

APPROVED

**MORAIN VALLEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE
9000 West College Parkway
Palos Hills, IL 60465**

The Governing Board of Moraine Valley Community College, District No. 524, Special Meeting/Board Retreat, was held on Tuesday, January 20, 2026, in Building D, Board Room D219, 9000 West College Parkway, Palos Hills, Illinois, 60465.

I. CALL TO ORDER/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chair Beth McElroy Kirkwood asked meeting attendees to rise and join her in reciting The Pledge of Allegiance. The meeting was called to order by Chair Beth McElroy Kirkwood at 6:30 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

Present: Beth McElroy Kirkwood, Chair; Walter Fronczek, Patricia Joan Murphy; Diane Shaar; Tracy M. Sullivan; Eileen Kerlin Walsh (arrived at 7:02 p.m.)

Absent: Jaclyn O'Day; Garrett Weigel, Student Trustee

III. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

None.

IV. CLOSED SESSION

It was moved by Vice Chair Murphy and seconded by Trustee Fronczek to adjourn to closed session pursuant to Section 2(c)(16) of the Open Meetings Act to discuss self-evaluation, practices and procedures or professional ethics. The meeting was facilitated by Jim Reed, executive director of the Illinois Community College Trustee Association (ICCTA).

ROLL CALL VOTE taken on motion to move to a closed session:

Yes: McElroy Kirkwood, Fronczek, Murphy, Shaar, Sullivan

Absent: O'Day, Kerlin Walsh

Student

Advisory: Absent

Motion carried.

Chair McElroy Kirkwood indicated the special meeting would continue upon the Board's return from the closed session.

The Board moved to closed session at 6:32 p.m. The Board returned to open session at 8:02 p.m.

V. **GENERAL DISCUSSION OF MATTERS RELATING TO THE SHORT- AND LONG-TERM FUTURE OF THE COLLEGE**

- Facilities Master Plan and Referendum Discussion: Dr. Haney said the college is requesting that the Board approve the facilities master plan at the regular meeting in February. She said the facilities master plan needs to be approved to comply with the Illinois Community College Board. Dr. Haney said the facilities master plan has not changed since it was last presented to the Board. It was agreed that the Board would vote on the facilities master plan in February. Trustee Fronczek stressed that the facilities master plan is a working document.

Chair McElroy Kirkwood asked the Board for their feedback regarding the potential referendum. Secretary Kerlin Walsh said she is in favor of pursuing the referendum at the medium funding level. Vice Chair Murphy clarified that the facilities master plan itself would be voted on in February, and the referendum would be handled separately. Megan Steigauff, college attorney, stated that if a referendum were to be placed on the November ballot, it would have to be voted on by the Board by August. She said it may be beneficial to make the decision earlier, to allow more time to prepare for the referendum and to communicate with the public. Trustee Fronczek said he would like to clarify the potential referendum's dollar amount and expressed concerns about the overall scope of all the projects. He said the college should focus on its essential needs rather than presenting a broad "wish list" to the community. Trustee Fronczek said he wants to ensure the public understands exactly what the college needs and how the proposed improvements would benefit the community. He said if they do ultimately pursue a referendum, he feels the college should proceed with the lower funding level.

Dr. Haney explained that the low-funding range was approximately \$100 million, and the mid-range funding option was approximately

\$130 million. She noted that community feedback showed stronger support for the mid-range funding option. Trustee Fronczek said he was unsure how the funding ranges were developed, but noted it was good to see community support. Trustee Shaar asked if the college favored the mid-range funding option. Dr. Haney said the community's preference aligned with the mid-range funding option. She said the college supports whatever the Board decides.

Trustee Sullivan asked that the enrollment and workforce projections that affect the projects be provided to the Board when discussions regarding the referendum resume. She said she wants to ensure the Board is equipped to explain how and why the specific programs identified as potential referendum beneficiaries have been identified. Trustee Sullivan asked whether it would be beneficial to conduct an additional electronic survey to gather more community input and to keep it open for one month. Chair McElroy Kirkwood said she did not feel like the number of responses the college received regarding the referendum was enough for her to feel comfortable voting in favor of a new building.

Secretary Kerlin Walsh said the experts who conducted the initial survey expressed confidence in the results and methodology. She said the Board must decide whether to trust the experts and the results they gathered, or whether additional information gathering is needed. Attorney Steigauf asked whether a QR code was sent to the community to complete the survey. Trustee Fronczek asked how many pieces of mail were sent out regarding the community engagement sessions. Dr. Kiana Battle, vice president of Institutional Effectiveness, confirmed that more than 100,000 postcards with QR codes were mailed. Chair McElroy Kirkwood expressed concern that the number of responses the college received was too low, given that 100,000 postcards were mailed. She said she is concerned that people are not interested if they will not complete the survey. Dr. Battle said the survey window was approximately two weeks. Trustee Sullivan noted that some community members may argue that the response timeframe was too short.

