



Our Mission: We disrupt generational poverty by supporting, preparing, and empowering young people at distinct stages of life to break down barriers on their path to success in adulthood.

**Northwestern University Settlement Association
Board of Directors Regular Meeting**

**1400 W. Augusta Boulevard
Chicago, IL 60642**

Board of Directors members present in person: Chair Amy O'Donnell, Robert Best, Virginia Burnstine, Kathleen Elliott, William Welnhof, Melissa Gibson, Lieke Hakkenberg, Tracy Heilman, Christine Jacobek, Kurt Mueller, William Rowe, Sarah Shumway, Hollis Sunshine, Tyrone Washington, Larry Weithers, Claire Winnard.

Board of Directors members present on Zoom: Alice Schaff.

Guests: Adam Arnets, IMC Foundation.

Staff present in person: CEO Carole Wood, CFOO Christian Feaman, Chief of Staff Danielle LaPointe, Rowe Assistant Principal Derrick Svelnys, Rowe Assistant Principal Dr. Duane Davis, Director Board Relations Alison Armstead.

Amy O'Donnell, Chair, called the meeting to order 12:13 PM.

Amy requested for the Assistant Secretary Alison Armstead to take the roll.

Public Comment

No members of the public present for public comment.

Board Chair Report

Amy highlighted several recent organizational milestones, including Rowe's eighth grade graduation, and a Settlement presentation at Wintrust. Also acknowledged, were successful auxiliary board events, including the Winnetka Board wine event and the North Shore Board luncheon.

Amy then led the Board in adopting resolutions of appreciation for Kurt Mueller and Robert Best as they concluded their service. Kurt was recognized for over a decade of leadership, including his service as Treasurer and Board President, his role on the Audit & Finance Committee, and his commitment to donor engagement through the Better Futures Luncheon. Kathy Elliott made a motion to approve the Kurt Mueller resolution. Christine Jacobek seconded the motion. The motion was approved by unanimous vote.

Robert was recognized for more than 25 years of board service, including terms as Board President, General Counsel, and Parliamentarian, as well as his longstanding contributions to the Executive, Education, Governance, and Audit & Finance Committees. Sarah Shumway made a motion to approve the Robert Best resolution. Kathy seconded the motion. The motion was approved by unanimous vote.

Amy presented the resolution to approve the FY26 Board meeting schedule, which will include four full board meetings on September 15, December 15, April 27, and June 22, and four Executive Committee meetings on August 11, November 7, February 23, and May 20. Robert Best made a motion to approve the FY26 Board meeting schedule. Holly Sunshine seconded the motion. The motion was approved by unanimous vote.

Amy presented the resolution to approve the FY26 Committees, which will include the Executive Committee, Audit & Finance, Governance, Education, Strategy & Effectiveness, and Development Committees. The Development Committee was highlighted as a priority addition to bolster staff fundraising efforts. The Board also confirmed that Tim Cawley, Amanda Albert-Knight, and Bill Gerstein would continue as members-at-large on the Education Committee, with Bob Best serving as a member-at-large on the Governance Committee. Sarah made a motion to approve the resolution. Kathy seconded the motion. The motion was approved by unanimous vote.

The public is welcome to attend the meeting.

Discrimination based on disability, race, creed, color, gender, national origin, religion, ancestry, marital status, or need for special education services is prohibited.



A resolution was also presented to ratify the dissolution of the Northwestern Settlement Foundation. Amy explained that the Foundation had served as the vehicle for utilizing New Market Tax Credits, which generated significant savings in debt forgiveness for the organization. With that purpose completed, the Foundation was no longer needed. The Board expressed gratitude to former Foundation members, for their service. Bob made a motion to approve the dissolution of the Northwestern Settlement Foundation. Virginia Burnstine seconded the motion. The motion was approved by unanimous vote.

CEO's Report

Carole Wood reflected on the close of Fiscal Year 2025, noting that despite challenges, the year ended on a positive note. Northwestern Settlement successfully refinanced its debt, maintained a balanced budget, met all required cash-on-hand thresholds, and expanded its debt service coverage ratio. The Settlement continued to make payroll and pay bills on time without drawing on its line of credit.

