



Muskegon Community College

**BOARD OF TRUSTEES  
RETREAT MINUTES  
July 15, 2014**

**Shoreline Inn Hotel – Marina View Room**

**Present:** Chair Crandall; Vice Chair Osborn, Trustee Frye, Trustee Mullally, Trustee Oakes, and Trustee Portenga

**Absent:** Trustee Lester

1. Welcome and Introductions

Dr. Nesbary welcomed Steven Ender, President of Grand Rapids Community College and Bert Bleke, Chairperson for GRCC.

2. Overview

- The MCC Board has been exploring policy governance for the past several years and several Trustees have attended ACCT seminars on the topic. The board is interested in learning about GRCC's experience with policy governance, both from administration and the Board's perspective – What they have learned along the way? Is it working? How to implement?

3. Community College Governance

Bert R. Bleke, MA, Chairperson, GRCC  
Steven Ender, Ed.D., President - GRCC

**Documents**

- [The Ten Principles of Good Boards](#)
- [Carver Guide: Ten Principles of Policy Governance \(Summary\)](#)

**President Steve Ender:**

- The GRCC Board has been practicing policy governance for six years.
  - It clearly involves the Board being in the position of “Where do we want this college to go?” and that becomes the “Ends” of the institution. The key question for the Board when moving in this direction is: “What does the Board, as one, believe their role is around the institution, its future, and its present state?”
  - When moving to policy governance, the development of Ends and Executive Limitations is some of the most important work the Board does.
  - Once the Ends are developed, a Strategic Plan is developed to move the organization forward. With limited resources, you really have to get to the core business of the institution. GRCC’s Ends are: 1) Student Success; 2) Workforce; 3) Transfer. The Ends of the college have been examined two times since Dr. Ender has been president and have been decreased from six to three.
    - The first time, a strategic planning group of 80 people was developed. Working with the Board, Dr. Ender asked that they review all of the framing documents – their mission, vision, values and the Ends.
    - An iterative process began, first working with the Mission, Vision and Values. Recommendations and edits were handed back and forth between the strategic planning group and the Board and in 6-7 months the framing documents were completed and presented to the Board for formal vote and approval.
    - Next the strategic planning group worked with the Ends of the college, through the exact same process. By the end of the year, they had the framing documents of Mission, Vision, Values and Ends and developed the 3-Year Strategic Plan internally.
    - GRCC’s CAP projects were an Academic Quality Improvement Program Institution (AQIP), so under each End the group designed the CAP projects and the metrics to measure movement toward the Ends through those CAP projects and that went to the Board.
  - What Dr. Ender wanted as president was clear recognition of the metrics that his performance would be evaluated on.
    - Metrics are monitored every month at the Board meeting.
    - The president receives feedback and works with the Board on successes and failures around the Ends.
    - The strategic plan and those metrics and the annual evaluation is simply a summation of 10 Board meetings.
    - Refined from 6 to 3 ends and from 26 metrics to 19 that are monitored and reported on at each Board meeting.
    - Dr. Ender loves the process and believes it’s very rational. Once the strategic plan is built around the Ends, the champions of these Ends work with committee groups and employees write performance plans with their performance objectives built around the work that’s going on in the Strategic Plan. It all ties together with the system very nicely; not just the President or the Cabinet, but all the employees. The goal is to make it all one system with everyone moving forward together.

### From Chairperson Bert Bleke:

- It's all based on what you believe, the philosophy of the Board is the critical piece. Without the right philosophy, nothing is going to work. The philosophical base of the Board is not to micro-manage the system, but to be concerned about policy.
- Chairperson Bleke's sense of the role of the Community College Board is it has three major functions: 1) Monitoring student success; 2) Monitoring finance; 3) Monitoring the president.
- He doesn't believe the Board is in the position to determine the Ends for goals of the college – they don't have the expertise, it is a "mutual thing".
- Developing the Ends, two board members participated with the 80 member group monthly for 3 hours and took the thinking back to the board for discussion.
- Policy governance and establishing Executive Limitations clearly define for the president what he is supposed to do and what he cannot do. Just knowing what your role is and having some logical, clear thinking behind it is very supportive and makes a big difference.

