Call to Order
Chair Toledo called the meeting to order at 8:05 am.

He welcomed the trustees, Gina Yarborough and members of the college community. He thanked Shannon Larange and the Presidential Search committee for the work and support they provided throughout the presidential search process.

Chair Toledo provided an overview of the structure of the meeting, which would consist of a summary of the presidential search process, a deliberation phase and vote to support one candidate.

On October 21st, 2022 the Chair of the Board of Trustees, Hector Toledo, notified the Commissioner of Higher Education, Dr. Carlos Santiago, of the Board’s intent to conduct a Presidential Search. Chair Toledo initiated the Presidential Search using the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education Guidelines and Procedures for the Search, Selection, Appointment and Removal of State University and Community College Presidents, dated June 2013.

The College issued a Request for proposals (RFP) for executive search firms on October 22, 2021. On November 23rd, 2022, the Board of Trustees Chair Toledo and Search Committee Chair Higgins interviewed representatives from Academic Search and Greenwood/Asher and Asher Associates. The Board of Trustees voted on December 16, 2022 to select Academic Search as the executive search firm to assist with the presidential search. The College notified Academic Search of its selection on January 4th, 2022.

The Board of Trustees appointed a 13-member Presidential Search Committee on February 2nd, 2022. Trustee Clare Higgins was appointed to Chair the Search Committee. Board Chair Toledo,
Trustee Judith Roberts, and Student Trustee, Evan LeBeau also served on the search committee. The search committee also included: Nicole Fowler, GCC Administrative Assistant to Dean of Engineering, Math, Nursing and Science, Liza Harrington, GCC Coordinator of Library Services, Caitlin Worth, GCC Math Professor, Tonya Blundon, GCC Director of Advising and Transfer, Stephen Poulin, GCC English Professor, Melissa Kuzmeski, Samantha Hopper, Community Engagement Coordinator with the Women’s Funding Network, GCC Student Senate President, Roxann Wedegartner, Greenfield Mayor, and Mario Delci, MA Department of Higher Education Representative.

Samantha Hopper resigned from the committee on February 25th, 2022.

Academic Search conducted a pre-search study the week of January 31st, 2022. Information obtained from meetings held during the pre-search study was used to create an Executive Search Profile. Participants in the meetings discussed what they perceived as both the challenges facing the College and opportunities available to the College in the next five to ten years; relatedly, they discussed what they believed were the professional and personal qualifications required to successfully address those challenges and take advantage of those opportunities.

The GCC Presidential Search Committee held its first meeting on February 9th, 2022. The search consultant discussed key dates that the Committee needed to establish, such as the candidate application due date; the meeting to select semifinalists; and a two-day meeting to interview semifinalists and identify three to five of the semifinalists to recommend (unranked) to the Board of Trustees as finalists. The finalists would be invited to visit campus to meet with members of the College community and interview with the Board of Trustees. Attorney Gina Yarbrough, Massachusetts Community College Counsel, attended the April 7th, 2022 search committee meeting and conducted training for the Committee on the Open Meetings Law and applicable provisions of the Public Records Law.

Upon the approval from the Board of Trustees and Commissioner of Higher Education of the Executive Search Profile, advertisements were then placed in various national online publications, such as The Chronicle of Higher Education, Inside Higher Ed, and Higher Ed Jobs. In addition to placing ads, the consultant sent letters to thousands of community college senior level administrators and presidents, advising them of the opportunity and asking for nominations. The consultants made phone calls to those nominated and selected individuals listed in the Academic Search proprietary database or listed in the Higher Education Directory.

