

MINUTES
POLK STATE COLLEGE
District Board of Trustees Special Meeting
Thursday, February 5, 2026 – 3:30 p.m.
Polk State Center for Public Safety, Room 267

Dr. Angela M. Garcia Falconetti called the February 5, 2026, District Board of Trustees Special Meeting to order at approximately 3:39 p.m.

Members Present: Ms. Ann Barnhart, Ms. Ashley Bell Barnett, Mr. Kyle Davis, Mr. Steve Lester, Mr. Greg Littleton, Ms. Cindy Hartley Ross and Mr. Ashley Troutman

Members Absent:

- 1. Meeting Called to Order**
- 2. Adoption of Agenda**

Ms. Bell Barnett moved, seconded by Mr. Littleton, to approve the agenda for the February 5, 2026, Special Meeting. All members voted affirmatively.

- 3. Action Items**
 - a. Consideration of the appointment of Dr. Anne Kerr, President Emerita of Florida Southern College, as Interim President of Polk State College**

Chair Barnhart stated that in light of the major transition the College will be experiencing over the next several months, it was very important to identify an interim leader that has both experience and a proven track record of leadership. She elaborated that Dr. Kerr is a seasoned higher-education leader with decades of experience. Chair Barnhart provided each Board member with Dr. Kerr's resume and expressed the belief that Dr. Kerr has the ability to guide the institution through its next chapter. She then asked Dr. Kerr to address the Board to share why she is willing to serve as interim and answer any questions they may have.

Dr. Kerr briefly addressed the Board and numerous faculty and staff members in attendance and expressed excitement and surprise with the opportunity to serve as interim President. She shared her passion for educating students and workforce development and all that can be accomplished to strengthen the community. She noted that her life's mission of educating and serving students aligns with this interim position and she is excited to be considered. She noted that she had a "hard stop" with serving as interim. She then invited the Board to share any questions or comments they may have.

Ms. Ross commended Dr. Kerr on her numerous accomplishments throughout the community and while at Florida Southern College and that she looks forward to working with her again.

Ms. Bell Barnett echoed Mr Ross' sentiments and inquired about Dr. Kerr's "hard stop." Dr. Kerr clarified that she could serve as interim President until this summer and added that the search for

a permanent President will be successful, due to Polk State's great reputation. She aims to have the entry plan for the next president ready so that the transition goes very smoothly.

Mr. Troutman raised questions about the process and criteria used for the appointment. He expressed that his questions are not about the candidate. Chair Barnhart emphasized that as Chair, she has the responsibility to work with the Florida Department of Education along with the current President when they look to identify potential candidates who will come into the interim role with leadership skills and the ability to work faculty, staff, and students. She added that during the review it became very evident that if the College could secure Dr. Kerr for this role, she would be the best candidate. Mr. Troutman inquired if any internal candidates or other external candidates were considered and under what authority. Chair Barnhart confirmed that they looked across a spectrum of candidates under the authority of her as Board Chair and in conjunction with communication with the Department of Education. Mr. Troutman requested that the Board review its rules regarding the process of a succession plan. Mr. Littleton referred to the Board's earlier discussion during today's workshop with the intent of reviewing all College rules and procedures, including the one pertaining to this topic. Attorney David Carmichael briefly referred back to Board Rule 1.10, Selection and Appointment of the College President, and Florida Statute 1000.70.

Ms. Bell Barnett inquired if the Board would receive the contract for the interim candidate at time of approval. Chair Barnhart clarified that after the Board approves Dr. Kerr as interim President, she will work with Dr. Kerr and legal counsel to negotiate a contract. If the contract is acceptable and she is approved, Dr. Kerr will sign the contract, and the contract will be made available to the Board.

Mr. Lester moved, seconded by Ms. Ross, to approve the appointment of Dr. Anne Kerr, President Emerita of Florida Southern College, as interim President of Polk State College. Upon roll call vote, the motion was carried with (6) Ayes: Lester, Bell Barnett, Littleton, Barnhart, Ross, and Davis and (1) No: Troutman. Mr. Troutman reiterated that his vote was only because of the process, not the individual.

Final Remarks

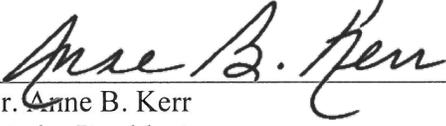
President Garcia Falconetti made her final remarks to the Board during her last Board meeting. She emphasized that the College needs a strong and respected interim President who is an extreme professional. She expressed gratitude to Chair Barnhart for the time she has invested in the College, the Board members who hired her, and all Board members for their professionalism, leadership, and support. She reflected on how much was accomplished during the last eight years and thanked all for the opportunity to serve.

Adjournment:

Having no further business, Chair Barnhart adjourned the meeting at approximately 4:00 p.m. to resume the Board Workshop.

 2/23/26

Ms. Ann Barnhart Date
DBOT Chair



Dr. Anne B. Kerr Date
Interim President