

D38 (Cont. from 18)

could be used together with other savings to give a one-time compensation to staff.

Somers said that such an action was well received a few years ago, but that was prompted by a hiring freeze and reaction to the pandemic, not raising compensation on a permanent basis.

Phillips said that the priority now must be in finding sustainable sources of funding.

Regarding other potential sources of funds for such an action, Ridgway said that there are also funds in nutrition services and from fundraising.

Ridgway said it might be unwise to commit to a one-time action in advance of learning the level of state funding for the 2023-24 school year, which would not be known until March. Gov. Jared Polis has said that he will increase funding by 8% to 10% but was not specific. This increase would be realized as a change in per pupil funding and would be put in the general fund.

Taylor also asked for an analysis of district turnover among the staff. Phillips asked that this analysis include substitute teachers.

In their board member comments, several direc-

tors expressed an opinion on the budget situation.

Board Secretary Tiffney Upchurch said she visited all district buildings on the day after the election and said that, regardless of which side of the vote you are on, we must remember that we are all neighbors and should treat each other with respect. She urged the public to familiarize themselves with the budget process.

Phillips said that she appreciated all who have reached out since the election, and that we need long-term solutions to the problem.

Clawson said that the public has spoken and that we need to reduce expenditures.

All members of the board thanked veterans on the staff for their personal sacrifice.

Public comment

A number of members of the public spoke during the meeting.

Two said they were grateful that the board voted to not change its policy on public comment, which would have required individuals to submit their comment in advance online.

Several thanked the board for putting the MLO on the ballot and encouraged them to keep trying until they are successful.

One criticized Somers for his post-election video, saying that he shamed voters who voted against the MLO. He said that the district should live within its means.

One suggested that the public be assisted in understanding the budget situation by being offered alternatives such as making sports self-funded. Perhaps a detailed proposal would help to clarify the situation.

One said there was not a mobilization of parent groups in support of the MLO. She suggested that Kiwanis, homeowners associations and the Chamber of Commerce should be included in seeking support. Perhaps the mayors of Monument and Palmer Lake could be enlisted to speak in favor of the cause. Perhaps adding a sunset clause which would limit the term of the MLO would help.

The Lewis-Palmer D38 Board of Education usually meets at 6 p.m. on the third Monday of the month in the district's learning center, 146 Jefferson St. in Monument. The December meeting will be on Dec. 12 as schools will be closed during Christmas week.

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D38 Parent and Community Advisory Committee, Nov. 15

Committee discusses options following election

By Harriet Halbig

On Nov. 15, the D38 Parent and Community Advisory Committee (formerly the District Accountability Advisory Committee) discussed strategies to cope with the failure of a mill levy override (MLO) on the November ballot.

In her Board of Education update, Board Liaison Tiffney Upchurch reported that the MLO failed by only 360 votes. She said the emphasis going forward is to seek sustainable sources of funding to improve salaries for teachers and other non-administrative staff of the district.

Upchurch reported that Gov. Jared Polis has indicated that he may increase the education budget by 8 percent to 10 percent in the school year 2023-24. This would be seen as an increase of per-pupil funding. She cautioned that this would not necessarily result in a compensation increase of that amount because the funding will be put in the general fund.

Superintendent KC Somers answered a number of questions from the membership.

When asked about whether universal free lunches were coming to the district, he said that would not happen until the 2023-24 school year and guidelines have not yet been released. Students who currently qualify for free or reduced lunch will still need to apply, because that program is supported by the federal government.

Asked if grants could ease the funding crunch, Somers said that the district now applies for many grants successfully, but those funds must be used for specific purposes.

Asked if community members could donate directly for increased compensation, Somers said there is no mechanism for that, but there is a program to adopt a classroom or a school to support programming.

Asked about potential school closings or a four-day week, Somers said districts in other parts of the state are closing schools due to falling enrollment figures. That is not the case in District 38. He said that four-day weeks are a subject which will be examined to see how much it would save. He said it is unlikely it would go into effect as soon as next year.

Upchurch said it is critical that the public under-

stand the current sources of funding. For example, many think that money from the sale of marijuana is earmarked for schools, but it is not applied to compensation.

She said she will continue to work with the Colorado Association of School Boards to lobby for increased school funding. She also suggested staging some sort of education appreciation event in the district.

