



**MEETING MINUTES & AGENDA**  
**SPECIAL MEETING**  
**LISTENING SESSION**  
**CAMPBELL COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE**  
**DISTRICT CREATION**

**Saturday, October 10, 2020**  
**2:00 to 4:30 PM**  
**Gillette College, Pronghorn Center**  
**3807 College Drive, Gillette, WY 82718**

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Zoom Link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85495176070>  
Dial-In Phone Number: 1 669 900 6833; Meeting ID: 854 9517 6070

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***THE STATUTES OF WYOMING REQUIRE THAT ALL MEETINGS OF PUBLIC BODIES BE OPEN TO THE PUBLIC, EXCEPT IN SPECIFIC CIRCUMSTANCES, AND THE WYOMING COMMUNITY COLLEGE COMMISSION FULLY SUPPORTS THAT MANDATE.***

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**ACTION AND REPORT AGENDA ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION**  
*Commissioners are not required to attend, but a quorum may be present*

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**2:00 p.m.      Opening & Introductions**

**A.      Overview & Initial Presentations**

**[TAB](#)**

Commission Chair, Dr. Jackie Freeze Provided a general welcome and acknowledged her appreciation for all who are attending online and in person. She further noted the importance of the topic and the desire to gather as much information as possible. She led all in the pledge of allegiance. She then provided an overview of how the day would proceed.

Wyoming Community College Commission is charged with trying to determine if this application for a new community college district meets certain criteria in

order to be considered and moved forward. Aspects that need to be reviewed in a global sense are:

- 1) The need for a new community college in our state. Discussion will focus on the need as it relates to the local area.
- 2) The financial ability to support the college
- 3) The potential financial impact of the new college district on the state.
- 4) The educational soundness of the proposed plan.

The Commission, to fulfill its obligation on behalf of the state, includes a number of steps. The first is to receive an application. Once the application is submitted and determined to be complete, a 90-day review period starts. The Commission then has 90 days to act on the application request. Next the Commission goes into a data gathering mode involving a number of different entities including Campbell County and the State of Wyoming who both provide information in a variety of settings including educational, demographic, and financial. Information is collected such that the Commission can make a substantive decision based on the facts that support the application.

A comprehensive needs assessment survey is conducted by the Commission. For the purposes of that survey, the Commission is using an outside group. The needs assessment can be rather simple as there is limited time to complete. The assessment will provide some additional recommendations and data. Some high-level data will be presented today, but the final assessment will be presented prior to making the final decisions.

The Commission needs to also conduct two public hearings, one in the applying county and one elsewhere. The goal is to gather as much information as possible. One session is being completed in Campbell County and the other will hold at Central Wyoming College in Riverton, do to its centralized location in the state. Both sessions are open on zoom providing additional options for feedback.

Commissioners will not be providing any feedback at this stage. The goal remains to listen, hearing what all have to say, seeking to understand the priorities, and understand when there are concerns. Commissioners may ask clarifying questions. All will be taking critical notes.

The Commissioners will receive the needs assessment survey on November 6<sup>th</sup>. A special commission meeting will be held November 20, in Cheyenne, to

review, discuss, and consider all information, and to either approve or deny the application. This meeting is open to the public and people are welcome to attend.

Should the Commission approve the application, the application is then referred to the Legislature for review and approval. If the Legislature approves, then the application is put before the county for approval of the mill levy.

This is a lengthy process, as it should be, these decisions are not made lightly. As things move forward due diligence is included and those making the decision are confident in the final decision.

Commissioner Freeze then reviewed the schedule for the day. First will include introductions including Commissioners present at the meeting both in person and on zoom. Then will undertake a review of the Ground Rules. To be followed by a presentation from Campbell County and comments followed by Northern Wyoming Community College District administration. Then a baseline data presentation from the consultants. Followed by a solicitation of comments from the audience. This section has been broken into general topics that we have asked. Folks are welcome to provide feedback that may or may not fall in line with the presented topics. The goal with the topics is to guide the conversation to make sure needed information is asked about. Dr Freeze will complete a summary of the process at the end of the discussion and remind all of next steps and how the Commission will move forward.

Ground rules were reviewed and should include addressing the need and impact of the proposed Gillette College District and what it will add to community college education in Wyoming. Comments should be limited to a maximum of 3 minutes so all are heard in the scheduled 2.5 hours. All should be specific and targeted in their comments but factual comments are preferred. The Commission hopes to understand the educational need and purpose behind the request. Dr. Freeze asked that all be respectful when others are speaking. Comments can be submitted through the Commission website.

- **Commissioner & Staff Introductions**

- *Commissioner Dr. Jackie Freeze* introduced herself as Commission chair noting she was from Rock Springs.
- *Commissioner Greg Blikre* introduced himself as from Gillette.
- *Commissioner Julie Newman* introduced herself as from Torrington.
- *Commissioner Kay Dooley* introduced herself online noting she was from Powell.
- *Commissioner Craig Fredrick* introduced himself online noting he was from Guernsey.

Commissioner Freeze added all were trying to maintain the social distancing.

- **Campbell County Taskforce Presentation**

Ms. Louise Carter King, Gillette City Mayor – Started by noting the importance of everyone’s time and her appreciation for the Commission taking public comments on the topic. She welcomed all to Gillette and to the campus of Gillette College noting everything on the campus was built through the power of partnerships. She then introduced others who will speak about the district formation request. Rusty Bell, Campbell County Commissioner; Robert Palmer, Gillette College Advisory Board Member, and Carol Seeger, Campbell County Commissioners Administrative Director, who sends her regrets as she could not make it.

