



MEETING MINUTES & AGENDA
SPECIAL MEETING
LISTENING SESSION
CAMPBELL COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE
DISTRICT CREATION

Wednesday, October 14, 2020,
6:00 to 8:30 PM
Central Wyoming College
Intertribal & Community Center, Room 116
2660 Peck Avenue, Riverton, WY 8250

Zoom Link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83843346468>
Dial-In Phone Number: 1 669 900 6833; Meeting ID: 838 4334 6468

THE STATUTES OF WYOMING REQUIRE THAT ALL MEETINGS OF PUBLIC BODIES BE OPEN TO THE PUBLIC, EXCEPT IN SPECIFIC CIRCUMSTANCES, AND THE WYOMING COMMUNITY COLLEGE COMMISSION FULLY SUPPORTS THAT MANDATE.

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<https://communitycolleges.wy.edu/about-us/commission-meetings/>

ACTION AND REPORT AGENDA ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

Commissioners are not required to attend, but a quorum may be present

6:00 p.m. Opening & Introductions

Commissioner Freeze provided a brief note of thank you for all who are attending and then g then introduced Dr. Brad Tyndall President of Central Wyoming College. We welcomed everyone to Central Wyoming College. He also made all aware of health protocol for the campus.

A. Overview & Initial Presentations

• **Commissioner & Staff Introductions**

Commissioner Freeze recognized all who had gathered to provide input. She further noted that input was valuable in the decision-making process. Candor and honest responses are greatly appreciated regarding information asked

about related to the formation of the Campbell Community College District. Introductions of Commissioners and Commission Staff was completed.

- Commissioner Jackie Freeze – Present
- Commissioner Dennis Boal – Present
- Commissioner Greg Blikre – Present
- Commissioner Ember Oakley – Present
- Commissioner Kay Dooley – Present

Commissioner Freeze reviewed the process to identify what the Commissioners are looking for and the application decision process. The Commission's charge is based on statute and is to determine the need for the state, the financial ability of the district to support the college, and the educational soundness of the proposal. She confirmed that the questions were crafted from that direction. All people are encouraged to share whatever information that might support or challenge the application.

Commissioner Freeze reviewed the process as starting with the county completing an application. Once the application is verified for completeness a 90-day review process starts. Currently the Commission is in the 90-day review process. During that time, data is gathered from the applicant, state, and the Western Interstate Commission on Higher Education (WICHE) who is providing additional research. Preliminary data will be shared from Campbell County and WICHE. Then a comprehensive needs survey is conducted. A competitive process was completed to identify the provider of the needs survey. WICHE was identified as the organization completing the study. Commissioner Freeze recognized the accelerated timeline based on the 90-day period. The Commission is trying to be as thorough as possible while meeting the deadline with complete results. She further noted the need of two public hearings. One was held in Campbell County on October 10 with positive turnout. For the second meeting, a more centralized location was chosen, Central Wyoming College. This location is designed to encourage people from Campbell County or anywhere else within the state to share feedback. Additional meeting access is provided through Zoom.

Once the needs assessment is received and the Commission has pulled all the information together, Commissioners will review all information. The Commission will meet on November 20, 8:30 am to 12:30 pm, in Cheyenne at the Herschler building to review final materials and approve or deny the application. The meeting is open to anyone interested in attending.

If the decision made by the Commission is to approve the application, then the application is referred to the Legislature for review. The Legislative review will come back with a recommendation to allow or not allow creation to move forward. If legislative approval is granted, the county has to conduct a special election to approve the mill levy necessary to fund the institution.

The goal is to conduct a process in a timely manner, gathering all necessary information for the making of a sound decision.

Commissioner Freeze read through the listening session ground rules. Comments should address the need and impact of the proposed Gillette College District and what it will add to community college education in Wyoming. The comments should help the Commission consider long-term enrollment, financial feasibility, and impact on the state as whole.