Trustee Fronczek said he would like the administration to reassess and refine its understanding of the college's highest-priority needs. Dr. Haney asked if the Board would like the administration to return with a prioritized list of needs. Trustee Fronczek said he would appreciate

that information. Dr. Haney noted that staff and administrators participated in focus groups, and their feedback was used to shape the current master plan. Dr. Haney said the college can prepare a one-page summary of the facilities master plan, including the priorities and price ranges. Secretary Kerlin Walsh said it may be beneficial for the college to review the process from the previous referendum and see how it can be applied this time around.

Vice Chair Murphy asked about the operational costs associated with a new building and whether those costs could create a financial impact. Trustee Shaar noted that new facilities would likely generate revenue through new programming. Dr. David Dammon, vice president of Administrative Services, stated that while a new facility would increase utility costs, some programs would be relocated from older buildings on the main campus, offsetting certain expenses. He added that new buildings typically do not require major repairs for 20 to 30 years, and the highest cost is the initial construction or acquisition. Trustee Fronczek observed that new programs could require additional staffing. Dr. Haney explained that staffing needs would be incorporated into the annual budget and that retirements sometimes create funding flexibility for new positions. Michael Cipolla, vice president of Financial & Business Services/college treasurer, reminded the Board that the college is in a tax-capped district and cannot levy additional taxes. Trustee Sullivan asked if utility setup costs were included in the total estimates for the potential new building. Dr. Dammon confirmed utility setup costs were included in the total estimates.

Dr. Haney introduced the opportunity to purchase a building in Orland Park that could serve as a public safety center. She requested authorization to enter into a letter of intent through the college's real estate agent to assess the building and determine whether the college would like to pursue it. Secretary Kerlin Walsh asked whether the building would be purchased at or below market value. It was noted that the building had been on and off the market for over a year and that a reasonable offer might be accepted. The real estate contract would include exit clauses if the Board did not approve the purchase.

Secretary Kerlin Walsh asked whether other locations in the district had been considered. Dr. Nagle, vice president of Academic Affairs, explained that the Orland Park property could function as a public safety center and is located across the street from the Village of Orland

Park's Police Training Facility, which has a firing range, and near the Orland Fire training facility, which has a burn tower. He described the potential for partnerships and noted that the college's Public Service programs have increased by 30 percent over the past year. He said the building also aligns with long-term plans for expanded Fire Science, EMS, and Public Safety training programs.

It was noted that the concept of a public safety center was included in the EO Sullivan survey. This building previously was under contract for a year, but the deal fell through. Vice Chair Murphy asked whether acquiring the building would be part of the referendum. It was noted that acquiring a public safety center could free up space on campus. Trustee Shaar noted that acquiring an existing building could accelerate program expansion compared to building a new facility. Trustee Shaar asked if there was a waiting list for the fire academy. Dr. Nagle responded that although there is no formal waiting list, all sections are full, and the department continues to expand its Fire Science and EMS offerings. Vice Chair Murphy noted that Cook County has an ongoing need for police training opportunities. Trustee Sullivan shared that she had toured the building four or five years ago and said we need to determine the facility's condition. She said she is concerned about the public perception of buying a building and going out for a referendum at the same time. She noted that the parking lot requires complete replacement, and much of the building may need to be gutted.

Trustee Sullivan asked about the potential timeline for the property. Dr. Haney said the college would need 90 to 120 days to conduct a full assessment of the property. Once complete, administration would return to the Board with findings and funding options. If the Board supports the purchase, the college could then proceed. Vice Chair Murphy asked whether the college could purchase the building even if the referendum failed. Dr. Haney stated that funding options include incorporating the building into the referendum or using college reserves to purchase it outright. Mr. Cipolla confirmed that the college currently has the necessary reserves to purchase the building. Dr. Haney then asked whether the Board would support conducting a formal assessment of the property. The Board expressed support for moving forward with an assessment of the building.

