



Board of Governors Meeting Minutes

Board of Governors-Northeast Community College Area

9/24/2026 9:30 AMCDT

@ Northeast Community College, Lifelong Learning Center, Suite O197, 801 E. Benjamin Ave.,
Norfolk, NE 68701

Attendance

Present:

Members: Del Ames - Secretary, Board of Governors, Steve Anderson - Member, Board of Governors, Diane Davies - Member, Board of Governors, Donovan Ellis - Chairperson, Board of Governors, Dirk Petersen - Member, Board of Governors, Jeffrey Scherer - Member, Board of Governors, Nicole Sedlacek - Vice-Chairperson, Board of Governors, Carol A. Sibbel - Member, Board of Governors, Pat Wojcik - Member, Board of Governors

Staff: Leah Barrett - President, Scott Gray - Vice President, Administrative Services and General Counsel, Amanda Nipp - Vice President, Student Services, Charlene Widener - Vice President, Educational Services, Mike Walkowiak - Vice President, Human Resources & Organizational Development, David Cone - CIO, Lindsay Spiegel - Director, Institutional Effectiveness, Jennifer Greve - Executive Director of Marketing and Recruitment, Diane Reikofski - Executive Assistant and Board Recording Secretary

Guests: Kristi Rastede-English Professor, Wendy Swenson-Spanish Professor, Nejla Muminovic-Norfolk Daily News, Allison Lambert-College Engagement Coordinator

Absent-Excused:

Members: Terry Nelson - Member, Board of Governors, Julie Robinson - Member, Board of Governors

1. CONVENE BUDGET HEARING (Presenters: Scott Gray)

[BUDGET HEARING on the 2026-2027](#) budgets for the purpose of hearing support, opposition, criticism, suggestions, or observations from taxpayers.

Official Notice of the Budget Hearing and Budget Summary was published in the [Norfolk Daily News](#) on Saturday, September 19, 2026.

 [BOG 2026-27 Budget Hearing Presentation.pdf](#)

The Northeast Community College Board of Governors met for its official Budget Hearing regarding the [2026-2027 College budgets](#) on Thursday, September 24, 2026. Notice of

the Budget Hearing was published in the *Norfolk Daily News* on Saturday, September 19, 2026. The purpose of the Budget Hearing on the 2026-2027 budgets is to hear support, opposition, criticism, suggestions, or observations from taxpayers. Chairperson Donovan Ellis declared the budget hearing convened at 9:38 a.m., in Suite O197 of the Lifelong Learning Center, located on the campus of Northeast Community College.

Scott Gray, Vice President, Administrative Services and General Counsel, reviewed the revenue and expenditures related to the General Fund Operating Budget. He noted a decrease in personnel and insurance expenses and increases in IT licenses, maintenance, and contractual services.

Review was also provided regarding the Building Improvement Fund Budget, and the Self-Supporting Funds Budget for Fiscal Year 2026-2027.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT on Budget Hearing

Individuals commenting on the Budget Hearing are allowed three minutes each. Any member of the public wishing to address the Board of Governors may sign in and comment to the Board at this time.

No constituents were in attendance to address the Board of Governors with a public comment.

3. ADJOURN BUDGET HEARING

Budget hearing was adjourned at 10:15 a.m.

4. CONVENE PROPERTY TAX REQUEST HEARING (Presenters: Scott Gray)

[PROPERTY TAX REQUEST HEARING](#) for the purpose of hearing support, opposition, criticism, suggestions, or observations of taxpayers relating to setting the final tax request at a different amount than the prior year tax request.

Official Notice of the Special Hearing to Set Final Tax Request Hearing was published in the [Norfolk Daily News](#) on Saturday, September 19, 2026.

The Property Tax Request Hearing was convened at 10:15 a.m. Notice of the Special Hearing to Set Final Tax Request was published in the *Norfolk Daily News* on Saturday, September 19, 2026. Purpose of the Special Hearing to Set Final Tax Request is to hear support, opposition, criticism, suggestions, or observations from taxpayers.