Commissioner Freeze requested the following:

1. Limit comments to a maximum of 3 minutes.
2. Be specific and targeted for thorough understanding of points made.
3. Wait to be called upon by Commission staff.
4. Be respectful while others are speaking.
5. This is not the time to debate differing points of view.
6. If you still have comments after the session ends, please submit them in writing on the Commission website.
7. Letters should not be read aloud during the hearing. All letters should be submitted via the Commission website.

Commissioner Freeze asked if there were questions about process. She then went on to review the meeting schedule including a presentation from Campbell County, followed by a presentation by the Northern Wyoming Community College District, a presentation of baseline information by WICHE, solicitation of feedback based on questions presented in a few topics. Topics relate to the charge presented earlier. Topic number four provides an opportunity for those who have signed up in advance to submit comments. Topic five provided an opportunity to provide any other input for those without a chance to comment.

- **Campbell County Taskforce Presentation**

Louis Carter King, Gillette Mayor – Thanked all for the opportunity to speak. She noted the importance of everyone’s time and appreciated the Commission’s willingness to receive public comment. She introduced some in attendance who looked forward to speaking about the County’s request to form a separate district: D.G. Reardon, Campbell County Commission Chairman; Robert Palmer, Gillette College Advisory Board Member.

She spoke to the importance of Gillette College as the city Mayor. She wishes for nothing more than the best for the city she was elected to represent. Gillette College is another community bright shining jewel. The College is a beacon of hope to the future of northeast Wyoming. She is in the position to carry on the vision of her parents Herb and Dorothy Carter. They along with other progressive thinking individuals, worked tirelessly, against fierce opposition to bring Gillette College to life from humble beginnings in borrowed class space, to modular buildings, to today’s first-class facilities. There is a significant legacy for those who fought to bring education to Gillette’s children and give opportunities for others to come to Gillette. Over 100 years ago, Campbell County came into being to serve local residents. Residents have shown repeatedly their success in growing the community. Having their own community college district would be the natural next step to further community growth.

D.G. Reardon – Offered his appreciation for hosting both listening sessions. He noted he is Chairman of the Campbell County Commission and they are taking the matter very seriously. He offered context as to why this is happening so rapidly. Mr. Reardon is a graduate of Sheridan College and has watched Sheridan College grow. Thirty years ago, I moved to Gillette and also watched Gillette College grow, becoming the campus it is today. Gillette College can now match up to any community college campus within the state of Wyoming. He encouraged all to come visit. Having been in Gillette for over 30 years, he managed at the coal mines, served as manager at a larger businesses, and hired Gillette College graduates. He also served on the Gillette technical advisory board and helped develop some of the programs provided to Gillette College graduates. Without these programs, he noted, people would not be coming to the mines with the necessary skill sets. He gave this background to relate Gillette College has huge, huge community investment. Including private industry, businesses, local government, Campbell County Commissioners, the City, Hospital, and the School District.

Not only in buildings but investments in higher education for students young and nontraditional. All support training for the jobs needed in the community. Business and industry support local control on programs. It is very important our community has the ability to make those decisions. Currently, the community does not have a say in the decisions that impact local community college programs or keeping the doors open. The community found that out the hard way regarding sports programs. The driving factor is community say in keeping the doors open.

Changing industry with carbon technologies, carbon sequestration, utilization, rare earth minerals, and even wind energy will change the complexion of the state of Wyoming. Thus, making it important to the local community college to have local decision making for those businesses looking to come into the community. Not only for the county but for the state of Wyoming. He asked for other communities to put themselves in Campbell County's place. Would they want an elected board in another community, 100 miles away make decisions for their community? He asked the Commission to consider this application.

Robert Palmer – He noted important comments and decisions lay before the Commission. He hoped the information provided would be beneficial including a slide show. With the application includes the purpose. Mr. Palmer read the purpose directly off the slide. The next slide noted the natural evolution for the College. Gillette College has been in existence for over 51 years. In 2003 the first campus building opened on the present site. In 2006 the name changed from Campus to College. The Pronghorn mascot was selected in 2007. In 2009 the first residence halls opened. Current headcount and FTE is almost 50% of the Northern Wyoming Community College District (NWCCD), and they serve over 1,400 Campbell County residents annually. Aerial pictures of the campus were shown. Currently the college enrolls over 20% of Campbell County High School graduates. In the last 10 years over 2,600 students have achieved their academic credentials from the college with ceremonies held at the college.

