

College of DuPage employees call on board to get back to business



College of DuPage's interim president and acting board chairman sparred briefly Thursday over the administration's preliminary response to the Higher Learning Commission, which placed the Glen Ellyn school on probation. (Chuck Berman, Chicago Tribune)

By **Alex Keown**
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College of DuPage faculty and staff are calling on the school's board of trustees to take care of business as elected officials boycotted a third meeting Thursday.

In a letter sent to the board prior to Thursday's meeting, college employees urged all trustees to attend the meeting "to approve new academic programs, new hires and purchases integral to college operations." The college's employees said the board must come together to place the business of the college "ahead of any personal and philosophical differences."

"We are saddened and angry that the inability of the Board to work together continues to jeopardize COD's future," faculty members said in the letter.

The letter was emailed to all six members of the board, but Richard Jarman, vice president of the College of

DuPage faculty association, said he is afraid the message is falling on deaf ears.

"What is going to happen? These are waiting matters," Jarman told trustees Deanne Mazzochi, Frank Napolitano and Charles Bernstein during a period of public participation during a meeting boycotted by trustees Dianne McGuire, Erin Birt and Joseph Wozniak.

McGuire, Birt and Wozniak had called a special meeting for 7 p.m., but they decided to cancel after Mazzochi, Napolitano and Bernstein scheduled a 6:30 p.m. meeting to discuss a request for records related to former College of DuPage President Robert Breuder's contract extension.

That was the third time a boycott has prevented college trustees from voting on issues facing the school, including the payment of some bills and a decision to turn over recordings of closed-session minutes from February and March of 2014 discussing the contract extension.

Several audience members also expressed their frustration, with some wondering what action could be taken to force the absent trustees to attend the meetings.

Without a quorum, the trustees who attended the 6:30 p.m. meeting were unable to vote on whether the school should release the recordings of the 2014 meetings to the DuPage County state's attorney's office.

In an email provided to the Tribune, McGuire accused Mazzochi, the vice chair, of "dirty political games" that have undermined the proposed agendas of the board of trustees. This was the second meeting Mazzochi called to be held prior to a special meeting called by McGuire.

"Trustee Mazzochi's grossly unprofessional behavior gives us no confidence that she will honor her promise not to interfere with our meeting tonight," McGuire said in her email.

Bernstein took umbrage at McGuire's accusation of dirty political games. He said the scheduling of a meeting to discuss the tapes was called because McGuire refused to add the item to her agenda for the night's scheduled second meeting.

"I will say to you Trustee McGuire, if you want to see any urgent issues, come on down. They are here. They are in the consent agenda and other resolutions that we are not able to discuss," he said.

The board has to approve bills over \$15,000, Mazzochi said, but is unable to do so without a quorum.

Joseph Collins, interim president of COD, said smaller bills that do not require board approval are being paid, but he worries about what the lack of payment will do to the relationship between the school and its vendors.

"It's not like we don't have the money to pay," he said. "We just have to have the board approve it, and if they're not meeting, we can't pay the bills."

The absence of McGuire, Birt and Wozniak is also preventing the board from discussing potential replacements for former board Chairwoman Katherine Hamilton, who abruptly resigned her position in December, leaving a 3-3 split on the board.

The board has until Feb. 11 to find a replacement for Hamilton.

Trustee Frank Napolitano said the board has received about 28 applications to fill Hamilton's spot, but so far there has been no discussion of the candidates due to a lack of quorum.

If the board does not select a replacement for Hamilton, the Illinois Community College Board will select a replacement. In a letter released to the Chicago Tribune by McGuire, she told the ICCB that the college's business will not resume until the vacancy is filled — which means the next few scheduled board meetings will likely not have a quorum. The board has another meeting set for Jan. 21.

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