Information on setting of the Final Property Tax Request for 2026-2027 was presented by Scott Gray.

5. PUBLIC COMMENT on Property Tax Request Hearing

Individuals commenting on the Property Tax Request Hearing are allowed three minutes each. Any member of the public wishing to address the Board of Governors may sign in and comment to the Board at this time.

No constituents were in attendance to address the Board of Governors with a public comment.

6. ADJOURN PROPERTY TAX REQUEST HEARING

At 10:18 a.m., there being no further discussion, Chairperson Ellis declared the Property Tax Request Hearing adjourned.

7. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE (Presenters: Donovan Ellis)

Chairperson Ellis led the assembly in pledging their allegiance to the flag of the United States of America.

8. CONVENE REGULAR MEETING

Chairperson Ellis convened the regular meeting at 10:19 a.m.

9. OPEN MEETINGS ACT

Pursuant to Nebraska Statute Section 84-1412, the public is advised that a copy of today's agenda and all reproducible printed material which will be discussed at today's meeting is located in Suite O197 of the Lifelong Learning Center, located on the Northeast Community College website. Also available in Suite O197 is a current copy of the [Nebraska Open Meetings Act](#) which is accessible to members of the public.

Chairperson Ellis advised that a copy of today's agenda and all reproducible printed material is located at the back of the room and is also located on the Northeast Community College website.

10. CONSENT AGENDA (Presenters: Donovan Ellis)

APPROVE the Consent Agenda including:

- Agenda of the September 24, 2026 meeting. Official Notice of the meeting is posted on the Northeast Community College [website](#), and published in the [Norfolk Daily News](#) on Saturday, September 19, 2026.
- [Minutes](#) of the August 20, 2026 Board of Governors meeting.

 [Board of Governors Meeting-Minutes 08.20.2026.pdf](#)

 [Consent Agenda - September 24, 2026](#)

Motion:

Motion to approve the Consent Agenda.

Motion moved by Nicole Sedlacek and motion seconded by Diane Davies. Voting yes: Ames, Anderson, Davies, Ellis, Petersen, Scherer, Sedlacek, Sibbel, and Wojcik. Absent-Excused: Nelson and Robinson. MOTION CARRIED.

11. 2026-2027 BUDGET

Consider the [2026-2027 budgets](#):

- 2026-2027 General Operating Budget
- 2026-2027 Building Improvement Budget
- 2026-2027 Self-Supporting Funds Budget

📌 [Budget approval](#)

Motion:

Motion to approve the 2026-2027 budgets as presented.

Scott Gray commended Kayla Lackas, Morgan Eggerling, and Sharon Painter in his office for the work they do in assisting him with developing the budget.

Motion moved by Dirk Petersen and motion seconded by Del Ames. Voting yes: Ames, Anderson, Davies, Ellis, Petersen, Scherer, Sedlacek, Sibbel, and Wojcik. Absent-Excused: Nelson and Robinson. MOTION CARRIED.

12. PROPERTY TAX REQUEST

Consider the [2026 Property Tax Request](#):
2026 Property Tax Request **\$10,275,158.48**
2026 Tax Rate **0.020000**

📌 [Property Tax Request](#)

Motion:

Motion to approve the 2026 Property Tax Request.

Motion moved by Diane Davies and motion seconded by Nicole Sedlacek. Voting yes: Ames, Anderson, Davies, Ellis, Petersen, Scherer, Sedlacek, Sibbel, and Wojcik. Absent-Excused: Nelson and Robinson. MOTION CARRIED.

13. PRESIDENT'S REPORT

13.1. Monitoring Report(s) (Presenters: Leah Barrett)

[EL-08, Communication and Support to the Board](#)
[Monitoring Report Summary](#)

 [EL-08, Communication and Support to Board 2026.pdf](#)

Dr. Leah Barrett presented EL-08, [Communication and Support to the Board](#). The report concluded that the College is in compliance with most provisions of the policy and continues to provide the Board with timely information, monitoring data, administrative support, and required agenda materials necessary to fulfill its governance responsibilities. Board survey results reflected strong confidence in the President's communication practices, the quality and timeliness of monitoring reports, the effectiveness of OnBoard, and the support provided by the Board Recording Secretary.