Ms. Carter King continued with saying the importance of Gillette College personally and professionally. As Mayor she wished to have what is best for the city. Gillette college has become another bright shining jewel in the community including the Tech Center, Inspiration Hall, to the Pronghorn Center. She noted her position to carry on the vision of her parents. They and other progressive individuals, some in the audience, worked tirelessly to bring Gillette college to life including classroom spaces, modular buildings, to today’s first-class campus. What a legacy for those who fought for a first-class place to have an education for children close to home and to give opportunities for others.

This is not the first time Gillette and Campbell County have blazed their own trail. Over 100 years ago the county came into being to serve residents. Time and again residents have shown success in growing their community. A community college district would be a natural next step to community growth.

Mr. Rusty Bell, Campbell County Commissioner briefly detailed the importance of the College to business and industry and the investment's meaning to Campbell County. He added that as Campbell County goes, so too the State of Wyoming. The investment and need for the College and what it does for our communities (Gillette, Campbell County, Wright) helps the whole state of Wyoming. The need and investment is obvious. It is imperative to make the necessary decisions on how all citizens provide for business and industry at a local level. When asking other county commissioners around the state, in a tight environment, would you feel comfortable in having seven people from another county make the decision on programs offered or even keeping the lights on? He recognized that it is not healthy for Wyoming nor for our community. He added they have had a wonderful partnership for a very long time, yet it is time for change. There never will be a good time for this decision, but it is important for all of Wyoming. Campbell County has things others do not including: the Carbon Capture Safe Project, the Integrated Test Center, Carbon Products Facility under construction, rare earth element research, and more over the next one to five-year span. It is very important that decisions are made at a local level on items provided for our industries locally. The Taskforce created to complete a lot of the work includes: Robert Palmer, Jerry Tested, Josh McGrath, Mack Davidson, all who are sitting in front of you. Regretfully a number couldn't make it today including Carol Seeger and Eric Barlow.

Mr. Robert Palmer introduced a slideshow that many on the task force had put together. He highlighted the fundamental purpose of formation was to allow the existing Gillette College to continue to fulfill its role and mission as a Wyoming Community College in meeting the challenges and student success strategy goals set forth in the Northern Wyoming Community College District Strategic Plan 2018 to 2023, free from structural impediments inherent in being a subordinate campus within a larger district in which we cannot have a meaningful role in our own governance. The community needs to confirm its community college and see that it continues to meet its objectives helping students to succeed in their lives and careers all while being a vibrant player in the community.

Mr. Palmer advanced to the next slide adding classes have been offered in Campbell County for over 50 years, this fall semester is the 51<sup>st</sup> year. Old main, the first campus building, was completed in 2003. The name changed from campus to college in 2006. The pronghorn mascot was selected in 2007. In 2009 the first residence halls were introduced. Current headcount and FTE are almost 50% of the NWCCD. The campus is serving over 1,400 Campbell County residents annually. The next

slide featured aerial pictures of campus facilities. Current enrollment includes over 20% of Campbell County high school graduates. In the last 10 years over 2,600 students have achieved their academic credentials with commencement ceremonies held in the Pronghorn Center. Mr. Palmer invited all for a tour of the facilities including those located along highway 59 and the Agriculture and Rodeo facility which is east of town. Fiscal year budget for 2020 was \$11 million and the NWCCD overall budget was \$32 million. Gillette College's budget is an estimated 35% of the district total with almost 50% of district total FTE and headcount. The next slide highlights a one-page summary of Gillette College including enrollment, economic impact, and demographic composition, now and for the future district.

College infrastructure includes eight facilities totaling over 860,000 square feet with student and academic support programming. In Wyoming statute 21-18-103 the property ownership transfer is addressed with a new district. All the buildings on the campus are owned by Campbell County, some in partnership with the district and include a ten-year life. Old main and possibly the residence halls were one of those original buildings. Most if not all debt for those two buildings has been covered by the City of Gillette. He reiterated the vested interest by the citizens, industries, and public entities in ownership of Gillette College. He further noted the State of Wyoming has vested interest in the facilities, through matched funding for many of the buildings including the Pronghorn and Technical Education Centers.

He closed indicating an independent Gillette Community College District is mutually beneficial for Campbell County, Sheridan, and Johnson counties and the state of Wyoming. Allowing for local governance and a continued focus on multiplying student success.

- **Northern Wyoming Community College District Comments**

Wendy Smith, NWCCD Associate Vice President, presented on behalf of the district. She acknowledged her presence on behalf of President Walt Tribble and NWCCD Trustees. They asked Ms. Smith to pass along their gratitude for Commission engagement in the process. She also offered her appreciation to the Commissioners, Dr. Caldwell, and all Commission staff as well as a number of Gillette College folks who helped to make the forum possible.

- **Baseline Data Presentation- Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education**

Presenting online was Mr. Patrick Lane from the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education. He noted WICHE is working on the needs analysis and reiterated the very tight turn around. He showed some high-level data while adding this is not all the data they have been working on. They have been conducting interviews in the area and around the state before turning in the report on November 6<sup>th</sup>.

The first presented slide showed the percentage of adults with an associate's degree or higher across the state. Darker colors represent higher levels of degree attainment. Campbell County is at about 30% while Sheridan and Johnson Counties are at 44% and 38%. He will primarily focus on Campbell, Johnson, and Sheridan Counties. He next presented the per capita income level by county, excluding Teton county. Per capita income level in Campbell County is \$49,000 while Sheridan (\$55,000) and Johnson (\$48,000). The next chart shows the number of Wyoming high school graduates across the state to the class of 2036. In 2020 Wyoming is expecting approximately 5,600 graduates with increasing to 6,200 in 2026 with declining to just under 5,000 in 2036. The big drop off in 2026 reflects a decline in births during the great recession. This projection comes with standard caveats as it is limited to just being a projection. WICHE staff have been reviewing articles that more people are moving to Wyoming. People moving into the state can change the number of high school graduates.