As of the end of the fiscal year, the Development team raised approximately \$2.9 million, representing about 12.5% of the annual budget. This included nearly 100 grant applications, with 18 funded. While donor behavior has shifted and competition for dollars has increased, the team built a strong stewardship plan emphasizing strategic partnerships and hosted the second annual Better Futures Luncheon, with the third scheduled for September 2025. Comparisons to pre-pandemic fundraising show that current efforts are tracking positively against FY17 levels, excluding one-time special grants.

Carole also reported that Rowe Elementary received a two-year charter renewal with conditions following a lengthy and complex review process. Rowe implemented mid-year administrative changes to strengthen the renewal case, resulting in positive progress, including reduced exclusionary discipline, more culturally relevant programming, and new partnerships such as with the Museum of Science and Industry and Cuatro, which runs a Saturday Puerto Rican guitar program open to both Rowe students and the broader community. CPS has recognized these improvements and engaged directly with Rowe leadership, including site visits and planned collaboration through working committees with the new 21-member Board of Education.

Enrollment remained a challenge, with 591 students enrolled as of June 1 and 95 eighth-grade graduates. Efforts to increase recruitment included new marketing materials focused on the "Rowe Advantage" and targeted outreach in key neighborhoods.

Family CARES, Emergency Services, and the Food Pantry experienced continued increases in demand, partly due to anticipated reductions in SNAP benefits. New initiatives included a backpack program for students and the launch of a free store, which opened to the public in August. Northwestern Settlement also joined the Chicago Benchmarking Collaborative, gaining valuable data to measure impact and benchmark against peer organizations.

At House In The Wood, outdoor education served more than 900 students during the school year, with positive feedback and early requests for future programming. Summer camp staffing improved significantly, stabilizing operations and supporting enrollment of more than 300 campers.

Carole also highlighted ongoing efforts to build visibility, noting participation in over 75 events and panels during the fiscal year, alongside staff participation in affinity groups and professional organizations. These activities increased awareness of Northwestern Settlement's work and helped strengthen external relationships.

Looking ahead to Fiscal Year 2026, Carole emphasized a dual focus: continuing to strengthen internal operations while prioritizing external visibility and fundraising. A new strategic planning process will launch with an external partner to refine the organization's vision, geographic reach, and program focus areas. Additionally, a new institutional dashboard will be introduced in September to better track outcomes and communicate impact.

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Assistant Principal Derrick Svelnys and Interim Assistant Principal Duane Davis, presented updates on Rowe Elementary, focusing on teacher recruitment, student recruitment, and data/assessment.

Duane reported that Rowe ended the year with five teacher vacancies out of a total staff of approximately 36. Recruitment efforts were ongoing, including interviews scheduled to fill at least two of the positions. Rowe is also partnering with Teach for America, which is expected to place 2–3 corps members at the school next year. Additional recruitment outreach included partnerships with the UIC Black and Brown Male Teacher Pipeline Initiative, Golden Apple, and Erickson Institute.

It was reported that enrollment as of June stood at 531 verified students, with an additional 10–15 expected once paperwork was completed. Recruitment efforts targeted Rowe’s primary “heat map” neighborhoods, including West Town, Humboldt Park, Hermosa, North and South Lawndale, Austin, and Logan Square. Staff have engaged with Community Action Councils, Chambers of Commerce, daycare providers, and local businesses, and attended neighborhood events to raise visibility. Plans for July and August included outreach at Movies in the Park, libraries, and Park District events in targeted neighborhoods.

Derrick provided an overview of academic performance and emphasized the school’s focus on curriculum improvements, STEAM integration, and partnerships such as with the Museum of Science and Industry, which is embedding school-based support. Data identified a mix of strong-performing teachers, as well as several staff flagged for additional coaching and development. Rowe leadership is implementing a structured coaching model to ensure support for newer and early-career teachers, with the goal of raising performance across the board.

Consent Agenda

Board Chair Amy O'Donnell introduced the Consent Agenda for approval, stating that it would proceed with a single, unanimous vote unless any member wished to remove an item for individual discussion. Christine made a motion to approve the consent agenda. Lieke Hakkenberg seconded the motion. The motion was approved by unanimous vote.

