. On behalf of Campbell County, our elected officials, our community, our citizens, constituents, and Task Force we respectfully request consideration and positive affirmation of the application.

Dr. Caldwell noted there would be a section in the agenda for public comment. Commissioner Freeze recognized those wishing to make comment.

Mr. Palmer also wished to add one more piece. He reiterated that they look forward to entering into a contractual relationship with NWCCD to pursue an independent college which will continue throughout the accreditation process. Hopefully it will be mutually beneficial and mitigate some of the financial deficits discussed.

Bill Fortner provided on final public comment. The CREG report is very seldom right and he asked if we have better indicators than the CREG Report.

Darla Cotton noted she is a native of Campbell County and been employed with the Parks and Recreation department. She is a Graduate of Gillette College and her husband who is also a native and has served on the Diesel Advisory Board. Her comments today are to express why Gillette College should be approved as its own community college district. A key reason for applying is the added opportunities for the district. Added education opportunities for the district have been hindered by not being a separate district. Gillette has shown the ability to rise to the occasion over many year despite its inability to be independent. We are asking for the ability to form a district to serve a community need unique from every other community college district. While some say it is not the time to separate, the opposite is true. The fact that education creates opportunity for people in communities. Education helps to diversify the population and the workforce. Education is one of the factors reviewed in economic development. Gillette College approached the NWCCD Board with a plan to cover financial cuts and return athletics. The way the Gillette was treated during a recent meeting, dismissal of the plan, and the nonrepresentation of anyone on the board prompted the application. Athletics being cut was certainly the catalyst but is not the only reason to go through this process. She is asking that the Commission give Campbell County the opportunity to form its own district.

Mark Christianson, Former Campbell County Commissioner commented that the board has heavily invested in Gillette College. The college has a lot of great partnerships with the city and the county. Campbell County was treated differently and proactively established the maintenance sinking funds. It is also something the board of Commissioners has stepped with every other county

property. There was good discussion earlier about possible duplication of services. The Commission as a whole will need to address duplication, but he does not think it will be an issue with Gillette College. When the first round of cuts happened a number of years ago, Gillette College managed to send \$300,000 to the district to mitigate cuts. There are some programs offered which are exceptional. At the end of the day people will find the best programs. At Gillette College there are opportunities for differentiation. A few years ago money was directed out to build stackable credentials. Unfortunately, because of politics that opportunity was unexplored further. He asked for all as they look at the opportunity to consider the good outcomes.

Senator Wasserburger quickly talked about something important to him. Many years ago he received a degree in political science. He noted the principals of democracy. One of the most important parts is self-determination. That means the ability of a community to determine its own future through voting. The question before you today is a question of fairness and how you believe in the democratic principles of the founding of our nation. The ideas in the Declaration of Independence and the founding of our Constitution. If you believe a community of 50,000 should be controlled by a community 100 miles away without a single vote, then he asked to not approve the application. But if you believe in the principals of democracy and fairness that every community should have its own college, a board, the ability to vote and determine its own future, then he asked for a favorable vote. This is the very basic principal of democracy. I hope you will provide and “Aye” vote. Everyone can talk about a good time or a bad time, it doesn’t matter, as it is always a bad time in Wyoming. I think we have proved beyond a reasonable doubt and according to the assessment this is a net good for all community colleges. I believe we have also shown that the way we plan to fund the college, money will return to the other colleges.

D. COMMISSION DELIBERATION - APPLICATION, NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND SUPPORTING MATERIAL

I. RUBRIC SCORING AND RESULTS

[TAB 15](#)

Commissioner Freeze made a general comment regarding the summary on the rubric scoring and why it was completed. Each Commissioner had been asked as part of this process to take all the information gathered together and complete their own independent analysis. The rubric was nothing more than a document to cause each Commissioner to do their own internal review and provide some talking points to start discussion. She acknowledged that she would not lead the discussion by individual items. She believes that they have gone through almost everything earlier in the day. Commissioner Freeze welcomed discussion about any individual items listed in the rubric. She then just opened up the meeting for general discussion. Dr.

Caldwell noted that WICHE helped develop the rubric to assist the Commissioners in their review of a comprehensive set of information.

E. COMMUNITY COLLEGE COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION TO APPROVE APPLICATION AND RECOMMEND DISTRICT CREATION TO STATE LEGISLATURE ([Executive Summary](#))

Commissioner Freeze, prior to considering any motions allowed Attorney General Mackenzie Williams to provide some general process remarks. Mr. Williams noted that he is representing the Commission, he noted the reasoning behind suggesting a second motion as this is very time sensitive issue. Under normal circumstances I would prefer to have a board as whole approve an order, but there just is not sufficient time. He suggests that the Commission go ahead and authorize member, normally he would suggest the Chair, to go ahead and approve the order. Mr. Williams will draft the order based on the Commission's decision today to be available Monday for final official signature. The reasons for doing so include that it is important to have something in writing in the event of a judicial challenge there is something for the court to review. He will do his best if requested to represent the discussion on the matter. To be clear, he has no opinion on what the Commission should do. He is just trying to accurately represent the Commission.

Commissioner Blikre noted that what we are talking about here is a community, a county that has been working hard to help fund all of education in this state here for many, many years. All they are asking for is the ability to have a local voice in what is presented at their own college. It is his hope that the Commission will support them.