- Legislative Priorities: Steve Pappageorge, vice president of Workforce, Strategy and External Affairs, discussed the college's legislative

priorities. He explained that Board members received the legislative priorities sheet and the federal funding summary in their packets. He noted that the Association of Community College Trustees soon will release information outlining legislative priorities for community colleges nationwide. He said the college reviews that document, identifies which items directly apply to Moraine Valley and supplements it with priorities that are unique to the institution. He emphasized that the federal priorities listed on the sheet represent their best assessment of what is most important at this time. Many of the themes are consistent with last year, including reauthorization of the Higher Education Act, immigration issues, food assistance programs such as SNAP, Adult Basic Education and protecting funding for programs like TRIO and WIOA. He stressed the importance of advocating strongly for these programs because they directly benefit students who need the most support. Mr. Pappageorge also noted that none of the district's congressional representatives currently are members of the Congressional Community College Caucus. He said it is important to encourage Representatives Casten and Jackson to join the caucus so that the college and its students have stronger representation at the federal level. Mr. Pappageorge stated that affordability remains a top priority at both the state and federal levels. He emphasized the importance of ensuring Pell Grants keep pace with inflation. He also reiterated the longstanding concern about the taxation of Pell Grants, calling it an outdated policy that penalizes the neediest students. He stressed the need to continue advocating for its elimination. Mr. Pappageorge discussed the significant anxiety among students regarding ICE's presence on or near campuses. He noted that concerns about family members can directly interfere with students' ability to attend college. He said the college must continue voicing that immigration support is essential for many students. Mr. Pappageorge outlined the schedule for those traveling to Washington, D.C. for the National Legislative Summit. A joint meeting with Senators Durbin and Duckworth is expected on Tuesday afternoon. The college has a private meeting scheduled with Congressman Casten and is working to secure a meeting with Congressman Jackson.

Mr. Pappageorge reviewed state-level priorities and noted that affordability remains an essential issue. He stressed that state legislators must understand the critical role of the Monetary Award Program, the only state-funded financial aid available. Mr. Pappageorge also highlighted the President's Council's vision for a

statewide manufacturing curriculum. He said the initiative has been under development for over a year and a half, and he believes community colleges are uniquely positioned to make significant contributions in this area. He described ongoing efforts to establish a common, statewide 11-credit welding program offered consistently across participating colleges. This would allow students who relocate to continue their program seamlessly at another community college. Mr. Pappageorge said the push for community college baccalaureate degrees came close to succeeding last year and should remain a priority. He also referenced the college's \$43 million capital request currently with the Capital Development Board, noting that continued advocacy may help advance it and support campus improvements beyond those planned through a potential referendum.

Trustee Sullivan inquired if there would be a shortened version of the legislative priority documents. Mr. Pappageorge confirmed that a list of talking points would be provided to the Trustees before the National Legislative Summit. He noted that meetings would be set up with Trustees attending the summit to touch base.

- Topics for Spring Retreat with ACCT Representative: Chair McElroy Kirkwood asked the Board to look over a list of potential retreat topics. The complimentary retreat must be scheduled by June 30, 2026. Chair McElroy Kirkwood said the Board will work on finding a potential date and topic for the retreat in February.
- Strategic Plan Update: Dr. Kiana Battle, vice president of Institutional Effectiveness, said in July 2025, the federal government issued guidance to all entities receiving federal funds that describes the use of diversity, equity and inclusion, or DEI, in language and initiatives or programs as unlawful. She noted that the college's current strategic plan includes diversity, equity and inclusion as one of its six strategic priorities and three of its seven core values. Dr. Battle stated that after consulting with Attorney Steigauf and Robbins Schwartz, it was determined that maintaining diversity, equity and inclusion in our strategic plan and core values could constitute a violation of federal guidance or mandates. Because this presents a potential compliance risk, the college was advised to remove DEI language from these formal documents to protect federal funding. Dr. Battle emphasized that, while we recognize these changes are necessary, our commitment to student success will not change. The college will continue to honor

its mission by ensuring that our students remain at the forefront of everything we do. Dr. Battle introduced Dr. Sadya Khan, executive director of Institutional Research, Planning & Effectiveness, to present how the college will continue to move the strategic plan forward with the use of the five remaining strategic priorities. Dr. Haney stressed that the potential changes have not yet taken effect. She said any amendment to the strategic plan would ultimately require Board approval. She said the goal of the presentation is to show the Board how the strategic plan would appear if DEI language were removed. She acknowledged the difficulty of the conversation and stressed that the goal is to be proactive in safeguarding both students and funding.

Dr. Khan began the presentation by providing context on how the college operates its strategic plan. She described the hierarchy of mission, vision, values and strategic priorities, which guide all departmental and cross-functional planning. She explained that the college uses continuous improvement planning processes and tracks progress using strategic planning indicators such as graduation rates, online course success and student satisfaction with technology. Dr. Khan reiterated that all planning efforts tie back to the strategic priorities. She reviewed how the original six priorities were developed through an inclusive community-based process. She noted that although DEI may need to be removed as a standalone priority, the seven DEI-related goals could be integrated into existing goals within other strategic priorities. For example, goals related to cultural awareness, equity training or creating an inclusive environment correlate with goals in areas such as program development, human resources and resource advancement. She noted that, while these are not exact matches, they would still allow the work's essential spirit to continue across the college.