In order to attract a diverse candidate pool, ads were placed in online publications that specifically targeted women and individuals from underrepresented groups. Further, strategies to generate a diverse pool of applicants included advertising with Diverse Jobs, Hispanic Outlook, Journal of Blacks in Higher Education and Women in Higher Education.
One week before the April 8th, 2022 application due date, the Search Committee began review and evaluation of candidates; the due date for members to complete the evaluations was April 17th, 2022. Based on the Committee’s evaluations, 11 “Top Candidates” were identified. The consultant then conducted preliminary due diligence on the “Top Candidates.” The preliminary due diligence included candidate interviews, reference interviews, and publicity screening. The consultant shared this information at the April 18th, 2022 search committee meeting. At this meeting, the Committee selected 11 semifinalists who were subsequently scheduled for interviews on April 25th and 26th, 2022. The Commissioner and the Board of Trustees were given the opportunity to review semifinalist application materials before interviews were scheduled.

After the semi-finalist interviews, the Search Committee recommended five candidates as finalists, pending successful clearance after detailed due diligence conducted by Academic Search that included background checks (criminal, civil, credit, driving, and degree verification). In addition, Academic Search interviewed references for each finalist and conducted a detailed publicity screening on each finalist.

On May 4th, 2022 one finalist candidate withdrew from the search.

The Board of Trustees announced the four following finalists on May 5th, 2022: Dr. Jennifer Berne, Dr. Nicole Esposito, Dr. Richard Hopper, and Dr. Michelle Schutt. Each finalist visited the College for one day during the period of May 9th-16th, 2022. The candidates met informally with various constituent groups. Participants in the constituent group meetings completed evaluation forms on the candidates. The evaluation forms were subsequently given to the Trustees for their review. Additionally, as part of the finalists’ visit, the Board of Trustees interviewed each finalist in an open meeting. The Commissioner and the Secretary of Education also interviewed the finalists via teleconference.

Deliberation began with trustees being called upon in alphabetical order.

**Robert Cohn** – Trustee Cohn expressed his appreciation for all four candidates and community for their involvement with and commitment to the search process and Greenfield Community College. Trustee Cohn shared he feels most strongly about Dr. Richard Hopper. He believes Dr. Hopper brings many strengths to the position, is committed to the area and can bring stability. He reiterated he does believe all four candidates could do the job.

**Cady Coleman** – Trustee Coleman shared she also believed all four candidates were well qualified to do the job. Dr. Michelle Schutt rose to the top for her. Trustee Coleman was struck by her mix of experience and her understanding and working knowledge of student services. She felt Dr. Schutt has a deep understanding of working with all segments of a College as evidenced by her recommendations and professional experience. She was also impressed by her participation in the New President’s Aspen Fellowship. Trustee Coleman remarked she received
very positive feedback from the College campus and her recommendations reflected a team building style of leadership along with a deep understanding of and ability to foster legislative and community relationships.

Trustee Coleman was also very impressed with Dr. Jennifer Byrne. She appreciated all of the qualifications Dr. Byrne brings to the position especially her documented ability to put together a vision quickly, make difficult decisions when necessary and streamline processes. She felt it was clear Dr. Byrne is committed to living in this area and appreciates who we are and what it’s like to live here. Trustee Coleman remarked Dr. Byrne appeared to be very faculty oriented which she indicated as a strength and area for growth.

Christopher Donelan – Trustee Donelan also agreed all four candidates were great. Dr. Richard Hopper rose as his top candidate. He expressed his interest in knowing if the other Trustees that interviewed Dr. Hopper had feedback on his performance this year. Trustee Donelan shared for him it boiled down to the question of do we want to “hire” a new President or “train” a new President. He believes there are too many pressing issues right now to engage in training a new President. He believes by hiring Dr. Hopper we are hiring a new President rather than training a new President.

