

11-29-2007

Board of Trustees Minutes, November 29, 2007

Eastern Washington University

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**EASTERN WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY
BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

**Special Meeting
November 29, 2007**

**Open Session ~ 9:30 a.m.
Pence Union Building, Room 261**

MINUTES

Trustees in Attendance via teleconference call:

Paul Tanaka, Chair
Jo Ann Kauffman, Vice Chair
Neil McReynolds
Kris Mikkelsen
Bertha Ortega
Ines Zozaya-Geist

Trustees in Attendance in person:

Gordon Budke
Isaura Gallegos

Those in attendance introduced themselves before the meeting was called to order.

Chair Tanaka, on behalf of the Board, wished Coach Wulff and the Eagle football team best wishes for their game. He commented that the Eastern community is very proud of them.

Call to Order, I.

Chair Tanaka called the November 29, 2007 special open meeting of the Eastern Washington University Board of Trustees to order at 9:30 a.m.

Quorum, II.

A quorum was present; all Trustees were present either via telephone or in person.

Action Item, III.

Discussion Action Item, III.A.

Service and Activity Fee dedicated to fund a student transportation program, III.A.1.

Chair Tanaka began the meeting by announcing that the item of business for today's Board meeting is to discuss and take action on a proposed student transportation fee.

President Arévalo introduced the topic of a student transportation fee. He explained that this has been discussed several times and that the Associated Students of Eastern have been working on this project for the past one and one half years. Last year the ASEWU presented a referendum to the student body asking students to vote as to whether they were willing to assess themselves a fee to provide bus service to students and the Eastern community.

Dr. Arévalo introduced Toni Habegger, Chief Financial Officer, to provide further information. Ms. Habegger explained the following:

- the fee proposal being considered today is a \$6.50 fee per student per quarter regardless of credit load assessed to students other than distance education students
- the fee would entitle students to bus ridership service on all Spokane Transit Authority bus routes, not just routes to Cheney
- to be implemented January 2008
- the portion of the Spokane Transit Authority contract funded by the Associated Students would be \$123,000
- the remaining two equal portions will be shared by general university funds and EWU Parking Services
- with Eastern's current enrollment, the \$6.50 per student fee would generate a surplus of approximately \$70,000 to \$75,000 annually, which should be sufficient to deal with elasticity in enrollment and the STA contract.

President Arévalo explained that the STA project first began as a pilot to test the need and response. When the pilot was deemed successful several years ago, conversations began regarding long term funding and the possibility of the need for a mandatory fee.

The students have been funding their portion with reserve funds from ASEWU funds. The students could spend their reserves on other things if a student fee paid their portion of this project. The goal for today's meeting is to find an alternative to the student government spending their reserve funds.

Evan Buelt, President of the Associated Students, explained that the EWU Associated Student Council voted to approve a fee in the amount of \$10.50 per student per quarter. Mr. Buelt recommends the fee be set at \$10.00 per student per quarter. He explained that the students want the fee to be high enough to improve and increase the services provided by the current STA contract and to provide funds for other transportation related issues.

He mentioned that the students support a fee for these services and they also support the forming of a committee with representatives from five entities. The students request that the committee be similar to the Student Technology Fee Committee wherein proposals are submitted and voted on.

Dr. Arévalo explained that Eastern students voted last spring in support of a transportation fee between \$7.00 and \$12.00 per student per quarter. The Associated Student Council recently voted to implement a fee of \$10.50 per student per quarter. 1,200 members of the student body voted, and 77% of them voted in support of paying a transportation fee.

Mr. Buelt expressed that the students are in support of the student council proposal. He shared that he has received emotionally charged e-mails from students who want improved services with the

Spokane Transit Authority contract and they want additional transportation related items like more parking lots on campus, a parking garage, and covered locations for students to catch the bus. The students are requesting joint partnership with the university to improve the transportation resources for students. Students do support a fee of \$10.50 as long as they can see improvements in services. The additional fee would serve the students who do not ride the bus by funding other projects.

Trustee Budke introduced the motion to approve a mandatory student transportation fee of \$6.50 per student per quarter with the proviso that an advisory committee be formed. The student fee will fund 1/3 of the Spokane Transit Authority obligation but will not fund other as yet undefined projects.

The motion was seconded.

Discussion occurred as Trustees asked questions regarding what level of services will be included at the \$6.50 level. Will the student's portion of the STA contract include improved service over what has been provided over the last several months? Will there be more buses that come and go directly to the Cheney and Riverpoint campuses?