For finances, the current year fiscal budget was \$11.2 million. For fiscal year 20, NWCCD's budget was \$32 million. Gillette college budget is an estimated 35% of the NWCCD annual budget. Mr. Palmer noted the provided fact sheet detailing who the College is. The sheet covers enrollment, impact, and demographics. Gillette College infrastructure includes eight facilities

totaling over 260,000 square feet. Wyoming Statute 21-18-103 address the transfer of property from an existing to a newly created district. Campbell County has a vested interest in the college with over \$90 million in buildings. He noted the Taskforce's belief an independent district is mutually beneficial allowing for local governance and continued focus on student success.

- **Northern Wyoming Community College District Comments**

Dr. Walt Tribley joined via zoom and spoke for the institution and on behalf of the district. He expressed his appreciation for facilitating such a careful and important process. Further noting with all taking place in the world, a community who wants a shining college is a given. The only caveat to that very positive message is if Gillette College becomes its' own district, it needs to be funded and funded well. Not just in the first or second year, but it needs a sustaining funding source moving forward. Dr. Tribley added all would want that for a sister district, just as we do for sibling districts now. He hoped the context of his comments are received are as if we are in a presidents meeting with all district presidents. None of us wants to take something, leaving the other districts less than whole. If Gillette College can become its' own district, and governed by the people that forged it from the beginning, it really must happen so that it does not take any funding away from the colleges that currently exist. This is what a caring and responsible state does. He closed by noting Gillette College stands as wonderful example of how a community can make magic happen.

- **Baseline Data Presentation- Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education**

Patrick Lane from the Western Interstate Commission For Higher Education (WICHE). Patrick introduced himself as the Vice President for Policy and Analysis at WICHE. WICHE is conducting the statutorily required survey about the need for an independent district in Gillette, the overall need for the district in the state, the impact on the other institutions, and the educational soundness of the plan. He noted data shown predominantly focuses on Campbell County. But also he will share information about Sheridan and Johnson Counties. This is not the extent of the data relied upon for the report. Interviews are being conducted and they are working closely with partners at the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems to review and complete an in depth data analysis. A final report will be presented to the Commission on November 6th.

The first slide shows the percentage of adults with an associate's degree or higher across the state by county. Darker colors represent higher levels. Campbell County includes 29.6% of the population with an Associates. Sheridan has 43.8% and Johnson with 37.9%. The next slide shows the per capita income by county. The per capita income in Campbell County is about \$49,000 per year. Sheridan is at \$55,000 and Johnson at \$47,629 annually. The next chart shows the projected number of high school graduates across the state to the class of 2036. The data is drawn from WICHE's own analysis based on data from the state of Wyoming. Wyoming is expecting about 5,600 graduates, increasing to about 6,200 in 2026, then declining to just under 5,000 in 2036. This pattern is mirrored in every state across the country. The drop off in 2026 is reflective of the great recession in 2008. The projections are not exact, but underlying trends are expected to hold true. The next slide comes from the State Economic Analysis division and shows the expected change in population. Campbell County is expected to see some of the largest increases in the state, growing by almost 10,000 residents. Sheridan will grow by about 4,600 and Johnson by about 744. Much of the population growth will be in older individuals. The second to last slide shows the major industries by region. In the Campbell County region the primary industries include: Government, Mining, Oils/Gas Extraction, and Retail. This differs somewhat from the northeast region which features Government, Retail, and Accommodations. The last slide shows the number students from Campbell County, and then the number of students from Campbell, Crook, and Weston Counties and the percentage enrolled in community colleges across the state. The majority of students are enrolled in the NWCCD. Sizeable Campbell County populations are also enrolled at Eastern Wyoming College. Given that Gillette College already exists it does not mean that other colleges would automatically loose these students. Mr. Lane concluded asking if there were any clarifying questions.

