

District Accountability Advisory Committee, Oct. 8

Summary of superintendent activities, legislative review, teacher evaluation process

By Harriet Halbig

The Lewis-Palmer D38 District Accountability Advisory Committee (DAAC) heard introductory summaries of the new superintendent's activities, a legislative review, and an update on the teacher evaluation process at its Oct. 8 meeting.

Superintendent KC Somers introduced himself to the group on the 100th day of his tenure. He said his theme for the year is One Team, Our Team, consisting of students, staff, and community. He summarized his Listening and Learning Tour during July and spoke of staff surveys during August through October and his plans to listen to student views as well.

Somers said that he has been attending Parent Teacher Organization and Building Accountability Committees meetings at various schools and has reached out to such community groups as Kiwanis, Tri-Lakes Cares, the Monument and Palmer Lake town governments, and the Tri-Lakes Chamber of Commerce.

He celebrated the fact that the district has been named Accredited with Distinction by the Colorado Department of Education for the 11th year in a row.

Somers spoke briefly about the proposed bond issue on the November ballot, stressing that it addresses growth and can be cost neutral due to decreasing debt as two bonds are retired in a few years (Palmer Ridge High School and Prairie Winds Elementary), an increase in assessed property values, and a growing tax base.

Teacher evaluations

Executive Director of Personnel and Student Services Bob Foster summarized the evaluation process for teachers in the district. Originating in 2009 as a result of Senate Bill 191, which required that teacher evaluations be based in part on student performance, the process evaluates teachers on several standards including professional practices. Over time, a process has made it possible to evaluate staff in such areas as music and physical education and such specialties as speech and occupational therapy.

Evaluation schedules vary with the seniority of the teachers. Probationary teachers are evaluated twice annually with additional observations. All others are evaluated annually. Before SB 191, tenured teachers were evaluated every three years.

All teachers are probationary when first employed regardless of experience in other districts.

Executive Director of Learning Services Lori Benton explained that teachers who have students with severe to moderate needs are given credit for this fact.

Board Liaison Tiffiney Upchurch spoke of activity at the board level, including "onboarding" of Somers,

the upcoming election for three positions on the board, and the bond issue.

Regarding the bond, she said that the use of modular classrooms will address overcrowding only for two years. She also said that the Grace Best Education Center is not the appropriate place to address overcrowding because it is now used to house the Transitions program, the Homeschool Enrichment Academy, and the Robotics program. She said that open enrollment has been halted at all levels except high school due to capacity use of existing buildings.

The committee reviewed and approved its bylaws. The only change involved the removal of the Commit-

tee for Political Activity and the addition of the Parent Community Technology Advisory Committee.

The committee reviewed and approved its meeting schedule for the coming year.

The Lewis-Palmer D38 District Accountability Advisory Committee meets six times a year at various locations. The next meeting will be at 7 p.m. on Nov. 12 at Lewis-Palmer High School, 1300 Higby Rd., Monument.

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Monument Academy School Board, Oct. 10

Board selects new chief operating officer

By Jackie Burhans

The Monument Academy (MA) School Board held a regular board meeting on Oct. 10 with an overflow audience at Wesley Owens Coffee Shop. They provided an update on the secondary school and introduced and questioned the sole finalist for MA's chief operating officer (COO) position.

Termination of Griffin contract and naming of COO finalist

The MA board held a special board meeting on Oct. 2.. After an executive session, they unanimously voted to terminate former Executive Director Don Griffin's secondary school consulting contract due to nonperformance. The board also declared Christianna Herrera as the finalist for their open COO position and began a period of 14 days for due diligence.

Secondary school update

Board President Mark McWilliams said construction of the new school was still on track, with perimeter

foundations in and walls going up. He noted that plans added access to the administrative offices that doesn't go through the nurse's office. MA plans to have events with teachers and students at the new location, with JHL Constructors supervising. McWil-

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