Governance Committee Report

Kathy presented a resolution to amend the by-laws with two parts: To allow the Board to extend the term of an elected officer beyond the current bylaw limit of four consecutive years under exceptional circumstances, when it is deemed in the best interest of the organization. And to revise the requirements for Honorary Board Membership, changing the current minimum of 20 years of service to a broader standard recognizing those who have provided distinguished service in one or more capacities over a period of years. The Governance Committee will return in September with additional details on honorary membership and recommendations for the first class of honorary members.

Tracy Heilman made a motion to approve the resolution. Christine seconded the motion. The motion was approved by unanimous vote.

The Governance Committee recommended the election of five individuals to new three-year terms beginning July 1: new members Carshae Dahl and Ignacio López, and returning members Amy O'Donnell, John Relias, and Tyrone Washington. Robert made a motion to approve the election of Board Members for a three-year term. Virginia seconded the motion. The motion was approved by unanimous vote.

The Governance Committee recommended the following officers for one-year terms: Amy O'Donnell, Chairperson, Sami ElSaden, Vice Chair, Larry Weithers, Treasurer, and Virginia Burnstine, Secretary. Robert made a motion to approve the election of officers with exceptional circumstances for the Board Chair’s sixth year. Christine seconded the motion. The motion was approved by unanimous vote.

As Chairperson, Amy appointed the following members to officer positions for one-year terms: Alison Armstead, Assistant Secretary, Robert Best, Historian, Kathy Elliott, Assistant Secretary and Bill Welnhof, Assistant Treasurer. Amy made a motion of approval of appointment of officers for one year. Christine seconded the motion. The appointments were approved by unanimous vote.

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Kathy concluded with a reminder for all members to complete the annual Board Survey, which will inform committee assignments and planning for the coming year. Additionally, orientation sessions for new board members will be scheduled, with the option to hold them one-on-one or as a group.

Financial Report and Budget

Bill Welnhof reported that the organization closed the fiscal year in a stronger position than expected, despite challenging circumstances. He highlighted that additional one-time funding had provided significant support, and overall cash flow and debt service obligations had been satisfied.

Christian Feaman reviewed the detailed FY26 budget. He emphasized that the year ended with a strong debt service coverage ratio, well above the requirement set by Wintrust, which will provide flexibility as the organization enters the new fiscal year. He explained the shift from Student-Based Budgeting (SBB) to the Per Capita Tuition Charge (PCTC) model.

Christian highlighted key budget line items, and noted that staff restructuring reduced salary costs despite implementing a 5% salary schedule increase. Teacher staffing was aligned to current enrollment needs. The organization suspended 401(k) contributions for six months as a precautionary measure but plans to reinstate them if financial performance allows. Liability insurance was budgeted more accurately, with projections conservatively estimated above expected costs. The team had negotiated savings of \$3,000–\$5,000 per month on technology services through a new contract. Christian also noted that the refinancing of bonds resulted in substantially lower debt service obligations, further strengthening financial stability.

Bill called for a motion to approve the 2025-26 budget. William Rowe made a motion to approve the 2025-26 budget. Bob seconded the motion. The motion was approved by unanimous vote.

Bill presented the resolution to approve the renewal of the line of credit. Although historically maintained at \$2.5 million, the current cash position is strong, and the line of credit remains unused. William Rowe made a motion to approve the resolution approving renewal of line of credit. Larry Weithers seconded the motion. The motion was approved by unanimous vote.

Closed Sessions

Amy stated that no closed session was needed for this meeting.

Questions/Other

Board Chair Amy O'Donnell closed the meeting by noting that Carole would submit her report to the Executive Committee, which also serves as the Compensation Committee. The Committee would meet on August 11 to confirm and determine the next steps in the compensation process and prepare a proposal for the current and upcoming year. This proposal would be brought forward at the next full board meeting on September 15.

No new business or additional questions were raised.

Meeting adjourned 2:03 pm

Minutes submitted by Alison Armstead