B. Public Comment by Topic Segment (Comments should be limited to 3 minutes duration for each agenda item. Please state your name, affiliation, and locale). Please step forward as your name is called.

- **Topic #1 Campbell County Impact & Need**

Commissioner Freeze opened with sharing Topic #1 regarding sharing public comment on the impact to Campbell County and the need for the district. She

read the series of related questions and invited all those who are interested to stand up and speak.

Robert Palmer – Approached to offer creating a new district will continue to enhance the services and the experience currently offered. The College has great academic and student support, services, etc. The one thing currently lacking, primarily because of COVID, is the lack of extracurricular activities. Programs were disbanded yet in many of the colleges across the state those programs are on hold. It is wished that Gillette College's programs were on hold as well. But those programs are currently lacking. It is hoped that the district, once formed, will bring back many of those extracurricular activities (Energy City Voices and Athletic Teams). All look forward to hosting many activities again including competition from athletics and academics.

Paul Laskey, Vice President of Cyclone Drilling – There were 560 high school graduates in 2019. One hundred forty of those graduates attended Gillette College or 45%, which is compared to 10% who attended the University of Wyoming. Becoming our own district will encourage even more enrollment growth.

Adrien Gariss, Representing Campbell County Hospital District – The hospital has a strong partnership with Gillette College. As you may be aware there is a huge nursing shortage. The hospital has put a lot of money, time, and effort into recruiting new RN's, LPN's, nursing assistants, medical assistants. Over half of the RN staff is from the college with a much more positive retention rate. Gillette College graduates want to stay in the community and remain in the community. As the health care industry develops, there is discussion about creating medical billing and coding. The hospital is considering a number of robust programs to start as partnerships. The college is an important source or lifeline of employees.

Jeff Wasserburger, State Senator – He reiterated that the programs that were cut, did provide a great deal of diversification for the community. Not only students of color but also students from different countries. One of the programs available was host families. Host families welcomed many students over for Sunday dinner, etc. Extracurricular activities at Gillette College and student athletes had been involved in the community for several years. The student diversity has been lost as per the way it once was.

Tomorrow a dinner will be hosted for legislators to tour Gillette College. He reiterated he is heavily in favor of forming a separate college district. He did want to say to Sheridan College friends and advocates, that all will continue to work with Sheridan College. Even if this goes all the way through, and is voted positively by the people of Campbell County, at the end of the day, Gillette College will have four or possibly six years of accreditation in which they will be working closely with Sheridan College. The relationship with Sheridan College will not change at least for four years until final accreditation. He looks forward to working with the Northern Wyoming Board of Trustees and the President. He wanted to state that no matter what happens on this entire issue, Gillette College will continue to be a good sister to Sheridan College.

Jerry Tystad – He is a member of both the Taskforce and Gillette College Advisory Board. He is also a retired coal mining senior manager and has lived in Gillette for the past 40 years. He referenced the declining high school graduate projections from WICHE. The declining graduates is not really shown until the last few years of the projections. When this is compared to current college attendance, about 33% of students are enrolled through dual or concurrent enrollment. About the same percentage are high school graduates. And about 33% are nontraditional students. This presents an opportunity to focus in other areas not relying on just the high school graduates. Having local control helps the college and residents focus on growth areas and programs.

Regarding previous comments made about the declining coal industry. The importance of Gillette College has been really emphasized during these times. The necessity of a good strong college, reacting with the industries has been critical. Graduates from the technical programs are essential as increasing efficiencies are needed to remain competitive. The mining industry recognizes the importance of the college to retrain workers. Having local governance and the local ability to focus on training in various areas is critical.

- **Topic #2 – Financial Impacts**

Commissioner Freeze moved on to Topic #2 focusing on detail the financial impacts of a new district. She then read through the accompanying questions.