Somers said that last spring, the district updated separation forms completed by those leaving the district. A committee member suggested that if such forms were made public, perhaps the public would see the severity of the situation.

Regarding demographics, Somers said the predicted tsunami of growth has not materialized, although there are plans to build many houses in the near future. This year's enrollment is slightly down from last year.

Strategic Plan Priority 3: valuing our people
Chief Business Officer Brett Ridgway reported on actions in support of Priority 3 of the district's Strategic Plan.

Pointing to a chart illustrating the state's budget, he said that since 2008 education has received less funding and healthcare more as a result of Obamacare placing more of the burden on states.

One of the strategies the district is using to address the funding shortage is to create a Staff Collaboration Committee which will meet frequently to determine how staff feels about the current situation and what could be improved with the funding available.

The committee consists of two teachers from each school (one new and one experienced) and representatives of hourly staff such as operations, food service, and transportation.

The committee has no authority but acts as a source of information from a variety of viewpoints. The group will meet three to five times a year.

Following the first meeting, when asked what was on their minds, members responded:

- Could alternative forms of compensation be discovered (such as additional planning time)?
- Support staff should be offered additional train-

ing.

- Consider a four-day work week.
 - Substitute pay and shortages are problems.
- Ridgway said we will probably not know until March what the increase in funding will be.

Somers commented that we will not be able to achieve the \$5.6 million which the MLO would have provided, but we will strive to do the best we can with what we have.

Asked what happens if there are too few teachers, Somers said that sometimes classes are combined, teachers are given an additional class each day, more online instruction is offered, or less qualified substitutes are used.

Monument Academy introduction

Monument Academy Principal David Kennington explained the philosophy behind Monument Academy's classical approach to education. He said the emphasis is to focus on Western civilization and educate students to become active and responsible citizens.

The curriculum is divided into three levels. The first, the elementary level, involves facts, data, and basic skills such as spelling, reading, and math. The second level involves understanding how the facts fit together and why, and the third level involves proper use of the knowledge and understanding.

Kennington also said that students at the high school level may participate in dual enrollment with the high school and college.

When asked whether teachers are given specific instruction on how to teach, Kennington said teachers are told what should be taught but not how to teach it.

To view the PowerPoint, please go to lewispalmer.org, family resources, district accountability advisory committee, meeting content and November 2022.

The Parent and Community Advisory Committee meets five times a year. Locations vary. The next meeting will be from 6 to 8 p.m. on Jan. 10 at Ray Kilmer Elementary School, 4285 Walker Road, Colorado Springs. For further information, contact tmckee@lewispalmer.org.

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Northern El Paso County Coalition of Community Associations, Nov. 12

Two county commissioners speak on budgeting, spending

By Marlene Brown

NEPCO (Northern El Paso County Coalition of Community Associations) held its bi-monthly meeting on Nov. 12 at the Woodmoor Barn. It has 47 homeowner associations in its membership. With 24 homeowner associations (HOAs) in attendance at their annual membership meeting, making a quorum, they were able to hold elections.

The one new nomination received for board membership was Harold Larson of Heights Property Owners Association. Currently installed officers include Mike Aspenson, president; Bob Swedenburg, vice president and acting secretary; Transportation and Land Use Committee member Bob Mooney; El

Paso County Transportation Planning member Greg Roosevelt; Treasurer Jim Keefe; Community Outreach Committee, Dave Betzler; Membership, Larry Oliver; and Beth Lonquist replacing Matthew Nelson, Wildfire Preparedness Committee. Board member positions will be decided upon at the next NEPCO Board meeting Dec. 9 at the Woodmoor Barn 9 a.m. The meeting is open to any HOA member that is a member of NEPCO.

Wildfire Preparedness Committee

Beth Lonquist of Red Rock Ranch explained several new state wildfire actions that have been approved this year:

- HB22-1111—Concerning insurance coverage requirements for homeowners' policies issued or renewed as a result of declared fire disaster and in the event of total loss.
- HB22-1132—Regulation and Services for Wildfire Mitigation in connection with controlled burns on private property.
- SB114—Concerning preserving fire suppressions ponds in connection with making appropriations. It is in the public interest to preserve and protect historic ponds in new developments and restricting the mandatory draining of the ponds.