The next slide comes from the state economic analysis division which shows change in population by county through 2040. Darker colors represent a larger increase, lighter, reflect a decline. Campbell county is expected to see some of the largest increases in the state, growing by almost 10,000 residents. Sheridan clocks in at 4,600 and Johnson at 740. He noted the apparent growth pertains to the older populations. He also reiterated the caveat of these being best guess projections. The next slide showed the major industries by region. For the Campbell-Crook-Weston county region the biggest industries are Government, Mining, Quarrying, Oils and Gas extraction followed by Retail, Accommodations and Construction. For Johnson county Government is strong followed by Retail, Accommodation, Health Care, and Construction. The last side shows the number of Campbell County residents attending any of the Community Colleges. The middle slide indicates the number of students from Campbell-Crook-Weston Counties attending any of the colleges. The vast majority are enrolled in the Northern Wyoming Community College District yet

with sizeable populations at Eastern Wyoming College. These are baseline numbers under review.

- B. Public Comment by Topic Segment** (Comments should be limited to 3 minutes duration for each agenda item. Please state your name, affiliation, and locale). Please step forward as your name is called.

- **Topic #1 Campbell County Impact & Need**

Commissioner Freeze noted that a series of questions will be asked to receive responses from everyone. She also acknowledged that many had signed up to provide particular comments. She also indicated that they were trying to guide the discussion so that no one feels left out in the process. A slide for topic #1 was presented which included the Impact of and Need for a Community College District in Campbell County. The main question related to the topic included: How will the creation of a new community college district impact current academic, cultural, and extracurricular offerings for Campbell County? Public comments were received.

Robert Palmer, Chair of Gillette College Advisory Board and Taskforce – He noted to answer the first question, it will continue to grow. The Gillette campus is a full-fledged college already offering a full program of academics. Up until the current budget year there were additional extracurricular activities and athletic programs curtailed currently. As an independent district there is hope to bring these activities back. Every student wants a full community college atmosphere and environment. Hope to offer additional programming in continuing education specifically for industry. This is an opportunity that has not been allowed to develop fully as part of a larger district. They are looking to service the local community, business, and industry with needed programming. Nursing is a big factor for all and they hope to establish another level of nursing classes.

Rachel Scott, Community Member – One of her bigger concerns in moving to Gillette was the lack of diversity, in all aspects, potentially causing future problems or misunderstanding for her children. The college has helped their understanding offering more diversity in the population, and the cultural and sporting events. The family has spent a lot of time supporting the college through many ways. She has had kids assist with Eagle projects to better campus surroundings, and kids dually enrolled from the high school. She had a daughter who was part of the much-loved college voices program. Her husband also spent many happy years as a college employee who felt he was working for the betterment of the students and community.

This past year has been devastating for changes to her daughter's music program. Musical kids are highly intelligent and have much to offer to the communities. Academic pursuits for some students are a little more of a struggle yet they received needed support at the College. With the lack of opportunities, her daughter decided attend somewhere else where she could receive the same experience. Cultural diversity is hugely important to the growth of Campbell County. Our students were denied the support and funding needed even though the community was supportive. She would like the opportunity for the community to have the ability to make their own decisions and not others.

Phil Christopherson, Chief Executive Officer, EG Capital Development - The company is responsible for helping community development and grow the economy. Gillette College is an incredible partner in their efforts. When businesses plan to relocate or expand, one of the things looked for is an institution of higher education, a place where they can get a trained workforce. Gillette College does that and more. He has had two daughters and a son-in-law attend the College and two sons attend Central Wyoming College. Community Colleges are incredibly important. Any hint that our colleges are leaving would be a detriment to the future economy. I strongly support Gillette College being its own district. This community has stepped up over the years, look around you at this facility, built by the county. Other buildings were built by the city, the county, and by industry. Very little outside money has come to the campus as the community supports it. Please allow us to have the local control to have a Campbell County Community College District.

Ian Scott - I had served as the former Gillette College Groundskeeper, Campus Planner, and Safety Supervisor all at the same time. What makes this college unique we do a lot with very little. We have been hand sharing for a very long time to offer the things need for the community. Current employees cannot speak on these issues for fear of retaliation from their employer, which is a travesty. We need to be able to make our own decisions for what we do at our community college. It is important for our children and our community. If we don't see what a community college can do for Gillette specifically, I implore you to look at this, and everything it does for our community. Gillette needs to have this type of thing. Once we have been turned loose we will do great things. I also served as the Director of Area 59. If you want innovation and drivers of change, this is where you need to come.

Jaime Howell – I want to tie back to the previously mentioned cultural diversity. I have served as the host family coordinator for several years. I place student athletes with a family. Families invite them over and provide a place to call home. The

students still live in the dorms. But the families provide these students with the opportunity and place for somewhere to go. What I have heard from the families is they love getting to know these kids, who are mainly from other cities and around the world. Then the athletic programs would have the students come into the schools, interacting, reading with, and attending recess with the kids. The kids are learning about another culture, something they are not exposed to every day. This interaction would be great to continue.

Tracy Wasserburger – I serve as a local Nurse Practitioner and one of the local advisory board members. I wanted to touch base on some of the data shared earlier and how it ties back to the importance of Gillette college being sustained and our local control. It was brought up earlier by Chair Palmer, and also identified in the presentation about the impact to the growing and aging community. We have a very robust medical community, as an active member of the local medical community, I can tell you about areas of growth unique to the county, not realized through outward representation to people who do not reside in this community. There will be robust growth in the health care and medical community. Campbell County residents so rely on the Nursing program. So much so there is discussion to identify other areas of need to fulfill the health care spectrum. We already have a robust CNA program, an MA program, yet other disciplines are needed. We are much different than the neighbors to the west within the college district at this time. These particular needs are grossly important to us and our future. We are committed to this and will gladly work with anyone across the state in an effort to sustain ourselves.

