

MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING
OF THE
BOARD OF TRUSTEES
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

January 23, 1990

President John DiBiaggio called the Special Meeting of the Board of Trustees to order at 7:15 p.m. in the Lincoln Room of the Kellogg Center. President DiBiaggio indicated the Chairperson of the Board of Trustees would explain the purpose since the special meeting was called at the request of the Board.

Present: Trustees Malcolm G. Dade, Jr., Joel Ferguson, Lawrence D. Owen, Dean Pridgeon, Thomas Reed, Barbara J. Sawyer, Robert E. Weiss, and Kathy Wilbur; and President John DiBiaggio.

1. Chairperson Owen announced the purpose of the special meeting is to consider the appointment of an Athletic Director for Michigan State University effective July 1, 1990, and to consider certain other matters relating to the Head Football Coach. On a motion by Mr. Owen, supported by Mr. Ferguson, THE BOARD VOTED to approve the proposed agenda.
2. The individuals listed below addressed the Board of Trustees regarding the appointment of an Athletic Director.

Mr. Tom Brennan presented a resolution of the Board of the Downtown Coaches Club supporting the recommendation of the MSU Board of Trustees. All other participants presented comments in opposition to the action taken by the MSU Board of Trustees later in the meeting.

- 1) Mr. Doug Hawes, Chairperson, ASMSU Student Board; Mr. Tak Ready and Ms. Sharon Plettner, ASMSU Student Board members
 - 2) Mr. Dennis Martell, Graduate Student and Student Liaison member
 - 3) Mr. Paul Frolick, Student
 - 4) Dr. Ed Liebler, Alumnus
 - 5) Mr. Mark Ludwig, Student
 - 6) Ms. Michelle Sanders, Student and Chairperson of Women's Advisory Committee to the Vice President for Student Affairs and Services
 - 7) Dr. Eileen R. VanTassell, Faculty Council of the Academic Council and Faculty Liaison member
 - 8) Mr. Michael Perrot, Student
 - 9) Mr. John Flynn, Chairperson of Elected Student Council and Student Liaison member
 - 10) Mr. Tom Brennan, President, Downtown Coaches Club for 1990
 - 11) Dr. Wilbur Brookover, Retired Faculty member and former Mayor, City of East Lansing
 - 12) Mr. Larry Adderley, Alumnus and Sportscaster
 - 13) Mr. Bob Reynolds, Alumnus and Broadcaster, WITL Radio, Lansing
3. On a motion by Mr. Owen, supported by Mr. Ferguson, THE BOARD VOTED to adopt the following resolution:

BE IT RESOLVED that, in addition to his head football coaching duties, George J. Perles will assume, with no additional salary, the responsibilities of the Athletic Director position effective July 1, 1990. This arrangement is subject to a one-year review based on criteria to be developed by the administration in consultation with the Athletic Council and approved by the Board of Trustees.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Board of Trustees does not release George J. Perles from his employment contract as Head Football Coach at Michigan State University nor does it grant George J. Perles permission to accept employment with the New York Jets, a National Football League organization, or grant permission to the New York Jets to hire Mr. Perles.

4. Trustees commented as follows:

- A. Mr. Weiss remarked that it is not a vote against the President and not whether athletics is more important than academics, but that he would vote in favor of the resolution in order to provide continuity in the athletic program. A one-year appointment will provide an evaluation period of one person serving in the dual position.
- B. Mr. Reed stated that he is totally opposed to the process being used to employ the Athletic Director.

Public
Participation

Appointment of
George Perles
as Athletic
Director

Trustees Comments
AD appointment

January 23, 1990

Trustees Comments
Athletic Director
Appointment

- C. Mr. Dade remarked how unfortunate it is that society's value system places athletics at the pinnacle. It is not a question of supporting the President or supporting the Coach, and it is not wrong to differ in opinion. Mr. Dade said he sought the advice of others, but after consideration it is his judgment to set aside the policy of affirmative action, to set aside the selection process, and honor the commitment given to other Trustees.
- D. Mr. Ferguson commented that he believes those who love the University will continue to be supportive whether or not they agree with this decision. In making a decision, each person will use their best judgment. Academic entrance and graduation requirements were recently changed to improve the preparedness of entering students, and Mr. Ferguson remarked about that action and the fact the Board of Trustees and the University have had established priorities so that academics and athletics do complement one another.
- E. Mr. Pridgeon voiced concern for a process which lacks input from the University and does not include a recommendation from the President. He also commented on the issue of accountability of the Athletic Director and possible resulting circumstances to the President of the University.
- F. Trustee Kathy Wilbur chose not to comment.
- G. Trustee Barbara J. Sawyer requested that her complete comments be included in the minutes of the meeting.