Ms. Habegger explained that the current STA contract, one third of which is \$123,000 paid by the students, is currently in effect and stays in effect through 2009 with an annual renewal after June 2009. The services provided by STA under this contract have been consistent over the last two years, however, they have been improved since the pilot program. She reported that the university has not negotiated additional services with STA and the university is not currently in negotiations with STA.

Mr. Buelt stated that he objects to the \$6.50 fee because students are requesting additional services in addition to the STA contract and they are willing to pay a higher fee in order to receive additional services. Students are requesting direct bus service from Spokane Valley and Riverpoint to the Cheney campus, and additional parking lots, covered areas to catch the bus, etc. as stated earlier.

Trustee Budke explained that the university is responsible for capital projects, and he recommended that if students want a different environment in which to catch the bus, or other capital related items, they could come to the university with a proposal for such capital improvements. Trustee Mikkelsen explained that these capital proposals would need to be outlined with specifics including calculations of revenue and costs.

Board members asked for clarification and discussion regarding the student survey and vote that occurred last spring. It was reported that:

- The question asked students was, "are you in favor of a \$7 - \$12 quarterly transportation fee to sustain the current EWU STA ridership program"
- a total of 1,200 students voted
- 77% of those who voted did vote in support of a fee
- statistics are not available as to whether those students who voted were commuter or residential students

Student Trustee Gallegos expressed that she believes the \$6.50 proposed fee is adequate for a sustainable funding base for the STA contract. She expressed that she agrees with Evan that there are

a number of services and improvements that are needed, however, even though the other ideas may be good ideas, she is uncomfortable combining them with this fee and she believes those other capital project ideas should be brought forward as separate proposals.

Chair Tanaka stated that based on the language on the actual ballot, the students apparently voted to maintain the current level of services they had. The administration is saying, through their proposal of a \$6.50 fee, that a \$7 - \$12 fee is not necessary to maintain the STA contract plus have a cushion.

Trustee Kauffman complimented the students for organizing a campaign and putting a referendum on the ballot to find out that students are willing to assess themselves a fee.

Several trustees expressed that it is very difficult to determine what amount the fee should be in order to cover the costs of the STA contract as well as ensure an adequate cushion to deal with a potential increase in the amount of the STA contract. The university would not want to charge too high of a fee, and also don't want to set the fee so low that the university would need to raise the fee in the near future.

Ms. Habegger explained that the administration prepared a calculation to show the amount of funds that would be generated from fees of \$5.50, \$6.00, \$6.50, \$7.00, \$7.50, etc. President Arévalo believes the \$60,000 cushion at the \$6.50 fee level is the most comfortable. The \$90,000 cushion at the \$7.00 level felt a bit too high. It is not good fiscal management to charge the students a fee that is so high that excess funds build up in reserves. The purpose of this fee is to cover the costs of the bus ridership contract.

If the STA contract costs escalated in the near future either due to increased services or increased costs, \$6.50 or \$7.00 per student seems to be in the appropriate range to cover the costs.

Trustee Ortega expressed her belief that the lower the fee, the better, especially in consideration of the other fees students have to pay.

Chair Tanaka reiterated that the motion on the table is for a \$6.50 per student, per quarter mandatory fee, excepting distance education students. This student fee will fund the students 1/3 portion of the STA contract. The motion includes the proviso that an advisory committee will be formed to make recommendations regarding expenditure of the student fee funds.

President Arévalo clarified that the committee is advisory and the expenditure plan must still be approved by the president and the board.

Ms. Habegger explained that the advisory committee for this fee would be different from the technology fee committee due to the statute that regulates the fees. For this fee, the recommendations go through the S & A Fee Committee and then to the administration and then to the board. All clubs and organizations follow this procedure as well, and it is significantly different from the technology fee committee process.

This fee is at the discretion of the board in terms of its on-going nature.

Trustees reiterated to the students that capital projects such as additional parking lots or parking garage would need to be proposed to the university's administration separately.

***Motion 11-1-2007:** Motion by Trustee Budke that the Board approve a mandatory student transportation fee of \$6.50 per quarter per student, with the proviso that a transportation fee committee be formed to function as an advisory committee to the S & A Fee Committee. This mandatory fee will not be charged to students considered by the university to be distance education students who live outside of the Spokane Transit Authority service area.
Motion was Seconded.
Motion Carried.*

Chair Tanaka thanked Mr. Buelt and the Associated Students for their work on this project. The Board hopes the students will look upon the approval of this fee as acknowledgement of the work they have done. He also thanked Dr. Arévalo and Ms. Habegger for their work.

Adjournment, IV.

Chair Tanaka adjourned the special open Board of Trustees meeting at 10:22 a.m.

Paul Tanaka, Chair

Rodolfo Arévalo, Secretary