Commissioner Boal complimented Campbell County on the collaboration their local entities are able to pull off. That is why there are currently such neat facilities. That does not happen everywhere. His concern has always has been the money. Even though we are now in difficult circumstances, he noted the Commission, and all of us have to be able to answer that money question or this will not go far. To Commissioner Boal, new money was being brought in to the system, because of the tax assessment that would be levied on Campbell County. It just made sense, if anything that there would be more money available to the system instead of less. Commissioner Boal struggled with the report and comments about the negative fiscal impact to Sheridan College. He has reached the conclusion that there might be some negative impact on Sheridan College but it is manageable and the Commission will have a role in managing that impact. In listening to the folks from Campbell County, they will also play a role in managing that impact. He recounted Senator Wasserburger and acknowledged that the best government is the government closest to the people. I think if the people of Campbell County are willing to assess themselves the necessary taxes, then they need to have the right to determine how things go. For all those reasons, he acknowledged voting in favor of the motion. He will follow the process as it goes through.

Commissioner Kay Dooley noted a few comments as to where she is coming from. She thinks it important to look at and acknowledge that Gillette College offers wonderful

things but it is an outreach campus. Think of how Gillette College has grown in the last 15 years. The growth was made possible by the leadership of NWCCD. She hates for that to not be acknowledged. There is a huge debt of gratitude to that leadership. It seems like the impetus was the cutting of athletics. That decision was made by the same leadership that allowed Gillette College to be what it is today. Commissioner Dooley acknowledged that she has gone back and forth on how she personally feels about this issue. I have come to the conclusion before Mr. Wasserburger, that maybe it needs to move forward and see where it falls. I am not 100% behind it, but it is the right thing to do for me. Gillette College would not be what it is today without the leadership of NWCCD. Our decision today is not going to say yes or no, but we will go through the process.

Superintendent Balow introduced herself as Jillian Balow, State Superintendent of Public Instruction, she supervises K-12 education. She recognized that she is fortunate enough to have a seat on the Wyoming Community College Commission as well as the UW Board of Trustees and the State Board of Education. There are only a select few who have that opportunity. This has been quite a process and a good process to be a part of. Hats off WICHE, NCHEMS for guiding us through the process, the needs Assessment and hats off to Dr. Caldwell, the Task Force and to the others who really put forth robust information for the Commissioners to consider. She recognized that this was especially challenging for her since she is from Gillette. I did college algebra and a few other classes, 30 years ago in a trailer, behind an elementary school that is part of the Gillette campus. I got my college credits. Who is to say that having that community college feel didn't allow me to be more focused as a college completer? While I appreciate all the information and alternatives included in the plan. But speaking from an unbiased perspective, as a Commissioner, an education leader in the state, as well as someone who benefited. She noted this is infrastructure that we ought to be focused on during the most challenging of times in our state. We know what education does to lift communities, lift people out of poverty, and better relationships with business and industry for both our four year University and school district. She thinks this is the exact kind of investment that we need to be making in the education infrastructure. Gillette College has really grown despite not having that independence from Sheridan College as seen with the Nursing program, growth of dual and concurrent enrollment offerings, and with opportunities for students. She really appreciated the process, in particular the scoring. She wanted to underscore her support for Gillette College as a community college district should it go forward.

Commissioner Oakley noted that she was not sure if she was going to speak but will be brief. She most closely would echo Commissioner Boal in his statements and personal thoughts. The role of the Commission is less about personal thoughts regarding the issue but more if there is a significant and obvious financial detriment to the state or community colleges at large. Certainly this is something that would give pause. She recognizes that the lane is to get out of the way and let Gillette decide. There has been a lot of good information. With the financial aspects of this being somewhat alleviated, I stand in support of Gillette and Gillette having the ability of self-determination.

- Roll call vote for Motion #1

Commissioner Freeze asked for any other questions or comments. She acknowledged that it speaks to the process that there are so few questions because so much time has been spent on the topic and studied so thoroughly. The process has worked.

Commissioner Freeze stands for a roll call vote on the motion to approve the application for the creation of the new Gillette College Community College District. Roll call read:

Commissioners

Commissioner Boal- Aye

Commissioner Blikre – Aye

Commissioner and Vice Chair Dooley – Aye

Commissioner Frederick – Aye

Commissioner and Chair Freeze – Aye

Commissioner Newman – Aye

Commissioner Oakley – Aye

Commissioner Freeze recognized that it is unanimous. The motion is approved. The Taskforce can go forward with their movement for the formation of the Gillette College Community College District.

She also noted that during her time on the Commission there have been a fair number of items to celebrate about the future of education in Wyoming. She sees this as one of those things. Education is a priority to the state of Wyoming. We recognize all the work that has gone into education. She concurred with Commissioner Dooley that NWCCD was a good mentor and partner. But it is now time to cut the strings and go down the road to their own destiny. She suggested this as an opportunity to celebrate.

Senate Wasserburger approached and noted that on behalf of both the Wyoming House and State Senate, he thanked all for their time.

Dr. Caldwell reminded the Chair and Commission that the packet will proceed to the 66th Legislature to take action upon.

- Motion #2

Commissioner Blikre moved that the Attorney General or the Attorney General’s representative draft an order conforming to the Commission’s decision to approve the formation of the Gillette College Community College District and that our Chairman Dr.

Jackie Freeze is delegated authority to review the order for factual accuracy and sign on the Commissions behalf. Commissioner Boal Seconded. Motion passed unanimously

Commissioner Freeze thanked all for their effort, time, and energy to work on this project. Well worth doing for the state of Wyoming. It's done. Congratulations.

Mr. Palmer noted that this was Walt Wragge's last meeting as part of the Northern Wyoming Community College District Board of

ADJOURNMENT