"I applaud the speakers for your forthright comments. Your comments reflect sentiments similarly expressed in large numbers of letters and phone calls.

I, too, regret the process by which this issue has come to the Board for action. In my 12 years on the Board of Trustees I have never observed such gross overemphasis on an issue which relates to such a small portion of a major academic enterprise. Nor have I ever experienced the degree of damage that can result from speculation by representatives of the media such as the misperceptions developed by supporters of the University based upon comments by one or two members of the eight person Board. I, for one, object to the statement of an individual being construed to represent the collective judgment of eight persons who have not spoken as a collective body.

The Board of Trustees is made up of eight individuals who, despite having differences in opinion and differences frequently in their priorities, generally attempt to fulfill the responsibilities given us through election to office. We may disagree with one another on different issues confronting the Board and we may have a disagreement with the President from time to time. Generally, however, those disagreements have been over matters of substance pertaining to the academic mission of the University--issues which deserve an opportunity for free and open debate. I am alarmed that those discussions do not seem to merit anywhere near the same level of media or public attention as has the issue relating to the selection of an Athletic Director or the possible departure of a football coach. Nor, by the way, has there been much coverage of the major contributions this University, its faculty and staff make on a daily basis to educating our students and addressing society's needs through research, teaching, and public service.

Even more distressing is the choice of the media to escalate those discussions from the more limited topic of staff selection procedures to pronounce this issue as one over which the President of the University will resign--without attribution to any source that would suggest accuracy of the news reports. Such irresponsible reporting is not only inaccurate and a disservice to readers but has served to cause great alarm among many loyal MSU alumni around the country.

Having said that, I will also acknowledge that this issue has been handled poorly by the Board, by Mr. Perles, and by the Administration of the University. Individuals who might have restrained from commenting chose not to; those who might have clarified the issues also chose not to. The end result, however, has been to embarrass an institution which deserves much greater respect than it has been shown. As one member of its governing body, I apologize for being a party to such an unfortunate display.

January 23, 1990

Trustees Comments
Athletic Director
Appointment

Despite any action taken this evening, however, I take some comfort in knowing that Michigan State University is larger and stronger than all of us combined. Board members have disagreed and been able to move on to work in the best interest of the institution. Previous Boards and previous Presidents have had disagreements which seemed colossal at the time, only to respect one another in the ability to agree to disagree and get on later with the business of the University. Certainly that has been the case during my 12-year tenure. More often than I like to recall, I have had to remind myself to put issues into a long-term perspective by asking 'What was it I was so worried about a year ago yesterday?' -- realizing that, with time, crises are resolved and wounds do heal. I hope with all my heart that we will be able to look back at this issue and recall it as only a blip in a long and prestigious history of a great university.

The selection of an athletic director should not be a controversial issue, despite the high visibility of that position to the public. The potential loss of a football coach, despite an equally high visibility factor, should not sound a fire alarm heard around the country. We seemed to have defied the norm as a result of basic philosophical differences of opinion between the President and some members of the Board of Trustees. It has historically been the role of the President to recommend personnel actions for both positions to the Board of Trustees. It has also been the prerogative of the Board to either accept or reject the recommendation of the administration.

Never before have the two positions been in question concurrently. In the current instance, we had the intervention of outside forces which caused some members of the Board to encourage integration of the two positions in order to retain at least one individual, namely the football coach.

I do not feel personally capable of judging George Perles' ability to serve as AD and Coach concurrently. I have, as has the Board, generally, relied upon the administration to pursue recruitment and selection procedures and make the best recommendation to the Board. Circumstances in this case have precluded our receiving a recommendation from the administration.