Adrien Gariss – Returned to add that they were “all in” with the college in terms of financial support. The hospital pays for all the capital needed to equip the nursing programs and simulation facility as well as share staff with the program. He acknowledged continuing that support in the future for the nursing program.

Paul Laskey, Vice President of Cyclone Drilling – Returned noting that as an oil and gas drilling contractor most company assets and employees are based in Campbell County. Cyclone employs anywhere from 100-300 people depending on market conditions. They fully support the community college and the way it will be funded. What is concerning is the loss of control of the college, he shared the county may start to see a decline in postsecondary graduates. He added all would like to see the number of those with a postsecondary degree above 50 to 60%. There may be conversations about tuition increases. There is a realization of the importance of 1/3rd, 1/3rd, and 1/3rd. Tuition is only a portion of the cost of a college education. The community needs to pick up additional costs or otherwise we will end up with a situation where higher education is only available to those who can afford it. He noted all understand that the college will need to be taxed and funded locally.

Bill Fortner – His family homesteaded outside Gillette over 115 years ago. He is a fifth generation Campbell County resident. He is a retired coal miner and had worked in the oil and gas fields. He reminded all that the industry is in a lot of trouble. There was a .25 cent property tax that had come up for a vote, and it was voted down with good reason. When industry is assessed they are done so at 100% at 4 mills. When the people of Campbell County are educated on the impact of a 4% mill levy, they will understand they do not want to the district to form either. Residents need education on the full cost district creation.

Robert Palmer – Presented again recognizing that educating the community on the new districts financial impact was certainly a challenge. He indicated a vast majority of community members are already aware of the costs. They do support the optional 1%, the current funding model used by both the city and county. The optional 1% has been funded in Campbell County since 1976. In the last few decades the college has been part of that 1% fund.

He added that Senator Wasserburger had talked about the role of the schools and also BOCHES. BOCHES remains a significant partner. He noted the College receives no direct funding through NWCCD. The College does receive funding through tuition and fees, and the state appropriation, based on current enrollment. That money is passed through to Gillette College. The NWCCD cannot and should not fund Campbell County because of local mill levies. Gillette College will need to come up with local revenue, of which the county has been blessed with local and industry partners (City, County, School District, and Hospital). That's where money comes from making up the \$11.2 million budget. He thinks citizens will be open to the education, knowledge, and the information process, and once complete will see the benefits of the College including the \$65 million economic impact.

Josh MacGrath, ERA Priority Real Estate - Obviously post-secondary education is very important, and so too is local governance. From a property tax standpoint on a \$300,000 house in Gillette, the homeowner would see an \$8 per month increase in property taxes. He noted that no one loves an increase in taxes, yet in his household if we can stay away from Starbucks once or twice a month, we can handle this. Our fear is that in Campbell County and at the college that facilities might not get used the way they were intended. Resulting in a lot of money not used and lost revenue to every business in the County.

David Horning – He noted he would like to address the issue, “Are the citizens of Campbell County knowledgeable enough of the financial responsibility’s incumbent with the formation of a district”. The question is not really should there be a college? Gillette College currently exists. He submitted to the Commission it is not the role of the Commission to tell the citizens of Campbell County that they do not know enough whether or not to support district formation. That leaves this Commission in the review of the college, it is already there and functioning. The Commission is not a gate keeper to the citizens of Campbell County whether or not they are capable of taxing themselves. The where-with-all is there, all will certainly find out if county citizens concur and want to tax themselves?

- **Topic #3 – Statewide Impact**

Commissioner Freeze next introduced Topic #3, Statewide Impact. As she did for the others, she read through the related questions to the topic.

Josh MacGrath – He noted that they would like it be known to the state and other institutions that they are not asking for an eighth slice of the pie, just simply for a portion of the seventh slice. Campbell County citizens are not here to harm Sheridan College. They are simply asking for a slice of the seventh slice of the pie, which currently NWCCD is getting from the state.

