

Lewis-Palmer D-38 Board of Education, May 17

Facilities and growth discussion continues; individuals and district recognized

By Harriet Halbig

The Lewis-Palmer D-38 Board of Education continued its discussion of how to accommodate a growing number of students, considered a bond issue on the November ballot, and celebrated the achievements of several staff and students at its May 17 meeting. District growth and facilities

Representatives of the District Accountability Advisory Committee reported the response of committee members regarding accommodation of growth in the district. The representatives were Co-chairs Anne-Marie Hasstedt and Deb Goth and subcommittee Chair Amy Shertzer. Their suggestions were:

- Retain the sixth grade in the elementary school.
- Parents do not want fifth-graders in the middle school.
- Request funding for two new elementaries now.
- There may be a negative pushback from voters if the district requests only one school now and seek another within a few years.

The board later discussed a planning update with Assistant Superintendent Cheryl Wangeman and architect Brian Risley.

Wangeman commented on new data from Metrostudy regarding estimates of growth in enrollment. Metrostudy is a firm that confers with developers regarding plans for new construction, the price points for the proposed homes, and the likelihood that a family with children will purchase the homes. She said that Metrostudy estimates for growth are a bit higher than those provided by RTA, the firm which first worked with the Long Term Facilities Planning Committee.

Projections suggest that the district will reach full capacity by the 2023-24 school year, discounting the possibility that Monument Academy (MA) may increase its number of seats. MA Executive Director Don Griffin said that the Academy would likely increase its capacity by one classroom (24 students) at each grade level.

There followed a discussion of options for preschool services. One of these is to centralize preschool services in its own building, which would free up classroom space at Bear Creek, Kilmer, and Lewis-Palmer Elementary Schools. (The Palmer Lake preschool services are already located in a separate location.) The negative factor to this option is that it would add needed funding to the proposed bond.

Board Secretary Mark Pfoff commented that if we were to request funding for two new schools, the centralized preschool would be necessary.

Wangeman responded that the need would not be immediate.

District Superintendent Karen Brofft said that 10 years from now, a third school may be needed.

Pfoff said that the advantage of decentralized preschool is that the students would stay at the same school as they transition to kindergarten and beyond.

Another option to add capacity is to repurpose spaces in existing schools. Some schools, such as Lewis-Palmer Elementary and Prairie Winds Elementary, have large spaces that could be subdivided into additional classrooms.

Brofft commented that such repurposing would rob the schools of creative uses for these spaces.

Risley said it is more expensive to remodel a school than to build new. He said that the basic decision to be made now is whether the board wants to expand immediately or view options first. It may be wise to stagger the construction of two schools and consider the fact that the current rate of growth may not persist indefinitely.

Brofft spoke of her experience in Douglas County to deal with the rapid growth there. At one point, a school that was built to accommodate 500 students was being used for 900. As a result, scheduling lunches was very difficult and other accommodations had to be made. As a result, some families decided to have their children attend school elsewhere.

Board Treasurer Chris Taylor said that he would like to see a new elementary school in the Jackson Creek area in 2019. He said that if the district builds two schools in 2019-20, it will have excess capacity.

Board Vice President Tiffiney Upchurch asked how MA would affect capacity.

Wangeman said that MA would offer only 125 seats at the elementary level.

Pfoff said that he would be willing to discuss the band-aid approach of repurposing spaces but would prefer to discard it. He said that he would like to make a final decision regarding one versus two schools.

At first he thought that one school and the conversion of Bear Creek Elementary into a middle school would be sufficient but was concerned that fifth-graders would have to attend middle school un-



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