

**D38 BOE (Cont. from 1)**

major subject of conversation at the March 5 work session and the March 18 regular meeting of the board.

To view details of the process, please go to the district website, lewispalmer.org, and superintendent search 2024. There you can view several videos of presentations by Dr. Walt Cooper of McPherson-Jacobson, the firm conducting the search.

In brief, there was first a survey sent to stakeholders in the district asking about individual priorities to take into account while selecting a new superintendent. These would include community involvement, conservatism and traditional values, academic excellence, safety of students, financial responsibility, and quality and dedication of teachers. To view the ratings in detail, please see boarddocs.

The top three critical issues expressed by the stakeholders were staff recruitment and retention, teacher quality, and financial management.

At the March 18 regular meeting, Cooper reported that a committee of stakeholders had been formed to compile a list of questions for candidates based on the findings from the survey. He also asked each board member to submit three or four questions.

In explaining the terms of McPherson-Jacobson's contract, Cooper said that its participation includes not only the search for a new superintendent but assistance during the transition process and a two-year guarantee. If the selected candidate does not remain for two years, a new search will be conducted without charge. Additional assistance in the transition would be provided by the Colorado Association of School Boards (CASB) and the Colorado Association of School Executives (CASE). These two associations had previously administered searches in the state.

Board Treasurer Ron Schwarz commented that the selection process is subjective. It is critical to find a candidate with the right fit for the community.

Cooper agreed that it is important to consider a good fit and not just the presence of the appropriate skill set. He offered a rubric to help the board organize its thoughts while considering candidates. He added that each candidate would be provided with a question that they would answer in the form of a three-minute video. These videos would become part of the file for each candidate.

He stressed that many candidates will probably research the district and its priorities. As part of the announcement of the vacancy, there was an explanation of the district's strategic plan and its role in organizing the district's activities. The video question would be something that could not be researched, such as why a candidate views himself or herself as the best fit for the position.

Cooper recommended that there will be two days of interviews. The first, on the evening of April 4, would consist of a public forum at which each candidate would be asked a few questions and attendees could respond in person or online as the event would be livestreamed. This interview would be held in a round-robin format. Candidates will not get the questions ahead of time. The second, on April 5, would be interviews in executive session. On April 6 the board would meet to decide on a finalist and begin contract negotiations. The finalist would be confirmed at the board's regular meeting on April 15.

**Board goals and assignments**

As part of the work session, the board went into a detailed discussion of what actions they would like to take based on the district's strategic plan.

Two board members were assigned to address each category.

To view the proposed actions and assignments, please see boarddocs.

**Financial planning**

Another ongoing discussion involves preliminary planning for the 2024-25 district budget.

Chief Business Officer Brett Ridgway reported that his development of the budget pivots on the assumption of a 6% increase in funding from the state School Finance Act. Funding has not yet been finalized but is expected sometime in April.

Regarding compensation, Ridgway has developed a budget which would offer an average salary increase of 5.85% with a larger percentage going to lower-paid individuals and a smaller percentage going to higher-paid individuals. This budget includes only the traditional schools, with an appropriate amount set aside for the use of Monument Academy. This also does not include funding from such sources as the Transportation Fund and the Nutritional Services Fund.

Ridgway also proposed setting aside \$3 million for capital maintenance funding in the coming year. He said that a new inventory of facilities will soon be underway. A 10% contingency fund is built into this line item in case of unexpected expenses, such as with the Lewis-Palmer Elementary School corridor project, he said.

When asked whether BEST (Building Excellent Schools Today) grant money would be available for any of the proposed projects, Ridgway responded that funding for that program is decreasing.

The next step is to discuss the proposed budget with the Staff Collaboration Committee and the Financial Transparency Committee.

Ridgway also announced that the state Senate bill which he has written, Senate Bill 24-017, has passed unanimously in the Senate and the House Education Committee. This bill will change the timing of payments from the state. At present the district must hold \$15 million in cash during January and February to cover district expenses until property tax payments begin in March. It would shift the timing away from March-June to earlier in the year. This would free up \$8 million to benefit



**Above:** Julie Race is a Strategies for Teaching based on Autism Research (STAR) teacher at Prairie Winds Elementary School. Race is this year's winner of the Fox21 Remarkable Woman of Southern Colorado for 2024. Seven individuals nominated Race for this prestigious honor, recognizing her profound impact on children's lives. Race thanked her principal and the district, saying she loves the families and appreciates the paraprofessionals who help. From left are board President Tiffney Upchurch, Superintendent KC Somers, Race, and Exceptional Student Services Executive Director Rick Frampton. Photo by Jackie Burhans.



**Above:** At the March 18 D38 Board of Education meeting, the board celebrated Music in Our Schools Month. Members recognized that musical arts are vital to the well-being of students at every level, providing a positive impact on academic, personal, and professional growth. They also noted that Lewis-Palmer School District 38 music instructors work diligently to ensure a comprehensive program from kindergarten through graduation. Lee Meyer (Lewis-Palmer Middle School vocal music teacher) and Nathan Nors (Prairie Winds Elementary School general music teacher) also spoke briefly about D38 music programming. From left are Meyer, Nors, board President Tiffney Upchurch, Monument Academy Strings Teacher Christin Patterson, and Superintendent KC Somers. Photo by Jackie Burhans.



**Above:** Assistant Superintendent Amber Whetstine introduced Courtney Harrell to the school board for its consideration and approval. Harrell has over 18 years of experience in education from science teacher to assistant principal championing support for students and creating a welcoming environment for staff and families. Harrell said she was eager to lead LPMS with wisdom and strength. Whetstine said Harrell was so excited to start that she showed up on the 18th to unofficially meet the staff. Harrell spoke briefly, saying it was an honor to meet everyone. The board unanimously approved the appointment of Harrell. From left are board President Tiffney Upchurch, Harrell, and Whetstine. Photo by Jackie Burhans.

the students during January and February. Schwarz commented that bipartisan support at this level is very unusual and the bill may become law before the end of the month. The board will announce when it becomes law.

**Chess Tournament**

Steve Waldman spoke of the 17th annual Chess Tournament held Feb. 4 at Bear Creek Elementary School. This year there were a record number of participants, 127 students from grades K through 12. This is the first- or second-largest tournament in the state.

Waldman thanked Bear Creek Principal Donnell Potter, school custodians, Key Club and National Honor Society students, reading teacher Cindy Waldman, and others for their help in setting up and refereeing the tournament.

The tournament was divided into three groups: grades K-6, grades 7-8, and grades 9-12. The first three places received trophies. Several winners were present at the meeting. To see a list of participants, please see boarddocs under the Board of Education tab at the district website, lewispalmer.org. Select the date of the meeting.

**Student representatives**

The board now welcomes two student representatives at each of its meetings. These students are welcome to participate in discussions and present information about their schools. They do not re-

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