### Questions & Answers

- *MCC's Board asked if we're already doing what was discussed, how does policy governance change that?*
  - What Dr. Ender really appreciated around policy governance was in developing a Strategic Plan around the Ends and defining the major initiatives the college will pursue, each academic year for a three year plan it is very clear and accepted in their culture that once those Ends and metrics are developed, how they get there is the role of the college and the staff. The Board does not trip into these areas and they are very good about that, to the point when someone tries to trip in, another Board member points out that it is the college's responsibility. This doesn't mean the president doesn't get suggestions, but the president has a lot of support to go with what is best and to make decisions with his staff. At the end of the day, it all plays out in the president's evaluation. GRCC does not take new hires to the Board for approval; the Board gets a personnel report each month with new hires, terminations, etc.
  - In Chairperson Bleke's opinion, Presidents come and go; Board members come and go; Boards stay. His sense of where this is very beneficial is that it provides sustainability and long term thinking that, as the years go by and changes roll on, even before someone runs for the Board, they have a sense of what the role would be because this is the way the community college operates, this is the function and role of the board, this is how we do our work. It's easy for systems to go off base with a few small elections, it really protects the integrity of the board and the system, provides sustainability and a good logic for why we do things the way we do. The Board's job is not to be thinking about today, but to be thinking about what's five or ten years down the road.
- *It is difficult to give the Board enough information so they don't have to micro manage; I'm not seeing the things that I was used to providing a board and that has been a difficult transition.* Chairperson Bleke responded the solution to that is there are three major issues: 1) The Board monitoring and having expectations for Student Success; 2) The Board monitoring and having expectations for Financial Success; 3) The Board monitoring and having expectations for Presidential Success/the ability to be very clear with the President. Evaluations are a way to grow the presidency and grow the relationships. You develop

expectations, which are the conduit for growing the presidency and having conversations without the Board micromanaging.

- *How did the process go for originally developing and defining the Ends and the board reaching consensus on specifically what those should be?* Chairperson Bleke replied – the system (the president and his staff) set the process and the Board agreed with the process. Two board members sat in on the internal discussions (the 80 member team), divided into groups and had a great internal facilitator who facilitated 6-7 meetings (monthly meetings, 3 hours each). The group went from the broadest possible spectrum and brought it down (like the inverted triangle). On a monthly basis, Chairperson Bleke took the thinking of the group back to the Board for discussion. The facilitator also attended the monthly Board retreats to give their point of view. They have done a very good job of reaching consensus and taking their time to go through the process.
- GRCC's policy manual speaks to the Board policies around the Executive Limitations, which is the relationship with the President and key areas about what the President can and cannot do; outlines the Board/President relationship, talks about the Board working as a whole, etc. Using the policy governance model, GRCC went through every policy, designating which policies were college policies and which were Board policies. The MCC Board agrees that going through the policy manual and addressing each policy and sorting out the operating policies from the Board policies is a great way to get into policy governance.
- *What happens at a GRCC Board Retreat?* GRCC has a retreat nearly every month and at times they are used for monitoring some reports. Chair Bleke develops the agenda and tries to move the Board in four different areas: 1) Board growth; the Board does an internal survey annually to see where they can improve; 2) Monitoring – Student Success, Presidential relationships and work, and finance; 3) Other high quality items – what is important that needs to be discussed and doesn't fall within a monitoring situation; 4) Other – gives the opportunity for the Board and president to discuss items important and valued by them.
- *Does GRCC have a Study Session prior to their Board Meeting?* Their board receives the board packet the Wednesday or Thursday prior to the Monday Board meeting. If a Board member has a question about something in the agenda, they send the question in directly and copy everybody; an explanation is given to everyone and typically it's handled with a response, not a discussion at the board meeting. Retreats are related to the regular board meeting; where they have a lot of the discussions concerning student success or issues that have come up, resolving them before the regular board meeting. They discuss the highest level stuff, not getting into the weeds, which really makes a difference in their ability to be efficient as a Board by staying on important topics.
- *GRCC has no Board committees such as Personnel or Finance?* Chair Bleke stated the danger in committees is having a Board with divided knowledge, which creates issues. If you don't get into the weeds, it results in a Board where everybody has the same knowledge base and understanding, which is doable without getting into the management piece.
- *What process did GRCC use to move to policy governance?* GRCC suggested: 1) bringing in someone to assist MCC. GRCC used Steve Crandall from Grand Rapids, who is a great facilitator and a real pro around policy governance; 2) Look at executive limitations and board policies simultaneously – looking at the framing documents of Mission, Vision, Values and Ends – and coincide all of this with development of the next Strategic Plan.