The report identified three areas of non-compliance related to the level of information shared on certain matters, the appropriateness of information presented in terms of length and complexity, and perceptions regarding equitable treatment of Board members. Dr. Barrett acknowledged the feedback and reaffirmed her commitment to a "no surprises" approach to communication. She noted that there have been no instances of actual or anticipated non-compliance with Ends or Executive Limitations policies during the reporting period and no instances where the Board was found out of compliance with its governance policies. Dr. Barrett stated that she will meet individually with Board members, work with her executive coach, and seek additional opportunities to enhance communication and information sharing. She also welcomed ongoing feedback from the Governance Committee as improvements are implemented.

Chairperson Ellis expressed pride in the Board of Governors and noted the positive working relationship between Board members and the President. He also commented favorably on the ease of communication and the effectiveness of OnBoard as a tool for Board operations.

Following discussion, the Board accepted the Monitoring Report for EL-08, [Communication and Support to the Board](#) and acknowledged the identified opportunities for improvement.

13.2. President's monthly update (Presenters: Leah Barrett)

President's Monthly Update [09.2025](#)

Dr. Leah Barrett provided an update on key partnerships, regional initiatives, and external engagement activities. Northeast continues its collaboration with statewide and rural development partners through efforts such as the Northeast Elected Leader Academy (NELA), Rural Guided Pathways, the Rural Health Care Transformation Program, and meetings with higher education and community partners. The College is participating in regional initiatives focused on credit for prior learning, student success in math and English, and first-year experience programming.

The Board also received an overview of recent college highlights and recognition activities. Northeast participated in Husker Harvest Days and Ag Field Day, while both soccer programs earned national rankings (#13 women and #3 men). Additional updates included Northeast's participation in upcoming Nebraska Community College Association (NCCA) and national conference activities, where College and Board representatives will present on topics including artificial intelligence in agriculture, SNAP E&T initiatives, workforce development, and ownership linkage practices.

Dr. Barrett also provided federal legislative updates, noting concerns regarding a projected \$15 billion Pell Grant funding shortfall and reaffirming Northeast's opposition to efforts that would reduce or eliminate funding for Adult Education and English Language Learning programs.

Nebraska Community College Association (NCCA) awards will be presented during the October 4 NCCA Annual Meeting in Scottsbluff:

- Faculty Award: Adam Peterson
- Administrator Award: Lindsay Spiegel
- Governors Award: Nicole Sedlacek
- Distinguished Alumni Award: Bryan Reichmuth, a 1981 agribusiness graduate and former Northeast basketball player, recognized for his leadership and contributions to Nebraska's agricultural cooperative industry and producer education efforts.

14. COLLEGE REPORTS (10:45-11:00 a.m.)

Student Leadership Association [\(SLA\) report](#)

A video prepared by the Student Leadership Association (SLA) representatives was presented during the meeting.

15. BOARD EDUCATION AND INFORMATION

15.1. Administrative Services Report

15.1.1. Monthly Financial Report and Paid Bills Report (Presenters: Scott Gray)

CONSIDER the [Monthly Financial Report](#) for August 31, 2026, and the [Paid Bills Report](#) for August 2026. Board members who received reimbursement during the month abstain from voting on those items only:

Ames, Del - \$173.28

Anderson, Steve - \$142.88

Davies, Diane - \$60.80

Ellis, Donovan - \$115.52

Nelson, Terry - \$68.40

Scherer, Jeff - \$54.72

Sedlacek, Nicole - \$714.40

Sibbel, Carol - \$240.16

Wojcik, Pat - \$807.07

 [Monthly Financial Report-August 2026.pdf](#)

 [Paid Bills Report-August 2026.pdf](#)

 [Monthly Financial and Paid Bills Report-September 2026](#)

Scott Gray reviewed the August financial statements and highlighted several entries affecting assets. Total assets increased to approximately \$53.0 million, representing a 6.6% increase compared to August 2025. He explained that the Statement of Changes in Fund Balances includes entries that may not have been fully recorded at the time the report was generated. For example, financial aid funds had been disbursed to students, but the corresponding federal reimbursement had not yet been drawn down and recorded as revenue. Similarly, certain construction projects were reflected as construction in progress, although related invoices had not yet been received. These timing differences contributed to variances between the Balance Sheet and the Statement of Changes in Fund Balances.

