



Special Board Meeting | April 28, 2026 Minutes

Iowa Western Community College

4/28/2026 1:00 PMCDT

@ Iowa Western - Stuart Hall 1100 | 2700 College Rd, Council Bluffs, IA 51503

Attendance

Present:

Members: Chris Blake (remote), Eddie Holtz, Connie Hornbeck, Vicki Hoskovec, Matt Johnson, Dan Kinney, Jenny Kruger, Shane Larson, Kirk Madsen, Matt Mancuso, John Marshall MD, Erin McKee, Molly Noon, Randy Pash, Tom Riley (remote), Gilbert Thomas (remote), Kim Vrba

Absent:

Members: Kerry Newman

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by the Board Chair Connie Hornbeck.

2. Roll Call

Board Chair Hornbeck asked for the roll. Roll call was taken by the Board Secretary.

3. Approve Agenda

Board Chair Hornbeck asked for a motion to approve the agenda as presented.

Motion:

A motion was made to approve the agenda as presented.

Motion moved by Randy Pash and motion seconded by John Marshall MD. All aye votes were recorded. Motion carried.

4. Community Dialogue

Board Chair Hornbeck welcomed Dr. Vicki Murillo and her team to campus. She asked the Board members introduce themselves and share the districts they represent. Cabinet members also introduced themselves.

Dr. Kinney provided the background on how we got to where we are today. The topic was brought up at the February meeting by Dr. Marshall. The Board was in favor of learning more about the project.

Dr. Kinney turned the meeting over to Dr. Murillo to introduce her staff. In attendance from the Council Bluffs Community School District were Dr. Tracy Mathews, Chief Academic Officer; Melissa Comine, Chief of Secondary Schools; Diane Ostrowski, Chief Communications Officer; Jared Tripp, School Board President; and Bob Schlott, community member and donor.

4.1. Council Bluffs Community School District STEM School Presentation

Dr. Vicki Murillo, Superintendent of the Council Bluffs Community School District, presented an overview of the proposed STEM-focused charter school initiative and discussed potential partnership opportunities with Iowa Western Community College.

Dr. Murillo noted that she reviewed Iowa Western's mission statement and was particularly impressed by the emphasis on innovation, which aligns closely with the vision for the proposed charter school. She shared conceptual renderings for the proposed riverfront site and discussed the project's focus on hands-on, project-based, and work-based learning opportunities. The school's academic model would emphasize partnerships with industry and community organizations, allowing students to engage in experiential learning opportunities both on and off campus.

Dr. Murillo explained that the charter school model provides greater flexibility to implement innovative educational approaches while maintaining accountability through a contract with the State of Iowa. She noted that work-based learning opportunities within the district have tripled in recent years and highlighted successful partnerships with industry leaders. Proposed academic pathways include Engineering, Biomedical Science, and Technology-focused programs.

Discussion included the proposed facility and site considerations. The renderings were specifically designed for the riverfront location, though alternate sites may be considered if necessary. Approximately 1.4 acres would be required for the building footprint without parking, with an estimated total need of approximately two acres including parking. Iowa Western representatives noted that several prepared lots on the hilltop campus may also be viable options. Dr. Murillo stated she would provide the Board with exact space requirements. Dr. Murillo shared that the estimated total project cost is approximately \$35 million, with \$24 million already secured through various funding sources. She noted that Iowa has received a federal charter school grant, which must be utilized within five years. Additional grant opportunities are available for facility construction. The school district may also contribute funds toward the project. The district indicated that a long-term lease arrangement, potentially a 50-year lease, would be preferable to purchasing land outright.

Questions were raised regarding curriculum, transportation, athletics, enrollment, and staffing. Dr. Murillo explained that students would still be required to meet all state graduation requirements, while STEM concepts would be integrated throughout coursework. All core classes would be offered at the charter school, and existing models for shared staffing with Iowa Western could be expanded. Foreign language instruction may continue through online programming due to cost efficiency concerns for smaller class sizes.

Regarding extracurricular activities, students would remain eligible to participate in athletics through their resident school districts. Enrollment would be open through an application process on a first-come, first-served basis with waitlists as needed, consistent with public school enrollment practices. The proposed model includes approximately 100 seats per grade level, with an estimated 30 seats reserved for students outside the district.

Board discussion also addressed concerns regarding enrollment impacts on existing schools, including Abraham Lincoln and Thomas Jefferson High Schools. Dr. Murillo stated that the district views the initiative as an opportunity to retain students who might otherwise leave the district and to attract new students through innovative programming. She also noted the district recently launched a new online school option that has already attracted previously homeschooled students back to the district.

Additional discussion focused on opportunities for collaboration between Iowa Western and the proposed STEM school, including alignment of academic pathways, dual-credit opportunities, and shared staffing models. Dr. Murillo reported strong interest from both families and educators, noting that approximately 78% of surveyed parents expressed interest in a STEM-focused school and that district staff have shown enthusiasm for participating in the initiative.

Board members commended Dr. Murillo for her leadership and vision for the project. The Board requested that the item be added to the May Board meeting agenda for further discussion. Eddie will contact HDR to obtain blueprints and evaluate how the proposed project may align with Iowa Western's Master Plan. Dr. Murillo also shared that the Council Bluffs School Board supports the proposed site location.

5. Adjournment

Board Chair Hornbeck asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Motion:

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting

Motion moved by Matt Johnson and motion seconded by Randy Pash. All aye votes were recorded. Motion carried. The meeting was adjourned at 2:00pm.