- *What are GRCC's thoughts on how MCC should proceed?*
  - Keep it simple; look at everything that needs to be done and lay out when it will be done; create a timeline. Everything links together and should be done simultaneously.
  - Get the campus and the Board working on a process to set MCC up for its next Strategic Plan.
  - Chair Bleke suggested the MCC Board lead with a statement of purpose and logic as to why this work is being done, so it's not surprising anybody. This will clarify things and allow everyone to operate with transparency and clarity.

**Following the GRCC presentation, Chair Crandall asked Trustees for their thoughts about policy governance, whether MCC should move forward with policy governance and if so, what should the next steps be?**

- Feel very positive and more confident about policy governance; definitely worth pursuing; have a clearer perspective.
- Really good hearing from someone who has been through the process; seems like the way we need to go. This should eliminate some of the challenges such as having reports made that maybe we don't need, and the staff providing information already given to the president
- It's a good step forward and a good process. I would like to see this go forward; this is an ideal time to do this. We don't have time to discuss the really large issues that a board should be taking a look at. As we set Executive Limitations and processes (hiring, purchasing, etc.); we trust they will be carried out. Everyone working on the same three end products is really exciting. Would like to hear more reports on what's happening at the college.
- It's the perfect time and we have the board that can implement it.
- Because we have been gradually moving in this direction, but have not fully moved in this direction, now is the time.

**Action Items**

- The Board would like to know how many of the 28 community colleges in Michigan are actively using Policy Governance, how long they have been using it, and who they used in transitioning to policy governance. – *Dr. Nesbary*
- Two additional CarverGuide booklets will be ordered for the Board: Implementing Policy Governance and Staying on Track and The Ends and Ownership. – *Cindy DeBoef*
- Trustee Portenga will listen to the recording of the Policy Governance session with GRCC and give his input.
- Develop a basic fundamental statement about why the Board is moving to policy governance.
- A concise definition of Policy Governance will be developed from the CarverGuide and approved by the board, so everyone understands what policy governance is. – *Chair Crandall*.
- If the Board decides to move forward with policy governance, they will approve a statement at the August Board meeting regarding implementing policy governance.

- So everyone is involved in the policy governance model MCC will use, the entire college community, along with the Board, will develop the policy governance model. The Board will share how they want to organize the internal group to help contribute to the policy governance process and what Trustees will participate in the sub committees.

4. **Presidential Contract Issues**

*Trustee Mullally*

- The current **medical leave language** is very difficult to understand and needs to be simplified by the college attorney. How long can a person be on sick leave and how does it correspond with sick leave benefits, etc. Language also needs to be added that an interim solution will be sought after 90-days of sick leave and if the president recovers, a return to work will be discussed at that time.
- The suggestion of moving to a 3-year **term** was discussed. This would allow for more certainty for both the Board and the President and result in stability, commitment, faith in and support of leadership. The “at will” language would not be eliminated. If the Board commits to giving a longer contract, President Nesbary would commit to staying at the college for the term. The Board was in agreement with the recommended 3-year term.
- The president’s **compensation and annuity** were discussed. The Personnel Committee recommended moving the base pay from \$155,000 to \$169,000 and the annual annuity from \$4,700 to \$10,000. The Board was in agreement with these recommendations.

The Board will vote on the agreed upon term, compensation, and annuity at the Board meeting tomorrow. The final contract will be approved once finalized.

5. **CLOSED SESSION** – Property Acquisition

*Chair Crandall  
& Dr. Nesbary*

Trustee Portenga moved that the Board go into closed session to discuss property acquisition; second. A roll call vote was taken:

Trustee Portenga – Yes

Trustee Frye – Yes

Trustee Oakes – Yes

Trustee Mullally – Yes

Vice-Chair Osborn – Yes

Chair Crandall – Yes

Trustee Mullally had to leave the meeting.

Trustee Portenga moved going out of closed session; second. Roll call vote:

Trustee Portenga – Yes

Vice-Chair Osborn – Yes

Chair Crandall – Yes

Trustee Frye – Yes

Trustee Oakes – Yes

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:50 p.m.

Minutes submitted by Secretary, Nancy Frye.

/csd