Clare Higgins – Trustee Higgins shared she believed the pool consisted of two individuals who in some way have played a Presidential role in a College and two who have not, and thought a lot about that as we identify how we go forward. She also thought about the size of our College, its current challenges and past leadership, including retired President Robert Pura who was hired with no Presidential experience and led here successfully for many years. She thought about stability and needing a President willing to stay here and provide the stability the College needs. She expressed her appreciation for the leadership Dr. Richard Hopper brought this year but is looking for someone who can bring a fresh perspective and is a growth and learning mode in a different way. She is leaning towards Dr. Michelle Schutt and Dr. Jennifer Byrne as she believes they embody both growth and learning. She was also impressed by Dr. Nicole Esposito who she believes brings a lot of Presidential strength. She believes Dr. Esposito and Dr. Schutt could find the size of our institution a challenge.

Evan LeBeau – Trustee LeBeau shared he was grateful to have the experience of spending the afternoon with the candidates assisting Ms. Larange with the campus interviews. He expressed Dr. Nicole Esposito was his favorite candidate. Trustee LeBeau spent time watching the interactions in the afternoon interview forums and noticed that attendees were very relaxed, engaged and happy interacting with Dr. Esposito. He shared that spoke volumes to him. She’s a strong student advocate and really resonated with him.

Isaac Mass – Trustee Mass thanked Ms. Larange, Trustee LeBeau, the Board for their support and participation and the faculty and staff for their feedback. Trustee Mass shared he most focused on the long term stability of the institution having gone through two rapid changes
during the current pandemic. He expressed he is not looking for a person who will use Greenfield Community College as a stepping stone to a larger institution. He believes this in not the case for Dr. Richard Hopper and Dr. Hopper is his first choice. Dr. Hopper brings a combination of experience outside higher education along with is presidential experience. He’s been very impressed with Dr. Hopper’s choices to employ traditional business operations to improve our customer service at Greenfield Community College. This includes using the services of secret shoppers and consultants to assist with enrollment and marketing. Trustee Mass acknowledged this can be a sensitive and difficult, yet rewarding process for an institution. Trustee Mass noted Dr. Hopper has addressed shared governance system at the College the number one issue sighted in the College’s recent accreditation report, and has been fairly successful.

Trustee Mass shared his second choice is Dr. Michelle Schutt. He noted she comes from a different perspective, had the qualifications and believed she was committed to the area. One area of concern on the job training during a precarious period combined with having no experience working in a union environment. He felt the combination of those two things would be especially challenging. Trustee Mass believed the other two candidate were also well qualified. He felt Dr. Jennifer Byrne had all the right experience and could lead the institution. He felt the same for Dr. Nicole Esposito and agreed with Trustee LeBeau she had the most commanding presence and strength of character to be a leader in an institution. Trustee Mass concluded by sharing he believes Dr. Hopper has the experience along with having done a good job leading this institution during a difficult year. He also believes there is lots of room for Dr. Hopper to grow and he has many things left to accomplish. He acknowledged the difficulty of leading in an interim position and reiterated Dr. Hopper as his first choice.

Judith Roberts – Trustee Roberts acknowledged the difficulty of the task and all four candidates were great. Her first choice is Dr. Michelle Schutt. Trustee Roberts shared she is looking for a leader that is a good learner, a good listener and knows how to ask questions, not necessarily someone who has all the answers. She believes Dr. Schutt is the right person to lead the College during a time of transition and create stability in the long term for the College. She noted Dr. Schutt’s top three priorities of student success, employee support and legislative outreach really resonated with her. Trustee Roberts shared she felt the faculty and staff feedback on the candidates further supported her choice. Trustees Roberts second choice is Dr. Richard Hopper. She noted Dr. Hopper is a very different leader from Dr. Schutt. She believes Dr. Hopper is a very seasoned leader and she has tremendous gratitude to him for leading the institution during such a difficult time.

Chairperson Toledo – Chair Toledo thanked everyone for their well thought out comments and feedback. He agreed with the Board all four candidates would make great Presidents. Chair Toledo shared his top two choices were Dr. Michelle Schutt and Dr. Jennifer Byrne. Trustee Toledo thought Dr. Byrne was thoughtful and honest in all her responses to the interview
questions, not just saying what she thought the Board would want to hear, including when she was unsure of an answer or question. Trustee Toledo believes this is a unique characteristic hard to find in high level leaders.