Commissioner Boal asked, noting that the Colleges have a given pot of money that is divided among existing colleges now, if created there will be some increased costs. Yet there will also be some new money? He asked if anyone has made an analysis on what the fiscal impact will be on all the colleges, negative, positive or neutral. Commissioner Freeze referred to Dr. Caldwell to address the question, further noting that it was part of the research. Dr. Caldwell responded adding that the financial analysis is part of the research and part of the task of the Commission staff, WICHIE, and NCHEMS. All are helping with a comprehensive analysis including the financial considerations. It is quite a lift, and many are working on the total impact once accreditation should happen as it would affect general fund appropriations and the impact on the allocation model. Commissioner Boal asked further as to when that analysis will be available to fellow Commissioners and those attending the meeting. Dr. Caldwell responded the full packet will be delivered as Chair Freeze previously stated on November 6th. She indicated the hope to distribute the packet in ample time for full review prior to the November 20th meeting.

Robert Palmer - Noted his appreciation for the question, as it is important for the taskforce as well. Their goal is not to harm any of the other districts. As Mr. MacGrath previously stated, the goal is to receive the same share which has previously come to the College, into the future. He hopes to hear what that analysis looks like. Their purpose is just the opposite, to become a full-fledged partner with the seven institutions, not taking anything away, but to add and enhance what the institutions have. There are centers of excellence on each community college. Gillette College also has centers of excellence on the college campus for which we want to continue, but not at the financial detriment of the other colleges or state.

Commissioner Freeze reiterated the Commission's goal is to be as transparent as possible. The packet and materials will be available for review on the Commission website.

Senator Jeff Wasserburger – Said he understands the situation at Gillette College, It receives \$4.6 million in general fund money. By statute if a community college receives no state funding, it can levy less than the 4 mills required. If that was the case, and Gillette College was to become a separate community college district, the \$4.6 million that Gillette College is receiving would return to the general fund to be available for the Legislature to appropriate in any way chosen. He cautioned, as we go into whether or not Gillette College should be a separate district, all should stop looking at it from the view, and how it will impact my college. Look at it from the viewpoint of, is Gillette College ready to be its own separate community college district. There has not been a new community college district created in the state of Wyoming in 52 years. Fifty two years ago, Gillette was a town of 1,500 people. It is now a town of 30,000 with a county population of 50,000. Things have changed, and we have to change as a result. He urged everyone on the Commission to stop looking at this as how it impacts the community college mission, the director, the college, etc. Look at it from the perspective of is Gillette College ready to be a full district? He believes the answer is yes.

Bob Baumgartner, Chairman of the Board of Trustees, Eastern Wyoming College – Speaking on behalf of the EWC Board of Trustees, at last night's board meeting, a resolution was approved, against the formation of the community college in the state of Wyoming. The thought of adding a new community college district would be based on a compelling reason of educational enhancement for the state. The submitted application does not do that. There are no additional programs or portions that are any more beneficial than programs already being offered at any of the other community colleges. There are no new educational services proposed along with the information submitted for over the next two decades. Enrollment within the high schools is shown to drop. The state's adult population who are seeking to attend community colleges is declining. The need for an additional community college is decreasing, not increasing. There is no doubt that the expansion, has allowed for additional administration for that community college. The assessed valuation of Campbell County will likely decline significantly causing Gillette College to rely more on state funding. Thus resulting in a diminishing share of an already inadequate share of state funding for the seven existing districts. Again, the EWC Board of Trustees feels that the establishment of another community college will further weaken every existing community college in the state and definitely opposes the proposal.

- **Topic #4 – Speakers Registered to Provide Comment**

Commissioner Freeze moved on to Topic #4 which are presenters who had preregistered to provide public comments. Dr. Caldwell noted that we did have a list of preregistered speakers. Mr. Rob Dennis announced the preregistered speakers in alphabetical order.

Bill Fortner – He only had one additional thing to add. When Campbell County does good, the state of Wyoming does good. Should the Commission pass 4 mills on industry, Campbell County will not be good anymore.

