

current uses.

- Sell or lease the property. The second option was preferred after deliberations. (For further information on the LTTP, please see the Board of Education articles on page 1 and following this article.)

The results of the deliberation and the comments provided by those in attendance will be provided to the Board of Education at its Feb. 15 meeting.

Campus introduction

Prairie Winds Principal Aileen Finnegan provided a campus introduction to the school, which opened in 2001. She explained the responsive classroom model that includes a daily morning meeting to keep students in touch with one another on a small group basis.

The school has received the John Irwin School of Excellence Award many times.

Finnegan also explained the STAR (strategies for teaching based on autism research) program through which, in-

stead of going to outside therapists, students can receive needed services in the school. The school also serves those with a double diagnosis of autism and an additional disability and a new approach to trauma-informed instruction for those who have endured divorce, accidents, adoption, or other major life changes that can change the way the brain works in children. This program concentrates on making the children feel safe and wanted and then proceeds to re-introduce confidence and positive feelings.

The school has an award-winning chess club, and sixth-graders can choose between band and chess for one of their classes.

The school motto of Anywhere from Here emphasizes unlimited future possibilities for students.

Sources of Strength presentation

Lewis-Palmer High School Assistant Principal Bridget

O'Connor gave a brief presentation and demonstration of the Sources of Strength program, which offers a new, positive approach to suicide prevention.

Rather than stressing risk factors and other negative approaches, the peer-based program emphasizes strengths and trains student leaders to identify the signs of isolation. Advisors train student leaders from various parts of the population so that all students are noticed. The student leaders use personal contact and social media to spread the word about the program, which identifies family support, school mentors and positive friends, spirituality and gratitude as support factors.

Some campaigns sponsored by the program are Getting the Word Out, What Helps Me, and the Thankfulness Challenge encouraging students to keep a journal as a daily positive factor in their lives.

State of Tri-Lakes report

Board of Education liaison Tiffiney Upchurch reported on the recent State of the Tri-Lakes Region meeting, which showed this area to be the fastest growing in the county, and said that such growth places pressure on the infrastructure, including water, schools, and roads. The number of housing permits granted in 2017 was 184 and shows no sign of slowing.

Some local initiatives include plans to attract people to downtown Monument, a grant application to build a splash park in Limbaugh Park, and the construction of a pedestrian bridge over the railroad tracks in Palmer Lake.

Some anticipated legislative initiatives include a limit to annual housing growth to 1 percent in several counties including El Paso, a variable income tax rate increase to benefit education, and a requirement for the state to provide and fully fund early-child-

hood, primary, and secondary education up to the age of 21 (the present constitutional requirement is that students between the ages of 6 and 21 be educated gratuitously).

Also during the meeting, Director of Professional Development Elizabeth Walhof reported on her department's initiatives, and Director of Personnel and Student Services Bob Foster reported on the Wellness Committee, which is mandated by federal law to teach health and promote healthy habits such as exercise and healthy snacks.

The District Accountability Advisory Committee meets six times a year on the second Tuesday of the month at 7 p.m. Locations vary. The next meeting will be on March 13 at Bear Creek Elementary School, 1330 Creekside Drive, Monument.

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Lewis-Palmer D-38 Board of Education, Feb. 15

Board continues discussion of long-term planning

By Harriet Halbig

The focus of public comments, board comments, and the agenda at the Feb. 15 meeting was on continued discussion of long-term planning to accommodate growth in the district by potentially building one or two new elementary schools and repurposing Bear Creek as a middle school. (For background on this subject, please see the DAAC article, the Board of Education work session of Jan. 30 article, and the public deliberation article on pages 12 of this issue.)

Doug Abernethy of RTA, the consultant involved in the long-term facilities study, told the board that after lengthy research and debate, the option of building two new elementary schools was most appropriate, with Bear Creek Elementary repurposed as a middle school. He also said that deferred maintenance, safety and security and such programs as early childhood development and STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts and math) should also be provided for.

The board voted to approve the master plan provided by RTA. (To view the executive summary of the plan, please go to the lewispalmer.org website under Board of Education and meetings and view the agenda for the Feb. 15 meeting and supporting materials.)

Superintendent Karen Brofft said that the board must now look at next steps to cost out options and requests for proposals (RFPs) to set in motion the process of writing a ballot proposal for a bond.

Among these steps are:

- Prepare an RFP for an underwriter.
- Meet with bond counsel about polling and limitations.
- Develop a plan to manage

growth.

- Develop communications tools to educate the public that growth is coming.
- Develop and deliver a poll and analyze the results.

Brofft said that there are three main options for the bond. The first is to ask for the cost of one school. The second is to ask for the cost of two schools, and the third is to build one school, wait a few years, and ask for another bond to build the second.

Director Mark Pfoff said that the debt service on Prairie Winds and Creekside will end in 2025, which would alleviate part of the tax burden on the community. He suggested that District 38 ask for a single bond but defer using the portion on a second school until a later date.

Assistant Superintendent Cheryl Wangeman said that it would be more efficient to build both at once.

Pfoff said that the tax cost per year for a \$400,000 home would be about \$250 for option 2.

Board Treasurer Chris Taylor said that the use of Grace Best and its potential use by Monument Academy (MA) is not being addressed.

Brofft said that MA is a separate issue and District 38 does not make decisions for them.

Wangeman said that the representatives for BEST grants would visit the district the following day and that MA representatives would walk through Grace Best at that time.

Pfoff said that he would prefer that MA come to the board if they are interested in the property.

Taylor said that if MA comes to the board to use the property, it could help with

capacity.

Brofft said the district needs to have the property appraised before any agreement could be proposed.

Pfoff said that MA hasn't presented a plan to the board and the board should not wait while they consider it. Don't appraise the property unless you know there is demand.

Board President Matthew Clawson commented that it is known that MA wants to build a high school and the district needs a middle school. He agreed with Pfoff that they need to make their desires known.

Taylor requested that the superintendent seek out an architectural firm for a design build bid proposal.

The board passed a resolution to extend the period of negotiations with MA to include March 15. The extension was required due to MA's plan to add a high school.

The board heard a report on the Exceptional Student Services department. There



Above: A group of fourth-graders from Lewis-Palmer Elementary School posed as characters from Colorado history at the Board of Education meeting. Photo by Harriet Halbig.

are specialized staff in all schools, and some students also receive specialized services at outside locations. The district has received the highest rating for its programs.

Also mentioned was the new Aliorum De Award, which will recognize an individual

who has touched the life of a student with a disability. Any employee, community member, or student is eligible to receive the award. Recipients and nominees will be honored along with the person who nominated them at a ceremony on April 24.

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