The Trustees engaged in further deliberation by raising their hands.

**Judith Roberts** – Trustee Roberts thanked Ms. Larange for her support during the search process.

**Cady Coleman** – Trustee Coleman expressed she received the impression that the staff and faculty at the College felt unheard by the current leadership and believed that was a very important issue to be noted. For that reason, she believes Dr. Hopper would not be a good fit for the institution.

**Isaac Mass** – Trustee Mass shared he carefully read through all the feedback for Dr. Hopper and noted there was no negative feedback from community members or students. He also looked at in the light of the institution’s previous leadership which is a contrast to Dr. Hopper’s style along with the context that he began during the pandemic which made forging relationships challenging. Trustee Mass’ believes Dr. Hopper has the experience and skills to make difficulty and at times unpopular decisions to which the College may be facing.

**Clare Higgins** – Trustee Higgins stressed she is not opposed to any one of these candidates and acknowledged the difficulty of leaders during a pandemic making both good and bad decisions. She expressed she believes the College needs a fresh face after having a long time President followed by a short time President, followed by an Interim, who for better or worse have made some relationships on campus that need repair. She believes there is an opportunity for a fresh face with Dr. Schutt who has thought about a presidency for a long time and has deep experience in many areas of college administration, with the exception of presidency. She also reminded Trustees we are a very small College and who we can attract for a job is very different from other larger institutions. She acknowledged how it’s possible to think a candidate seeking their first presidency may see this institution as a stepping stone but reminded Trustees that was not the case with President Pura. She believes Dr. Schutt is committed to this presidency. She received the same feeling from Dr. Byrne.

**Robert Cohn** – Trustee Cohn noted that Dr. Hopper was also a fellow at the Aspen Institution and President Pura served as the Interim President of GCC for a short period of time and was hired out of that process. Trustee Cohn shared when hired Dr. Hopper went right to work on the NECHE accreditation report, working on the College’s shared governance and workforce development. He noted Dr. Hopper did a tremendous job of that in Maine.

**Chris Donelan** – Trustee Donelan reminded Trustees Dr. Hopper and the previous leadership
has worked hard on the College’s shared governance and workforce development which he believes are the two areas the unions push back on the most. Trustee Donelan sees Dr. Schutt’s lack of experience as a significant challenge particularly given the difficult relationships with the unions on campus.

**Judith Roberts** – Trustee Roberts responded to Trustee Donelan she also acknowledges Dr. Schutt’s lack of union experience, however she really liked Dr. Schutt’s response to the question, which including engaging in regular conversations with union leaders and members in efforts to anticipate and address any issues that may bubble up during the academic year and to forge trusting and open relationships.

**Isaac Mass** – Trustee Mass remarked he took her response differently in that she did not understand the role of the President at a community college in Massachusetts. He noted contracts are negotiated at the state level and the President administers the contract. Trustee Mass does not believe she understood that difference, not to say that she couldn’t learn. He also noted that while President Pura did not have presidency experience other than his interim position he had familiarity with the Massachusetts public higher education system. He worries this could be a significant challenge for Dr. Schutt.

**Clare Higgins** - Trustee Higgins expressed her concern that the deliberations is devolving around unions and not all the other areas of the College the candidates have shown academic leadership in, noting she recognized why this may happen given the amount of feedback received. Trustee Higgins shared Academic Search is available to provide additional leadership support for the College’s next President and encouraged the Board to take advantage of the opportunity to help strengthen areas of concern. She also reminded Trustees that all four candidates have doctoral degrees and should all be address as Dr. when using a salutation. She also noted that because the President’s responsibility is to administer the union contracts, having strong relationships with the unions and knowing the day to day “going-ons” is most important, so the little things don’t bubble into large things.