In working through the pros and cons of this decision, I have concluded that, while there are potential dangers to losing a football coach during this critical recruiting period, those dangers pale by comparison to the more critical issue of whether Michigan State University's Athletic Program can be adequately served by one individual. I do not consider this a vote either for or against John DiBiaggio for or against George Perles. I believe the principle question remains as to whether the two positions should be one. There is little doubt in my mind that the two positions must remain separate, for the following reasons:

- 1) The athletic director must represent 25 athletic programs, requiring his or her full attention to assure integrity and success in every sport.
- 2) The University must have regular and informed representation at NCAA and Big Ten meetings, requiring adequate time to remain informed on issues pertaining to athletics in general and to the individual team issues, reflecting the values and opinions of the President and Board of Trustees.
- 3) Combining the two positions represents a potential conflict of interest. A subordinate should not also serve as his own supervisor. The University has not allowed spouses to work in the same department or in positions supervisory over one another in order to avoid any perception of favoritism or conflict of interest. I do not believe a high standard of accountability can be maintained when the two positions overlap.
- 4) The football program, which I would acknowledge as having benefitted greatly under George Perles' leadership, deserves the full attention of the head coach.
- 5) To assume that an Associate Athletic Director would be selected to allow the Athletic Director time to devote to football is a great disservice to the associate.

January 23, 1990

Trustees Comments
Athletic Director
Appointment

- 6) Only four other Universities in the country have a joint AD/Coach position. The fact that there was at one time 20 colleges attempting this and only four remain says something to us that it is a lesson that we should not repeat.

Additionally, I would argue that the selection process designed by Roger Wilkinson to fill the Athletic Director position was consistent with the selection process required to fill other administrative positions in the University. I believe it is highly inconsistent and unfair to mandate compliance with that policy by colleges and administrators in the name of equal opportunity and to supersede the policy at the whim of the Board.

I encourage each Board member to search his or her conscience before casting a vote on this matter. I, for one, will vote against the appointment of George Perles and against the combination of the Athletic Director and Football Coach positions."

- H. Trustee Owen commented that he wished to clear up two misconceptions that may have been created by previous comments. First, Mr. Perles as Athletic Director will have a supervisor, he will report directly to Vice President Roger Wilkinson, who reports to the President, who reports to the Board. Secondly, Mr. Owen doesn't believe it fair to put the President in the position of responding to suggestions that he might resign.

Three principle points Mr. Owen said he would like to speak to are: that it is not unusual for valued personnel, academic or athletic, to receive offers from other institutions and private sector businesses. The Board regularly evaluates competitive offers being made to professors and other staff and attempts, where appropriate, to match that competition to keep valued people. Second, the fact that Coach George Perles will consider staying at Michigan State University, in view of the offer he has received, speaks well of his loyalty. And, third, Mr. Owen reported he is prepared to provide Coach Perles the opportunity of serving as Coach and Athletic Director.

Appointment of
George Perles as
Athletic Director
Approved

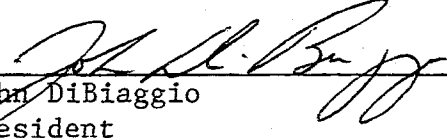
5. A roll call vote was called by President DiBiaggio and the following Trustees voted Yes on the motion: Trustees Dade, Ferguson, Owen, Weiss, and Wilbur. Trustees Pridgeon, Reed, and Sawyer voted No. The resolution was approved by a vote of 5 to 3. Motion Carried.

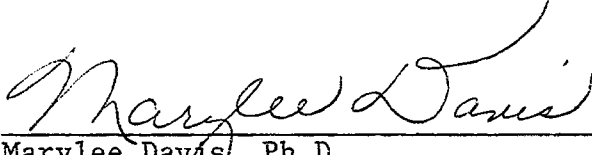
President's
Comments

6. At Trustee Dade's request, President DiBiaggio commented as follows. The President stated his position, one that he has repeated from the beginning of the process, that Michigan State is committed to fairness and equal opportunity. He believes the selection procedure for Athletic Director should have included an aggressive and exhaustive search that would have resulted in the inclusion of minorities and women in the pool of applicants and is disappointed that equal opportunity was denied rather than encouraged. He indicated concern that a message has been sent nationally that intercollegiate athletics is set apart from institutional goals, values, and commitments at Michigan State University. The President reported he is philosophically opposed to a Head Coach assuming simultaneous duties as Director of Athletics as there is an inherent need for a formal system of checks and balances in all administrative areas.

President DiBiaggio stated he does not consider this action as a personal affront but as one that could hurt the University and is disappointed that perceived pressures of the moment were elevated over long-term benefits to the University.

7. The meeting was adjourned.


John DiBiaggio
President


Marylee Davis, Ph.D.
Secretary