

Lewis-Palmer D-38 Board of Education, Nov. 18

# Post-election discussion, Somers' Listening and Learning Tour

By Harriet Halbig

The Lewis-Palmer D-38 Board of Education had an extensive discussion of the recent election and received a report on Superintendent K.C. Somers' Listening and Learning Tour, which began during the summer with community members and continued with staff.

Somers introduced the new Director of Nutritional Services, Stacey Baker, who has a background with the department of health and restaurant inspection. With a degree in microbiology, she has extensive knowledge of food safety and regulatory compliance.

### Board comments

Members of the board commented on their disappointment with the failure of the bond issue on the November ballot.

Treasurer Chris Taylor said that the divisions in the community need to be overcome before a bond can be successful. There is a strong voice in the community that does not support public education. At the board's next work session in early December, he said he would like to hear about other options to fund a new school.

Taylor said that although the district has a great reputation in the state for academics and athletics that does not extend to the community. He said that the board will continue to sponsor town hall meetings to discuss the current situation and plans to go forward.

He was asked what the board will do when the community can't grow anymore. He suggested that the board and others develop a long-term strategic plan which can be revisited and revised periodically to demonstrate that the district has a long-term view.

Secretary Theresa Phillips also expressed her disappointment. She thanked all who worked in favor of the bond. She agreed that it is important for all sides to listen to each other and encouraged members of the public to email and call her. She said future town hall meetings would be held at schools in an effort to reach the largest number of stakeholders.

Vice President Tiffney Upchurch praised the staff who worked on the day after the election and said that she felt that the board received valuable feedback at the town hall meeting the previous week.

Upchurch said that she is willing to meet with anyone.

Board President Matthew Clawson said that the district needs to figure out how to support teachers and students and said that he would look at all options for funding to be discussed at the December work session.

Issue 4A was intended to build a new elementary school in Jackson Creek and convert Bear Creek Elementary into a middle school.

### Listening and Learning Tour

Somers reported on his extensive Listening and

Learning Tour, which began during the summer and will continue through the end of the year.

July and August were spent engaging members of the community through meetings in various locations such as the library and coffee shops.

Somers asked what values the community supports, what challenges the district faces, and what expectations they have for the administration.

Values included a positive learning environment, dedicated staff, parent involvement, community involvement, graduating students prepared for future success, focus on the whole child (physical, social, academic), and open communications.

Challenges included meeting the needs of all students, effective use of facilities, staff retention and morale, safety, security, mental health, civil conversation, relationship with Monument Academy, and dealing with growth.

Somers spoke with members of the staff during August through October.

He asked them about their values and what they would wish to change. They said that they would like more funding for compensation and materials, a possible change in school times, more emphasis on mental health, more staff such as paraprofessionals and bus drivers, more technology resources, and increased security.

Regarding their goals, they said they would do their best to support and represent the district, to serve as role models to students, to guide and support students, and build relationships among themselves and the community.

Somers said that going forward he would speak with students in November and December, engage stakeholders in collaborative conversations, define the goals and vision for the district, begin long-term facilities planning, and educate the community about school finance.

Taylor commented that he would like the board

to consider how they may be more effective. He also said they failed when the bond failed.

The board then had a discussion about post-elec-

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