Secretary Kerlin Walsh said we are not going to change our values. She said the Board should consider whether the wording should be changed at all. She noted that the college did not lose funding last year and successfully received TRIO funding. She asked whether removing DEI language was necessary and whether other colleges had lost funding for maintaining similar terms. Dr. Haney said we do know of colleges in Illinois that have lost TRIO funding because of one line that referenced diversity, equity and inclusion. She said there is no way to know if we will lose funding and said the college is trying to err on the side of caution in consideration of our students and staff. Secretary

Kerlin Walsh also asked whether DEI responsibilities would remain embedded in various roles, even if language or priorities were revised. Dr. Haney confirmed that the work could continue and that DEI elements could be added back in a future plan. Trustee Shaar expressed that she felt the change was necessary at this time, and Trustee Sullivan noted that the approach is consistent with that of other higher education institutions, adding that the college can continue its positive work. Dr. Charmaine Sevier, vice president of Human Resources, noted that the college had previously employed one position dedicated solely to DEI. She said the role had no other responsibilities, and the college made the decision to eliminate that position because there was no other work that could be provided to that person. She noted that the elimination of the executive director of the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion position occurred in December.

Secretary Kerlin Walsh expressed deep concern and stated it is tragic that we are having to capitulate like this, especially during the week of Martin Luther King Jr. Day. She stressed that she understands the college needs to keep its funding but stated that she wanted to mark her protest. Trustee Sullivan asked if the matter would come to the Board in February for a vote. Mr. Pappageorge advised that Board members traveling to Washington should communicate their concerns to federal legislators. He stressed that the college's administration has had a very difficult time coming to this decision. He emphasized that the college's philosophy and commitment to its students will not change. He reiterated that the adjustments are a risk mitigation strategy, as many federal programs currently are at risk.

- Lobbyist Selection by Board: The Board engaged in a discussion regarding the possible selection of a lobbyist. Dr. Haney noted that the Board had received information outlining the process for selecting a lobbyist, as well as the key decision points that would require Board consideration.

Trustee Sullivan said the college should consider whether it needs a lobbyist at both the federal and state levels. She noted that federal lobbyists tend to be very expensive and are used to pursue grant money or big issues. She said community colleges are allowed to select a lobbyist without going out to bid and noted the Board could either directly appoint a firm or conduct interviews. She also stressed the need to identify a firm experienced in higher education while ensuring it

does not represent too many community colleges. Secretary Kerlin Walsh asked Trustee Sullivan if she was familiar with the potential firms under consideration. Trustee Sullivan said she was only familiar with one name and one firm on the list. She said the other names and firms listed still could be qualified and stressed she had not done any research yet. Chair McElroy Kirkwood recalled that the Board had interviewed lobbyists around five years ago but has not employed a lobbyist in the last five or six years. Vice Chair Murphy said the Trustees know their legislators and said these connections often allow them to contact lawmakers directly. She asked if hiring a lobbyist is necessary. Chair McElroy Kirkwood responded that hiring a lobbyist was identified as one of the Board's goals. Secretary Kerlin Walsh said the Board should look back at when the college had a lobbyist and determine whether the college was successful with that lobbyist. Trustee Sullivan said she is aware of at least three community colleges that currently employ lobbyists who advocate at the state level. She explained that if the Board decided to hire a lobby firm, it is important to define clear responsibilities and deliverables for the firm. Vice Chair Murphy proposed conducting a cost analysis and identifying specific goals to determine how a lobbyist could be most useful. Trustee Sullivan added that the Board first should clarify which work they need assistance with before making a hiring decision. Dr. Haney mentioned that a lobbyist might help secure the release of Capital Development Board funds. Trustee Sullivan noted that the Board also could consider a short-term contract with a lobbyist if there was a specific objective they hoped to achieve. Chair McElroy Kirkwood suggested narrowing the list to three firms and conducting interviews. Vice Chair Murphy asked Dr. Haney if she believed hiring a lobbyist would be beneficial to the college. Dr. Haney replied that it could be helpful in certain areas, though the decision ultimately belonged to the Board.

Secretary Kerlin Walsh requested feedback from Mr. Pappageorge. He said he agreed with the Board's focus on first understanding what they expect a lobbyist to accomplish. He explained that major strategic initiatives take time and that it would be important to prioritize the college's needs. He stated that hiring a lobbyist is a reasonable concept but emphasized that relationship-building is a major component of lobbying, and a short-term contract may not allow sufficient time for that. Dr. Haney noted that the listed firms would be beneficial to Moraine Valley and do not work with other community colleges. Chair McElroy Kirkwood concluded by asking Board members to continue

to think about the potential lobbyist and to provide her with any additional feedback.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 9:28 p.m.