During discussion, Steve Anderson inquired about the College's outstanding bond obligations. Mr. Gray indicated that he would research the matter and provide additional information at a later date.

Motion:

Motion to approve the [Monthly Financial Report](#) for August 31, 2026, and the [Paid Bills Report](#) for August 2026. Board members who received reimbursement during the month abstained from voting on those items only.

Motion moved by Steve Anderson and motion seconded by Jeffrey Scherer. Voting yes: Ames, Anderson, Davies, Ellis, Petersen, Scherer, Sedlacek, Sibbel, and Wojcik. Absent-Excused: Nelson and Robinson.
MOTION CARRIED.

16. Student Services Report

16.1. Enrollment report (Presenters: Amanda Nipp)

[Enrollment Report](#)

 [Fall 2026 BoG Fall 10 day Enrollment Report.pdf](#)

Amanda Nipp, Vice President of Student Services, presented the Enrollment Report, reporting that overall enrollment stands at 5,058 students enrolled in 44,026.5 credit hours. Mrs. Nipp noted that Early College enrollment remains strong and that Early College Navigators continue to strengthen relationships with area high schools, supporting student access and enrollment opportunities.

17. PUBLIC COMMENT on Monitoring Report or Board Education and Information

Individuals commenting on Monitoring Report or Board Education and Information are allowed three minutes each. Any member of the public wishing to address the Board of Governors may sign in and comment to the Board at this time.

No constituents were in attendance to address the Board of Governors with a public comment.

18. COMMITTEE REPORTS

18.1. Governance Committee (Presenters: Dirk Petersen)

[Governance Committee Notes](#)-September 10, 2026

- FIRST READING of REVISIONS to EL-04, [Planning](#).

[Board Self-Evaluation Action Plan](#)

 [Board Governance Committee Meeting - September 10, 2026 Minutes.pdf](#)

 [EL-04 Planning-Draft-Changes.pdf](#)

Dirk Petersen commended both Scott Gray and Jennifer Happold for their work with the Governance Committee.

The Governance Committee meeting was conducted via Zoom on September 10, 2026

- Content Review completed on EL-04, [Planning](#). Revisions are recommended and intended to improve clarity and eliminate duplication within the policy. The revisions are presented today for FIRST READING consideration.
 - FIRST READING of REVISIONS to EL-04, [Planning](#).
- The Governance Committee also reviewed the Boards Self-Evaluation Action Plan and Monitoring Report Summary. Discussion occurred regarding the frequency of periodic updates identified in the action plan associated with E-00, Global Ends Monitoring Report that was presented in December 2026. Scott Gray will follow up with Dr. Barrett regarding this topic.

19. PUBLIC COMMENT on Committee Reports:

Individuals commenting on Committee Reports are allowed three minutes each. Any member of the public wishing to address the Board of Governors may sign in and comment to the Board at this time.

No constituents were in attendance to address the Board of Governors with a public comment.

20. OTHER (Presenters: Donovan Ellis)

Other announcements and birthdays for the month.

While no Board of Cabinet members were observing birthdays during the month of September, Chairperson Ellis encouraged those that remember former Board of Governors member, Gene Willers, to extend birthday wishes to him as he observes his birthday on September 25.

21. Meeting Self-Evaluation (Presenters: Donovan Ellis)
Board Meeting [Self-Evaluation-September 24, 2026](#)

22. ADJOURNMENT

At 11:56 a.m., there being no further business to discuss, it was UNANIMOUSLY PASSED by VOICE VOTE to ADJOURN the meeting.

Following adjournment, as part of the Ownership Linkage activities, Student Ambassadors joined the Board of Governors for lunch.