

Manydeeds won't seek reelection as Regents president, backs Walsh to succeed him

Posted on Thursday, Apr 21, 2022

Edmund Manydeeds informed his fellow UW System regents that he won't seek another one-year term as board president this summer and threw his support behind Vice President Karen Walsh to succeed him.

Manydeeds wrote in the message that he needs to spend more time with his 1-year-old law firm in Eau Claire and mentoring his nephew, who is a partner at Manydeeds Law.

Walsh led the search for a new president that led to the hiring of Jay Rothman and has been spearheading the effort to find a replacement for Madison Chancellor Rebecca Blank.

"In addition to that, Karen and I communicate regularly and consult on every issue that has faced us since last year," Manydeeds wrote to his colleagues. "In short, Karen has given her heart and soul to the Board of Regents. She will make a great President of this Board of Regents."

>> WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)

Walsh told WisPolitics.com in a phone interview that she intends to run for the president's post at the June 9-10 meeting at UW-Milwaukee. She touted her work on leadership searches while on the board as well as her more than two decades working at UW-Madison in various public information and communications positions.

She said that gives her a unique perspective on system administration.

"Every single day, we should ask ourselves the question, 'What did we do for a

student today,' and if we can't answer that we did ... we need to go back to the drawing board," Walsh said.

Manydeeds, who was appointed to the board by Dem Gov. Tony Evers, was elected president last summer. He beat out then-Vice President Mike Grebe, who was appointed to the board by former GOP Gov. Scott Walker.

According to the system, there are no limits on the number of terms that a board president can serve. But presidents traditionally have served no more than two years.

The June election will come after the terms of three members expire in May: Drew Petersen, who was president from 2019-21; Grebe; and Corey Saffold, who is serving a two-year term as the board's non-traditional student appointment.

Petersen and Grebe are Walker appointees. Once Evers replaces those two, he will have 11 appointees on the 18-member board. Also, DPI Superintendent Jill Underly is viewed as backing Evers' priorities with the system.

Still, Manydeeds and Walsh are the only Evers appointees to the board who have been confirmed by the state Senate, and both have terms that run through May 2026. The unconfirmed appointments could be rescinded next year if a Republican wins the gov's race this fall.

Walsh said she's unfazed by that dynamic.

"No matter what, there is always uncertainty. If you look at the last two years, it's hard to find anything that's been certain," she said, referring to the pandemic.

See Manydeeds' email [here](#).