Debbie McClelland - Perhaps there is a lot people do not understand about the college. Four years ago, my husband, who operated his own business, was badly injured in an oil well fire. He lost his sight as a result of the treatment. I had to figure out how to take care of him at home, making it extremely important to have him for us and the family. He was able to go through the college. Her brother went back to the school and accomplished his CNA training so that he could help take care of her husband, in order for the family to qualify for their long-term care insurance. For her particular family, the college is a vital service. Other families also benefit from this.

The thing about being a part of the Sheridan College district is that the two communities are very different. They are different from where their tax base and money comes from. They are also different because of their educational level. They also have very different ideas and directions. We have hired, over the last 3 to 4 years, a college student to assist him with the business. So, he can now help her son run the business. Without student support it would have been much more difficult to

find someone of the caliber we needed. My son Nathan has dedicated hours of his time through the advisory board. She has served on the Foundation Board, Campbell County School Board, and served as the President of the State School Board Association. Education is key to a community. This College has offered people in this community, things they could not get without it. They have been stymied many times, to go the direction they want to go, by the Sheridan Board. Sheridan has their interests at heart in Sheridan County. We need to be able, in Campbell County, is to have the same respect for our ideas, and the same chance at representing our ideas. We do not have one vote on that college board. We are self-sustaining and we can be more self-sustaining through our amazing partnerships with the city, county, school district, hospital. This is the definition of a community college. I ask for us to have that self-vote.

David Warrant, President of the Gillette College Foundation – He hoped to offer some additional information later on behalf of the Foundation. The application and the factual circumstances do not lend themselves to the slicing of the issues into discrete abstract topics like we have here. That is inherent in the process. The question here is the current district has two campuses with two community colleges and that is where the similarity ends. The Colleges and the communities they serve are not the same and should not be. In topic one we have Campbell County impact and need. The answer to those questions presented in topic one is found in local control. The College needs to be able to respond and react to those unique factors that influence and direct the efficacy of its’ educational mission. That is a mechanism for a truly effective community college. In answering this first topic I would offer, what is inescapable and already offered, local control.

Commissioner Freeze reiterated the understanding that these questions overlap and intertwined. Yet wanted to make sure the list was covered to answer everything they want to share. She asked if there was anything they would like to augment as part of a new district.

Doug Dunkle, Foundation Board Member and Adjunct Professor - He wanted to represent his former colleague Mr. John McGuire who died about a year ago. He formerly served as head of the business department. John’s desire and dream was always to institute a program for students interested in Engineering, Accounting, becoming Attorneys, and other professions in the business world could enter and have a combination of honor’s level classes and mentorship by community professionals. Gillette Wyoming is uniquely situated with the kind of professionals to instantly participate in those types of programs. Offering the student who is interested in a

long-term profession, top level academics, to start their program and get a feel for what they are looking at in their community.

Noah Williams – He suggested that he was possibly one of the first professors, but he is really not a professor, but a teacher who taught at the college. He was fortunate enough to teach astronomy for 47 years. He reflected on growing up on an Indiana farm. His folks did not own the farm, they were tenants. He had an owner who was constantly telling us what to plant and where. Limiting the planting, number of pigs and care for their cows. The family later bought the farm and they did their own thing. They could plant the number of acres of corn wanted and beans. We could put rabbits in their huts. I have mixed feelings as both of his sons attended Sheridan College. Both all state basketball players who later played at Sheridan College. Now things have changed. I don't want to be a tenant, nor does anyone out here. Look at this gym, filled half full at some games. The cafeteria has been shut down, yet it doesn't need to be. You people, the Commission are in the driver's seat. Help us drive the car and become our own institution.

Jeff Wasserburger – He introduced himself as a State Senator, noting he represents Campbell and Converse County. He also is the Director for the Board of Cooperative Higher Education Services (BOCHES). He works closely with Gillette College, and the school district. He is the sole employee. According to State Statute, the board may levy a half mill. The board is to try and provide higher education services for grades 7 to 14. Essentially, he does a lot of work with the school district and a lot of work with Gillette College. Currently dual enrollment is one of the best things they are doing. Typically, 4 or 5 students per year, graduate from Gillette College with an Associate's Degree a week before they graduate from high school. This year for the first time, we may have a student from Westwood High School graduate with an Associate's Degree in Welding. Regardless, he will have 54 credits when he graduates from high school. He recognized that next Friday, Legislators will be on campus to discuss the issue of should Gillette College be a separate college district? They are all kinds of parts to that and the directives of the Committee will take place at the end of the day. He anticipates a resultant directive from the Committee at the end of the day, will be for the Community College to proceed.

- **Topic #2 – Financial Impacts**

Commissioner Freeze noted that the questions regarding what is working well and what could be improved had already been covered. She also noted discussion about direct impacts. She advised moving on to topic #2 which details the financial impact.

She added a subtle change in the format. She read all three questions and then folks are welcome to talk about any of the three areas. The three questions included:

- 1) How knowledgeable is the community regarding the full cost of developing and operating a new community college district?
- 2) How supportive is the community to approving new taxes to help support the community college district?
- 3) Describe the most significant funding challenges for the new district?

Commissioner Freeze clarified, they are not asking for tremendous detail, but that they are trying to get a sense of people's knowledge of the funding process, how funding might be different from the current program and what are the issues created by funding a whole new district.

Michael Von Flatern, State Senator from Gillette – I think I understand this as we have to vote for up to 4 mills. But we will not cut into the pie, that is the funding for the colleges, because the valuation of this county is at \$4.7 billion. We won't ever cut into the pie. Which was a comment made by the folks at Eastern. We are not asking for a portion of the \$290 million given to the colleges. But we have to take up to 4 mills as per a vote. But we really think we will use approximately 3.2 mills. We have the existing college running today, potentially costing \$14 million.