David Horning – He noted he is a member of the task force from Campbell County and the President of the Gillette College Foundation, and he had remarks to offer in the capacity of the latter position. He wanted to share with all, some background on the foundation as it speaks to the issues presented by the foundation. Particularly the willingness of the community to support the college. As noted and presented the community does support the college. The foundation was established in 1987 to provide county specific higher education opportunities. Twenty years later, the name was changed to its' present title.

The mission is to enhance the offerings and opportunities of the College, provide specific project funding support, including student aid, facilities, and equipment. The current foundation is comprised of 17 members, representing all of Campbell County. All who have been generous with their time and commitment. The Foundation has been extraordinarily successful in work done, reflecting community support. Currently there are almost \$13 million in assets. For the 2019 fiscal year, more than \$1 million was raised in gifts, awarded \$107,000 in scholarships, and almost a half a million dollars in program support. In the last several years the foundation has raised: almost \$1.1 million for the Rodeo Ag complex, secured a matching gift of \$1.7 million for an economic development grant, \$1.5 million for the area 59 STEM learning facility, and \$3.5 million for the Pronghorn Center. Recently the Foundation received a support gift of \$4 million, the largest to date. Regardless of the outcome of the application, the Foundation will continue to work closely with donors, the city, and county to support the college. The principal questions before the Commission include: is there a need for a community college in the proposed district; is there a need for the college in the state; does the proposed district have the financial ability to support the

college; and is the proposed plan educationally sound? The answer is to look at the College. We are not looking to form a college or district as the college exists. The application submitted is extensive and answers all questions. But there is no better answer, than to look at the college itself.

The success of the Foundation, is a barometer of the community to support its college. The people of Campbell County have and will generously support the College as an institution and financially. Should the application be approved and district formation granted, the Foundation is confident of continued support. Gillette College is already a successful community college and it can stand on its own. Campbell County has earned the right to make the decision on district formation and enjoy its own governance. Gillette College exists. The application is not a challenge or threat to the financial wellbeing of the other colleges. It is only the next evolutionary step. He concluded by asking the Commission to approve the application.

Dr. Leslie Travers, President Eastern Wyoming College - The Gillette application raises questions about the entire funding model for Wyoming's colleges and the important role they play in Wyoming's education system and the economy. It may be time for a larger discussion, rather than creating additional districts. EWC stands ready to be part of the discussion if needed. On behalf of Eastern Wyoming College, she questions the timing of the application. Wyoming is facing an \$877 million shortfall in the next two years with the collapse of energy prices and the COVID-19 pandemic. All potentially costing Wyoming \$1.5 billion in revenue. The colleges have been given a ten percent reduction in general funds, with the possibility of an additional ten percent. This is the wrong time for Campbell County to pursue a new community college district as services or cut to the disabled, the elderly in Wyoming, and state employees have been given furloughs. This is poor timing and we hope the Commission looks at this application and does not support it at this time.

Tracy Wasserburger – She thanked all for the opportunity to speak. There are so many caveats that she could talk up, which would not be appropriate. She is a nurse practitioner and also member of the Gillette College Advisory Board. She is deeply concerned about the future of Gillette College, and the direction that it is going. It is certainly time that we have the ability to stand alone. As so poignantly spoken to earlier, who likened it to, it is now time to move out of our mother's basement.

Needs within the county medical community are very specific. Distressing to the community has been, they have always been stymied by unique to the community needs where the hospital base is larger. The direction of the college is very concerning, unless the new district is formed and residents would have the ability to create their own destiny. Thank you considering the uniqueness of the community. After 50 years of a good relationship with the community college district, it is time that Campbell County be given the allowance to stand alone so the community can represent itself. She acknowledged the concern about taxes; however, residents who want to live in the community and want to support educational attainments, should also support a college education. She thanked NWCCD for what they have done for Campbell County, but acknowledged it being time to have a voice and stand alone.

