

Lewis-Palmer D38 Board of Education, Aug. 21

Four-day week, capital improvements, tutoring center discussed

By Harriet Halbig

At its Aug. 21 meeting, the Lewis-Palmer D38 Board of Education received a report from the district's Calendar Task Force that included feasibility of a four-day school week, a report on capital improvements achieved during the summer, and an introduction to the revitalized tutoring center at Lewis-Palmer High School.

Calendar Task Force report

Assistant Superintendent Amber Whetstone provided a report of the Calendar Task Force. The task force consists of board representative Tiffiney Upchurch, an administrative liaison, parents, members of the Parent and Community Advisory Committee, members of the Staff Collaboration Committee, teachers, and staff.

The task force met during the summer to determine its priorities, degree of interest in a four-day week schedule and its impact on start time, length of days, and length of the school year.

Members discussed the impact of such a schedule with other districts which have adopted it.

Preliminary conclusions are that Monday would be the day off for students, school days and the school year would be longer, and results of these discussions would be presented to the Staff Collaboration Committee at its September meeting.

Following that meeting there will be a survey of staff to determine their acceptance of the concept.

Board Vice President Theresa Phillips asked about the impact on the quality of education in the new schedule.

Whetstone responded that this is one of the aspects members will ask other districts about.

Board Treasurer Ron Schwarz asked when families will be consulted.

Whetstone responded that if it is determined that the change in schedule would not increase retention of staff, families would not be consulted.

Board President Upchurch asked whether waivers would be required to alter the number of instruction hours if necessary.

Whetstone said that is yet to be determined.

Most of the districts which have adopted a four-day week are relatively rural in character.

Capital improvement report

Executive Director of Operations and Development Chris Coulter reported on capital improvements achieved during the summer months.

The primary project is the construction of a new corridor in Lewis-Palmer Elementary School to bring the building up to code for fire safety. The original proposed project was halted by the Regional Building Department and was increased in scope as a result.

The project involved removal of existing walls,

doors, and ceilings in the corridor to expedite exits from classrooms to exterior doors. Additional panels to access the ventilation system were also brought to fire-rated levels. Wiring within the walls was replaced, a new intercom system was installed, and all lights and flooring were also replaced.

The unexpected scope of the project resulted in a cost overrun of \$130,000 which was covered by contingency funds. The board voted to approve the overrun.

In preparing a five-year plan for capital improvements, Coulter explained that it was necessary to identify critical repairs and life safety issues, document deferred maintenance issues, and consider projects underway.

Some considerations include renovations to update classrooms for use in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) instruction, career and technical education, visual and performing arts, and special education programs.

Coulter also spoke of continuing programs under the contract with Schneider Electric to improve energy efficiency in the district. He said that replacing light bulbs and fixtures has made a difference in the number of kilowatt hours used, but until the systems

are automated to shut down when buildings are not in use the maximum benefit will not be realized.

Kilowatt usage in July was 36% lower than the previous year.

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