Bill Fortner, Candidate for House District 52 – The biggest problem that he foresees is funding from industry. The industry is dying and dying pretty fast. He does not think the new district is sustainable without that. He feels that this will end up similar to what is happening right now. They will never have enough money and will always have to ask local citizens for more taxes and tax dollars, sucking away from the local economy. There will be more pressure on local residents especially those who are elderly and on fixed incomes. He feels that there is really no benefit for walking away from something that has been in place already for a half a century, which worked well. The only reason we are here today is because of the sports programs. I wish you would reconsider, I am not for it. Anyone I talk to is not for it, nor do they want more taxes. They already pay plenty of taxes.

Ralph Kingan, Mayor of Wright - As far as taxes are concerned, I have not talked to people in the County or Gillette, but as far as Wright residents, they do not have a problem with taxes. Businesses need to think about the businesses around now which are to stay competitive.

Jim Neiman – He noted he would speak from outside this county. I have a forest products company in Hill Wyoming. The family business has been around for 84 years. We have 100 employees in Hulett and overall 500 as we are expanding into another state. One of the shortages in the business is millwrights, maintenance people, and electricians. Under the current system, Campbell County cannot reach out to Crook or Weston Counties. We have to reach out as a business to this county. It is only one hour from Hulett to here. To Torrington it is 4 hours, to Casper it is 3 hours. It is very important to reach out to Gillette College to set up maintenance programs for employee training. With the addition of Gillette having its own community college, we will be able to expand our training. We have already donated money, and will give more if needed to help out.

Justin Merryman, Local Businessman - I am a Chiropractor and adjunct faculty at the college. I am on the College Foundation as well as the Parks and Rec Foundation. The question phrasing is set up a little differently. We are hurt financially if we are unable to make our own decisions. We should be able to generate our own divisions, within our own college, to genuinely impact our own economy. Thereby addressing our own needs in our county. We could actually see growth as per the enrollment. He added that when the College becomes independent, they will absolutely have more growth and students, not only from the high school. Through UW's mistakes, a lot of students stayed behind going to school at the local community college. My young brother is completing his Associates here and is President of the Pronghorn College. He continued on once he figured what he wanted to do. Do not worry about the finances, but do worry about the finances if this is not voted through. Not making our own decisions impacts the community greatly. Campbell County can meet local needs a lot more quickly than a county that is half of their population making decisions for us.

Norine Kasperik – I'm a retired nurse and nurse educator. I taught at the Gillette campus for 13 years. I am also a former State Legislator in house district 32. I have advocated for all bills that had come through the chamber to support the Community College, and voted for them. My husband has been on the Gillette College Foundation for 11 years, and President for five. I, my son, and my granddaughters have all taken classes here. Our family has been in Gillette for over 30 years. We have invested our time into Gillette College, in our work lives, and in retirement. Like so many others in this room and community we have contributed financially to the College. Our concern always for those 30 years is that we have no vote. My passion for the College started in the mid-80's. I started a local group called the Campbell County Higher Education Foundation. Our goal was to bring upper division courses

and Master's programs to Gillette through the college. We worked with local leaders and Legislators to impact legislation. Our greatest success was passage of the BOCHES program. At that time, we contracted with Colleges outside of Wyoming to bring in bachelors and masters programs. That is how she completed her bachelors and master's degrees. It made it possible to work with dual and concurrent enrolled students at the local school. We have had 20 years of growth between Sheridan and Gillette. We have seen improvements in communication and collaboration. We also saw great growth with community partners. But the remaining concern is that we have no vote. We have heard all the impacts the college has made on the community and local businesses. Six months ago, under current Sheridan Board of Trustees, and a new administration, changes were made with alarming conditions, that we all went to Sheridan to talk about. Unfortunately, we realized at that meeting the decision had already been made. It was a shock to go to Sheridan and talk about our concerns. Decisions were made and we had no vote. What we continue to see in the past six months is decreasing transparency. Now Sheridan is extracting money off the top without input from Gillette. We see increasing lack of communication with our Sheridan partners and lack of leadership including our hospital, city, and council. And we still have no vote. We see discontinuation of programs without community input. We have seen closure of classes without community input. And we have no vote. Inspiration hall sits empty, even though it has been paid for and maintained by the city. The Wyoming Community College Commission needs to support Campbell County and Gillette College and self-determine our future. Please support Gillette College standing alone.

Lenny Sober – School Board Member, and past Chair of the BOCHES Board, and former member of the Campbell County Commissioners. This is an unusual request to form a college district that already exists in everything except the actual college district. All the facilities are here. You ask if the community has the willingness and ability to fund such a district. These buildings belong to Campbell County and this community. It is unusual that all the facilities are already here. We've done some calculations to determine the impact on the community. If you own a \$300,000 house, at a full 4 mills, taxes would increase by \$108. I pay considerably more for that for the education of K-12. If you think about the downturn in the energy industry. Important for the economy is economic development. When one starts down the trail of recruiting for economic development, one of the first things to look at is the ability to train for local needs. If we have a college and district here, we have that ability to train. Coal production slides down every year, yet one job of the College is to retrain the workforce for other types of occupations and other kinds of things. Even today with COVID, it is almost impossible to hire a trained electrician,

mechanic, or welder. The college currently trains those people. We've always been at the mercy of an elected board in another county. Give us the ability to make decisions ourselves. Also give the residents of Campbell County the right to vote to say yes or no for the district. The best answers and choices pertain to what the voters say. While I understand the process here, I think it is a pretty simple solution – vote.

- **Topic #3 – Statewide Impact**

Commissioner Freeze introduced topic number 3 – Statewide Impact. She reminded all that the questions really come from the charge that is before the Commission which is to look at the global impact across the board. She asked that speakers talk about additional positive or negative impacts of an additional district may have on Wyoming related to enrollment, class, economic development. Or major challenges or opportunities that may exist regarding adding an additional institution at this time? And how would you sell key decision makers on the value of adding the new Campbell County District.

