

come at the end of the grant period, so MA is considering applying for a line of credit fill the gap and reduce the amount needed from reserves.

The board discussed many ideas for increasing students and revenue going forward and unanimously voted to adopt the amended budget.

Reset instituted to virtual learning

At the regular board meeting, Herrera said that state requirements to quarantine based on possible exposure had made it challenging to keep the east campus secondary school open. Although the data did not show transmission between students and/or teachers happening at the school, the presence of positive cases and contact tracing to identify who had been in proximity left the school scrambling to keep enough staff on hand to provide the level of education desired along with sufficient supervision.

Herrera stated that MA went from the teens to hundreds staying home within a week, with 55% of students and 40% of staff out at one time at the secondary level. Herrera said the district superintendent was supportive in helping to define when MA was reaching a tipping point where it could not provide education safely. The district has moved to all remote learning through the end of the semester. She suggested it made sense to consider using Thanksgiving break to catch up and get on top of the situation.

At the special meeting on the 19th, the decision was made to ask that everyone at the secondary school stay at home the week after Thanksgiving in order to reset the number of students and staff rotating in and out from quarantine. It wasn't clear at that time that this was also necessary at the elementary school, however when the message was sent to parents it did include both campuses. In-person learning will resume on Dec. 7.

Highlights

The following items were highlighted at the board meeting:

- The board unanimously passed a motion to allow the Governance Committee to make administrative changes to policies.
- MA has taken title of a bus acquired from St. Peter Catholic Church and now needs to file for a license and acquire a driver.
- The board asked parents to consider becoming substitute teachers, which requires a bachelor's

degree.

- Board member Ryan Graham reported that they were not able to find money in the budget for a one-time bonus for teachers. Instead the PTO will raise funds from parents along with the Teacher Gift Fund Committee with a plan to deliver checks by Dec. 11.
- Board member Chris Dole reported that the School Advisory and Accountability Committee (SAAC) will produce a mid-year survey before winter break and hopes to increase participation levels. SAAC is also focused on the Uniform Improvement Plan, which will be submitted to the district in January.
- The west campus Parent-Teacher Organization raised \$21,000 from its Fun Run ninja obstacle course and hopes to install an Americans with Disabilities Act-compliant concrete pad and walkway with a pavilion sometime over spring break or summer.

The next meeting will be on Thursday, Dec. 10 at 6 p.m. The MA School Board usually meets at 6 p.m. on the second Thursday of each month. Meetings may be held in-person and via Zoom, which will be streamed to the MA YouTube channel. For more information on how to join the meeting in person or virtually or to submit a public comment, see <https://bit.ly/ma-boe>.

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Lewis-Palmer District 38 Board of Education, Nov. 16

Board reviews practices during pandemic, recognizes first responders and student achievement

By Harriet Halbig

On Nov. 16, the Board of Education of Lewis-Palmer District 38 recognized several first responders for their aid to the district and a student officer elected to Key Club International. Superintendent KC Somers updated conditions during the pandemic.

Somers said that he couldn't say enough about the district's staff. They are tired, stressed, and overwhelmed, yet continue to do all they can to work on

behalf of the students, he said.

A major challenge at this time is to have enough staff to cover all needs in the district. There have been three outbreaks of the virus in the district since August. Contact tracing is being used to determine which individuals must quarantine.

In response to a question, Somers said that in the event of an illness, the family of the student reports to the principal or school nurse. The district then tries to trace contacts between the student and others during the previous 48 hours. This is most difficult in the high schools where students have a much broader number of contacts.

The El Paso County Health Department has not provided information on when schools would be required to pivot to distance learning, Somers said. In our district, we evaluate the situation on a site-by-site basis. Health officials maintain that these decisions are up to each individual district.

Board Secretary Tiffney Upchurch said that she feels safe with her children in school and that the district is taking all necessary precautions for their safety.

Board President Chris Taylor commented that the district is offering families the broadest possible choice between online, full-time in person for elementary, and a hybrid of the two at the secondary level. He said that he hopes that the staff may be able to have some down time during the holidays.

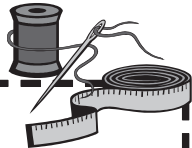
Community recognitions

The board recognized a number of first responders for their support of the district. These included:

- Chief Christopher McCarthy of the Palmer Lake Fire Department, who assisted during a recent fire at Palmer Lake Elementary School.
- Commander Jon Hudson of the Monument Police Department.
- Chief Jason Vanderpool of the Palmer Lake Police Department, who ensured that school staff were not ticketed for parking near the school during a time when parking on the streets is otherwise forbidden.

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