**Cady Coleman** – Trustee Coleman shared many of the things Trustee Higgins shared resonated with her. She expressed she paid much attention to the reference reports and campus feedback. She felt the campus feedback spoke strongly to the campus’s ability to relate to and feel heard by Dr. Hopper. She feels that is very important for the campus.

**Judith Roberts** – Trustee Roberts expressed she believes Dr. Schutt is a strong presenter and would be a great ambassador for the College. Her ability to listen, learn and ask questions will stand her in very good stead promoting the College to the outside world which Trustee Roberts believes is very important for the College particularly with outreach to Hampshire County.

**Robert Cohn** – Trustee Cohn reminded Trustees what you think you may be getting may not be
what you get. He acknowledged the challenges of the search process as prescribed by the Department of Higher Education.

**Clare Higgins** – Trustee Higgins remarked that while we may not like the process it is the process we have been charged to follow. She also remarked she asked every candidate what they see as Greenfield Community College’s region and noted Dr. Hopper was the only candidate who did not mention the larger geographic location outside Franklin County. She expressed her concern for the lack of mentioning the surrounding areas, Hampshire County in particular.

**Evan LeBeau** – Trustee LeBeau acknowledged the difficulty of this process. He reiterated he felt Dr. Esposito had the best energy to inspire our community to grow and continue the GCC spirit of “You Belong Here.” He also felt Dr. Schutt and Dr. Byrne would be great choices but did not match Dr. Esposito’s energy.

**Isaac Mass** – Trustee Mass expressed the importance to be unanimous if possible to convey the most support that we can to the incoming President. He acknowledged his concerns for Dr. Schutt and where the challenges lie, he believes it is in the College’s best interest to vote unanimously on a decision. He stated all four are able to do the job and Dr. Schutt appears to be well liked by the trustees and community.

Chair Toledo asked for a motion to end deliberation and proceed to a vote

Trustee Mass moved the motion and Trustee Coleman seconded.

**Roll Call Vote:**
Robert Cohn - yes
Cady Coleman - yes
Chris Donelan – yes
Clare Higgins – yes
Evan LeBeau – yes
Isaac Mass – yes
Judith Roberts – yes
Hector Toledo – yes

Motion passed.

Ms. Larange reviewed the process for conducting a roll call vote and proceeded with the process.

Robert Cohn – Dr. Richard Hopper
Cady Coleman – Dr. Michelle Schutt
Chris Donelan – Dr. Richard Hopper
Ms. Larange read back the votes to confirm accuracy. By a vote of 6-2 Dr. Michelle Schutt was chosen for recommendation to the Commissioner and Board of Higher Education as the next President of Greenfield Community College.

On a motion by Trustee Higgins and seconded by Trustee Mass the Board of Trustees confirmed by unanimous vote the recommendation of Dr. Michelle Schutt as the next President of Greenfield Community College.

Roll Call Vote:
Robert Cohn - yes
Cady Coleman - yes
Chris Donelan – yes
Clare Higgins – yes
Evan LeBeau – yes
Isaac Mass – yes
Judith Roberts – yes
Hector Toledo – yes

Motion passed.

On a motion by Trustee Coleman and seconded by Trustee Mass the Board of Trustees unanimously voted to recommend to the Board of Higher Education the appointment of Dr. Michelle Schutt as the next President of Greenfield Community College and that the Board of Trustees authorize its Board Chair to negotiate with Dr. Schutt over the specific terms and conditions of her appointment as President.

Roll Call Vote:
Robert Cohn - yes
Cady Coleman - yes
Chris Donelan – yes
Clare Higgins – yes
Evan LeBeau – yes
Isaac Mass – yes
Judith Roberts – yes
Hector Toledo – yes
Motion passed.

Adjournment
On a motion from Trustee Mass and seconded by Trustee Donelan the Board of Trustees unanimously voted to adjourn at 9:29am.

Respectfully submitted by,
Shannon Larange