Josh McGrath, Community College Task Force Member – He owns ERA Priority Real Estate in town and was also former president of the Gillette College Booster Club. I have a kid at the College who plans to go to the University of Wyoming. But she chose to stay at the College primarily because they were offering more in person classes, a key to the community college system is the lower class size. Four of her five classes are in person at Gillette College. Governance needs to be local. Sheridan doesn't want decisions to be made for Sheridan by Campbell County. A key to any business is flexibility. With the size of the schools and the decisions being made in Sheridan for both campuses, it has become harder to be flexible. A topic in the application was to provide a 20-year outlook. It is hard to project out 20 years, including in my business. I think it is easier to change here. We also need to talk about economic impact, \$64.8 million. A big number brought into our community every year. For a statewide impact, the question tossed around, is an eighth slice of the pie available. We are not asking for an eighth slice. We are asking for our piece of the seventh slice of the pie which we are already getting. For those worried about the funding model, we are not asking for any more from others. Senator Von Flatern mentioned our self-sufficiency. We would like a more equitable split of the funding at 45.7. The \$5 million of shared costs are set. This also presents opportunities for our district in IT jobs, human resources. No one likes to talk about taxes. We have always been in support of Gillette College and we will figure out some way to make it happen.

Robert Palmer – A couple things on statewide impact. If you review the funding model in place, BOCHES contributes a significant amount. Local citizens through the optional 1% contribute through the county and city. Citizens vote on the 1% every four years. They already have said that Gillette College is a high priority. Those dollars are set aside through the County Commissioner and the City Council for the operating funds to help on an annual basis.

As far as statewide impact. Look at the support in the room. Look at the hanging banners that we cannot add on to. As district #9 champions in cross country, rodeo, basketball, and soccer. What a great opportunity for the other colleges in the state to have another high caliber, competitor, not only competing athletically but also academically. A lot of our athletes are academic all Americans. Let us have that same competitive spirit. Not only athletically but also in other extracurricular areas. We have talked about the energy city voices. What a great opportunity to have that in our community and state. Unfortunately, they were prevented to complete a trip to Ireland because of COVID. What great ambassadors for the State of Wyoming. We see the same with the Welding program, Diesel program, and Electrical programs. They compete at the highest level nationally and bring back multiple awards. Standing for the benefit of our community, district, and statewide. Gillette students can compete at any level nationally.

David Walls – A 2008 graduate of Gillette College, Gillette College President's Award Recipient, and a Gillette College Distinguished Alumni. I am a Gillette native and work as a chemist. I am very appreciative of what Gillette College has given. We are in changing times. In 2005 my employer closed their doors, I found myself unemployed, undereducated and living in my mother's basement. Gillette college was able to change all of that. I find the current situation with Gillette College very similar. It is time for Gillette College to move out of their mother's basement. It is imperative that it be done soon. With city council and state officials working feverishly to make sure Gillette has a more secure economy. I see Gillette college making sure we play a major part in that endeavor. As we have heard, recent decisions severely hurt Gillette College's ability to help secure the economy. Gillette College has an excellent infrastructure in place and can attract and provide training for new professionals who will be needed. The city and county are working very hard at reinventing ourselves in the new environment. We are working hard to attract new industry and advancements in the energy sector. Investments that will prolong the use of coal and petroleum products. We will need trained personnel with new and fresh ideas. We need the ability to make our own decisions in a rapidly changing environment. Please help us get out of our mom's basement.

Chet Trebby - I am unable to attend in person. I am a former Gillette College employee, an adjunct professor in the Criminal Justice program. I had formed an advisory board with the city police and sheriff's department to determine where we would like to take the Gillette College criminal justice program to where we wanted to go and how we could best serve our community. We took that vision to the district level academics and received the response that Sheridan is the main district criminal justice program. And that the efforts would be focused there. If someone wanted to focus in a full-time criminal justice program they needed to plan to attend in Sheridan. Despite equitable enrollment in both campuses. Gillette's program was not meeting their needs, as we graduated about 30% of the needed students. I wanted to share how the local control will help better meet the needs of the community. Under the current system we are not able to meet local community needs. Gillette college needs to have its own voice and provide its own destiny and direction.

Debbie McClelland – I have listened to an awful lot this afternoon. In 1910 my grandmother came to Thornton Wyoming to homestead. She was one of five children. Her parents, local ranchers, asked her if she would teach everyone's children. There continues to be an extreme understanding of the value of education in this state. With large distances and small populations, education is the key. If the state is going to be a sustainable and growing place with a quality of life, education is a critical piece of that. Education is the foundation of what we do. The state does not have a loss when we have better education, the state always wins. Kids educated in the state, stay in the state. The State of Wyoming paid for my education. I was able to go to the University of Wyoming for an extremely reasonable cost. The kids in Campbell County need that education, and there aren't as many getting it that need it. Sheridan putting a thumb on our offering criminal justice does not consider the needs of this community. When we do not even have a vote, we are being taken advantage of. This is good for Campbell County and for the state.

- **Topic #4 – Speakers Registered to Provide Comment**

Commissioner Freeze noted a move to the registered public comments. Mr. Rob Dennis will call for the individuals who have preregistered to provide comments. Commissioner Freeze added her understanding that some who had preregistered had previously made comments, yet desired the opportunity for all to provide a second opportunity to make comments.