Sue Kneisel – She noted, she is with the Gillette College Foundation and did attend the hearings held the prior Saturday. Ms. Kneisel has been thinking a lot about the demographic differences in the community as a contributing factor to now being the time for Gillette College to achieve independence. As a citizen it is clear to her, that the two communities, Gillette and Sheridan, as related to educational needs. Campbell County has 17,000 more citizens than Sheridan. Campbell County's median age is 32 years old, Sheridan 42. Thirty one percent of the county population is under 18, for Sheridan 24%. Forty one percent of Campbell County residents are between the ages of 18 and 44. Almost three-quarters of the population is under 45 years of age. These statistics illustrate different needs in the community. The workforce will need access to training for viable future jobs. The two counties have totally different economic environments. Campbell County is in an extractive industry and is in the process of reinventing themselves. The county has resource facilities to make extractive industries more feasible. The college will need to be able to provide training as the local industries change.

She heard from Eastern Wyoming College, that they did not offer anything new, which was why Campbell County representatives were in attendance, so that they can be more reactive to the community. The lack of voice and ability to choose our own path was made abundantly clear with the no vote in representation. Ms. Kneisel understands the qualities of the state statute.

She indicated, they had found themselves surprised by the decisions made by the Sheridan board. Which comes back to the difference of the two communities. The needs of local students in Sheridan, during a time of budget cuts, is different than the needs of Campbell County's students. Sheridan College has been a good neighbor for over 50 years. Campbell County, the City of Gillette have demonstrated the ability and commitment to the college by the support given. It is drastically changing times which require the College to be more responsive, to the training and educational needs of the community. The applicant is not asking for funding to be taken away from any of the other colleges, yet they would like to see some of the funding paid for in local taxes returned back to the College. They do not need to build a new campus, one already exists. Please give the citizens of Campbell County the voice to decide.

- **Topic #5 – Other Relevant Information**

Commissioner Freeze opened up for topic #5 to see if anyone had final comments or to provide relevant information for the Commission to consider.

Adrian Garis – The argument here is we are already a college, a robust campus, a rival to almost all the other campuses in Wyoming. We already have state funding coming to the campus for the students. They are truly lacking is the ability to raise our own funds. This college has been cobbled together, running on cobbled together funding which really no other college is asked to do. The college does not have the ability to raise their own local funds to support the college specifically. In response to the other districts losing out, Gillette College is already getting their share of the funds. And is almost running as an independent campus, but lacks the ability to raise local funds. We would not ask any of the other districts to give up state funds and run a cobbled together funding mechanism. He noted that the College already has its piece of the pie but wants the ability to raise funds and be governed by local residents.

C. Closing

Commissioner Freeze thanked Central Wyoming College for hosting the meeting. She appreciated the ability to be in the center of the state and solicit comment from everyone. She also acknowledged the large contingent of Campbell County folks attending in person to share their passion for higher education and the College.

She thanked the Commission staff for doing all the heavy lifting. Dr. Caldwell introduced additional Commission staff and recognized the attendance of former Commissioner Mr. Larry Atwell. Commissioner Freeze clarified the staff will continue to pull all parts together and work with WICHE partners to gather data and complete the analysis for the submission of that information by November 6.

She reminded all of the Commission's charge and responsibility which is to look at the need of the new district for the local community and the state as a whole. Commissioner Freeze noted the consideration of the financial ability to support that particular entity and the educational soundness of the proposal. Resulting in a comprehensive look at a 30,000 foot elevation. The Commission is committed to a good sound decision. She clarified that the Commission had no built in biases and a commitment to look at all the information provided, resulting in a strong recommendation to the State Legislature.

The information will come to the Commission by November 6. Packets will be sent out shortly after that date. Commissioners will be provided with a rubric for an independent evaluation. A full and robust discussion will occur at a joint meeting November 20th in Cheyenne. All are encouraged to attend in person or via zoom.

Dr. Caldwell reminded all of the public comment submission, which is open October 9– 23, on the Commission's website.

Meeting adjourned.