Charlene Camblin – She had a little story to share. She’s a member of the Gillette foundation board and fourth generation rancher. There are many reasons why Gillette should be its own district. About a year ago, I attended the Northern Wyoming Community College Board Trustee meeting. Vice President Janelle Oberlander provided a report that day regarding Area 59 and success of summer camps provided in area 59. Area 59 is a maker’s space or center for innovation and fabrication, it serves as a lab. My neighbors’ kids, are country kids, while attending Area 59 they built a rocket. The kids were very excited and it opened a whole new world of learning for the country kids. Now the country school has opened their own STEM lab. The seed for learning planted at Area 59 is growing strong in our rural communities. Area 59 began as a dream or vision as a place to enhance learning. That funding included a funding model and grants. At the end of the presentation, one Trustee asked what is Area 59? The facility had been opened for a year and is listed on Sheridan’s website. The trustee did not even know what it was. There was an obvious disconnect and her impression was that the Trustees are out of touch with Gillette College. A Trustee should have the desire to know more about the colleges they oversee. Gillette College can and does great things when they can control their destiny. But they will never reach their full potential as long as the reigns lie in someone else’s hands.

Darla Cotton – I was raised in Gillette and graduated from Gillette College in 1994 with an Associates of Arts. I currently work for parks and recreation in information technology. I have supported the school in many ways. I also work part-time for the college at games and with audio visual set up. Athletics may have been the reason spurring us for the separation from Sheridan College but it is not the main reason. Diversity cannot be explored unless there is diversity in the student body. Removing athletics, removed diversity. Students who attend from out of the country and other states add a great wealth of education to the experience. So, when you say it is about athletics, it is not, but it is a big piece missing this year for students. Ms. Bot also said something about her daughter not being willing to participate. As a city and county, we have got to look at what we can do to keep the school around. She is worried when there is another cut faced by the state, the College may be on the chopping block. There may not be funds to keep us going, which is why I want the separation. I have personally had 7 to 8 students as a host parent. One of those host students was Mr. Kaleem Forman, he is no longer alive. He wanted to come back to Gillette to be in the community because of his former experience. He loved the town. I am worried those things Mr. Forman and my husband enjoyed are going away. So, I don’t want this to be a focus on athletics but it does tie into it.

Bill Fortner – I think we all agree on one thing. Education is important. We have already had that here, and have had it for 50 years. He is not disputing that one bit. The economics of this have action for the whole district, not who is not here. I've worked in three different states. If you look at the history of towns and counties in those states, none thought they would ever go broke, today they are both gone.

Heid Gross – She is the Foundation Director at Gillette College. I wanted to talk about partnerships and how wonderful the community of Gillette and Campbell County are. Also, how closely the Foundation works with the City and the County and the folks here to raise money for this college. It started back in 2002 or 2003 when the main campus building was built. At that time the community raised over \$2 million. Since I have been here, over \$1 million has been raised for the rodeo/ag building which is east of town. We raised over \$3 million for this facility (Pronghorn Center). Our work is ongoing raising over \$4 million in a recent partnerships drive. People here are totally committed to advancing the educational opportunities here in Gillette. We have so many people moving into the area. After talking to people in the real estate lending departments and agents. A lot of people from both the west and east coast are moving here. We need to be able to provide education and opportunity for new folks as well. When looking at the attainment goal the Governor has set forth, and Campbell County does not have as many people with post-secondary degrees compared to other areas. If we are to make the attainment goal, we need to have those opportunities in Gillette and Campbell County.

Richard Kimbal – He noted his role as the Student Body President at Gillette College. It is an honor to be here. I chose to go to Gillette College because of the Diesel Technology program. Having always been interested in working with his hands the Diesel program was attractive. I did a lot of research before coming out to the school for the Associates degree and found the reputation to be pretty good. I am from Montgomery County Maryland. On the east coast there are not a lot of schools that offer a Diesel Technology program especially with an Associate's Degree. The reputation the school had and different backgrounds, welding, machining, diesel, was definitely attractive. While being in Gillette with the start of the semester, I have learned a lot about the community and city. I have come to realize how vital the school is to the community and the students. Gillette College is helping me succeed and given me the best skills and knowledge. It has also given me the information and industry experience. It has given me something that I enjoy doing. I have loved every bit of it. I would love to play a part in changing this school. I encourage you to approve the application for the school to become its own district.

Nathan McLeland. – As an owner of an oil and gas business, you heard earlier from my mother. He is also a member of the city council. He is here as a proponent and advocate for forming our own district. My mother spoke, and to him she represents the passion of that generation who came to Gillette in the 70's, and who fought hard to make this a community that provided opportunities for people, build a thriving community, and things we have today. You heard Josh McGrath speak today, whose mother was a tireless advocate for this college. As a result of their work you are seeing the next generation of people want to come and serve the college. I've served as chair and vice chair of the college advisory board. This college was formed because we knew we needed it to prepare workers for our industry, prepare opportunities for young people. This college was built through the partnerships with the city, county, hospital, and numerous private donations. We have reached the point in order to continue with that mission and provide the opportunities, we need to become our own district with our own representation. We need to have that say in how our college can best meet the needs of our community. Therefore, I am asking that this Commission please approve the application.

Louis Carter King – I already spoke when I welcomed you, but I will take another opportunity to say Gillette does deserve to have its own district. People here and so many families here have worked so hard to make sure we have this beautiful campus. It is just a jewel in our community. Please give us the chance to continue so we can lead the state in bringing innovation and industry to our community that then funds the state. We are the engine for the State of Wyoming.

Ralph Kingan – I am also the mayor of Wright. I have roughly done twenty five sampling points and nobody disagrees, they are in for of the district, they don't mind paying taxes. I still think it is important for all the business in the county and the future of the county. And it needs to be a separate district.

DG Reardon – Commissioner of Campbell county and also a graduate of Sheridan College. I have been in Campbell County for now over 30 years. I have watched the development of a truly community college. It has grown from rooms borrowed and not set up for college classes into the facility you have here today. The discussion here and the application, assumes that the things needed are not in place for a community college. When talking about applying to create a new district, we are a district. But we are a subdistrict to Sheridan College. I loved the analogy of a parent child relationship. We are the child and we are 50 years old now. It is time for us to get out of the house and get on our own legs. We have learned a lot and will make our own mistakes. There is a lot of support in this community. Yes, there is a

concern about taxes and the economy. But junior college's do drive the local economy. We can grow Gillette and Campbell county supported by our own sales tax or our own mill levies. We are talking about giving Campbell County citizens the opportunity to vote and determine if we want to be our own district. People in this room would overwhelmingly say that. Mr. Fortner says his constituencies do not say that, my constituencies do say yes. The Commission's job is to see if we have the where-with-all, facilities, to have a junior college. Looking around here at the buildings, it would be resoundingly yes. The basic question on the table is if we take it to a vote for the citizens of Campbell County to say yes or no on forming their own college district. I think the folks at Sheridan would be glad to get rid of us. If the vote is no then Sheridan will be stuck with us. We have had a great relationship. It is time for us to be on our own.

Rachel Scott – This is not a new subject of conversation, the ability for Campbell County to stand on its own. This has been going on for years, related to the loss of our security here on campus. She works in the health care industry, an orthodontics office, we have been actively trying to recruit an orthodontist to the office. We like to share the highlights of our community. People who are coming here are looking for that place to have their families with family friendly aspects. A college regularly offers those. Typically shown are the Recreation Center and the college facilities. It has been a struggle showing people around town. We have had to withhold information regarding what is going on here now. Do we not want to educate the folks here in town to be our future leaders? My husband's family has been in the area and involved in education for many years. Please let us stand on our own and grow.

Nella Williams – I apologize to Bill. A third of the stars seen in the sky, within 100 light years of earth are double stars. Sometimes a star will break off, becoming its own star. I think we need to become our own separate star. I get people coming up from Cheyenne, Sheridan, Rock Springs, and they say how can you in the community do what you do? How can you put a gym, Rec. Center, like you did? How can you put an addition to the school and share with the county? It is because we are Gillette and we get things done. Let us go down the road, and we will get this done. You will be proud. Let us be our own star in the sky, a blue star which are the hottest.

- **Topic #5 – Other Relevant Information**

Commissioner Freeze introduced the final topic, Other relevant information that will facilitate a well-informed decision. She encouraged anyone to provide final comments that they desire.

David Horning – I am the President of the Gillette College foundation and I am here to speak to the application. I want to share some background to the foundation which speaks to the issue presented by the application. The foundation was established in 1987 in order to provide higher education opportunities in Campbell County. Twenty years later the name was changed to the Gillette College Foundation. The mission evolved to become working together to advance student success at Gillette College. The objective is to enhance College operations and provide funding for specific projects which support the college including student aid, equipment and facilities. The current foundation board is comprised of 17 members representing the entirety of Campbell County. All are dedicated to the success of the college just like foundation members before them. The Foundation has been extraordinarily successful in its’ mission and is proud of work completed at the College. The foundation currently manages almost \$13 million in assets. From 2006 to 2019 the foundation has raised over \$17 million and given over \$800,000 in scholarships and nearly \$7 million in program support. For the fiscal year ending in June of 2019, the foundation raised over \$1 million in gifts, awarded \$107,000 in scholarships, and \$450,000 in program support. In the last several years the foundation has raised \$1.1 million for the Rodeo/Ag complex and secured a matching gift of \$1.7 million from a private donor for an economic development administration grant for the Area 59 STEM facility. The Foundation also raised \$3.5 million for the Pronghorn Center. Only recently did the Foundation receive a \$4 million bequest in support of Gillette College, the largest gift received to date. No matter the outcome of the application the Foundation will continue to work closely with donors, the City of Gillette, Campbell County to support this college.

The principal issues before the Commission posed by the application are is there a need for the College in the proposed district, is there a need for the College in the state, does the proposed district have the financial ability to support the college, and is the proposed college academically sound. The application and supporting materials the Commission has received, are extensive and exhaustively address each and every one of those factors. The application process by its’ nature is required to address, should the district be formed. When we can answer each and every one of the elements by seeing what is right here in front of us. The answer to every question is “Yes”. To answer them no, means that Gillette College does not exist, is not here, and you are dismissing 50 years of success.

Gillette College and the efforts of the community, supporters, and students that made it the reality that it is. The question is not, is there a need for a Community College District. The question really is, was there a need for this College, this campus, and all

of the campus you see before you. The answer is that there was and is a need for the College. The College is already here and already a success. Gillette College thrives in the proposed district and that the district has the ability to support this College plan is educationally sound. The Foundation's progress is an indication of the community's support and willingness to support Gillette College financially. Gillette College can stand on its own and Campbell County has earned the right to make the decisions as to whether it should become its own district. This is not a selfish undertaking. The College should be able to respond to the local factor and govern itself in order to meet the needs of its' community.

Thank you for your consideration and I ask that you approve the petition. It is our community and it is our college.

### **C. Closing**

Commissioner Freeze thanked everyone for being here today and sharing their passion and years of work, and experience brought to the institution to help make Gillette College what it is today. Certainly, you have wonderful facilities and wonderful people in the community. The Commission will fulfill our statutory obligation and look at all the facts. We will continue our fact finding to make the best decision we can on your application.

Should you have any further comments to share, or that you have letters of support, you can certainly submit those to the Commission Office to be considered as part of the packet. She reminded everyone that the process continues. Another public hearing will be held in Riverton on October 14. That meeting will also be offered by Zoom, available for people who were not able to participate today, they can join at that meeting.

All information from the survey, all data, and everything else will be considered. We will hold a Special Commission Meeting on November 20, 2020 in Cheyenne and do the very best to take all into consideration to result in a sound decision.

Meeting Adjourned.