



Above: In honor of National School Board Recognition Month, Carissa O'Donnell, left, and Lauren Phillips thanked the board for its service and presented members with keepsakes. O'Donnell and Phillips are seniors at Lewis-Palmer High School and members of the student council. Photo by Jackie Burhans.

time in the interest of the students of the district.

Principal Drew Francis of Kilmer Elementary School gave a presentation on Project Based Learning in the form of building an outdoor learning space. Students designed the space, estimated funding and materials needs, and created an area with picnic tables and umbrellas outdoors where students could have lunch together or hold a class.

In their comments, members of the board spoke of their recent activities. Board Secretary Tiffney Upchurch reported that Chief of Safety and Security Dennis Coates received a \$642,000 grant from the Department of Homeland Security to implement a system for sharing information with first responders via the police, sheriff, and fire communication channels. The system will be online by fall.

Upchurch also mentioned that the state is creating a Parent Advocacy Network and encouraged all to apply to participate to ensure that the district's voice is heard. Also, the Legislature will need to decide whether districts will administer the annual Colorado Measure of Academic Success (CEMAS) tests this year. If a waiver is not granted, the district could lose funding for failing to administer the tests.

In his remarks, Somers said much time is still being spent in discussions of district response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Some are impatient for all students to return to full-time in-person learning, but Somers emphasized that the district is legally required to abide by state and county health mandates. The state remains in the orange

range of the dashboard regarding the pandemic, requiring masks of all students and staff and social distancing in class.

As a result, the middle and high schools continue to operate on a hybrid schedule, spending two days in the schools and the rest participating online. An improvement this semester is the introduction of synchronous learning, where students attend classes at home in real time so they may interact with their teachers and peers. Teachers and students have praised this development.

It is hoped that the 2021-22 school year will see students back in the classrooms. Eighty to 90% of teachers have expressed an interest in being vaccinated. However, vaccines are not yet approved for teachers.

In response to a question from board Treasurer Ron Schwarz, Somers said that academic testing remains controversial. Teachers feel that time with students is precious and testing would be too stressful. However, the resulting data is valuable.

Advanced Placement tests will be administered, but others, such as the SAT and ACT, may be postponed until April unless the district is otherwise notified. The district must be adaptable to the requirements of the state.

Somers said that the board spent time discussing the pandemic at its work session on Jan 12. He also said that owner's representatives had been selected for the Grace Best project. Anser Advisory and Cooperative Strategies has been tasked with evaluating the property, determining alternative uses, and overseeing any construction. A steering committee of 15 to 20 district staff, teachers,

parents, students, and community members has been selected and will hold its first meeting on Feb. 3. Progress will be covered on the district website ppld.org, and there will be future opportunities for community input.

Budget review

Chief Financial Officer Shanna Seelye presented a mid-year budget review for the board. The student population at the October count is 6,510, with 849 also participating online. She stressed that many students do both. The student count is down 205 from last year, but this number was foreseen and used as a basis for planning.

Somers estimated that the student count next year may be 300 fewer due to a large graduating class and small kindergarten class.

Seelye said that the district's flexible budgeting system allows for monthly adjustments as conditions change.

Seelye reported that the state had recently decreased per pupil revenue by \$64 per pupil bringing it to \$7,598, necessitating drawing from reserves to make up the balance. Also, the board voted to award a one-time compensation of \$1,000 per full-time employee in December.

Seelye also explained the receipt of allocations from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act and the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund from the federal government is to be used for personal protective equipment, technology for distance learning, (Chromebooks, etc.) and cleaning supplies. This district has also ordered rapid antigen tests for COVID. Students will not be tested without parental approval.

Policy decisions

The board held a first reading of several district policies, as recommended by the Colorado Association of School Boards.

The board approved a consent agenda consisting of such items as minutes of past meetings, a memorandum of understating with the University of Colorado Denver for concurrent registration, personnel items, and the Monument Academy Charter School Revised Budget.

The Lewis-Palmer District 38 Board of Education usually meets at 6 p.m. on the third Monday of each month at its Learning Center, 146 Jefferson St., Monument. Due to the President's Day holiday in February, the board will meet on Feb. 22. Seating is extremely limited, but meetings are livestreamed. To view the meeting, go to the district website, board of education, meetings, livestream.

Harriet Halbig may be reached at harriethalbig@ocn.me.

El Paso Board of County Commissioners, Jan 12, 19, and 26

Rezoning and final plat approvals for Black Forest properties

By Helen Walklett

During January, the El Paso Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) approved a rezoning application by Rob Haddock to allow the construction of an office building near the intersection of Shoup Road and Black Forest Road and approved a final plat application for the Winsome development at the intersection of Hodgen Road and Meridian Road. The commissioners also made decisions relating to the Highway 105 project, an annexation request, and the Settlers View and Jackson Ranch developments.

Haddock rezoning

At their Jan. 26 meeting, the commissioners heard a request by Rob Haddock to rezone his 4.77-acre property from A-5 (agricultural) to CC (commercial community). The property is located on the west side of Black Forest Road, just to the north of the Shoup Road and Black Forest Road intersection. The property is almost completely surrounded by RR zoning with an area of various commercial zonings in close proximity. There was previously a veterinary hospital on the site, allowed via a special use approval in 1985, which was destroyed during the Black Forest fire of 2013. Since acquiring the property, Haddock has removed all burn debris, constructed berms along Black Forest Road, and begun reforestation and revegetation.

Haddock is proposing construction of an 8,800-square-foot office building, with a 4,400-square-foot footprint, to facilitate collaboration between the executive staff of his family business, Metal Roof Innovations Ltd, who currently work from home. In total, 16 people would use the office, with up to half travelling for business or working from home at any one time. In spring 2020, Haddock began construction of a barn on the property, which is allowed under the current A-5 zoning. This will be used as a studio for the business while the manufacturing part of the business will remain out of state.

The El Paso County Planning Commission heard the application at its Dec. 17 meeting and voted 9-1 to recommend it for approval. Commissioner Eric Moraes was the dissenting vote, concerned by the number of uses

allowed under the CC zoning and stating that he would have preferred to see the application come forward as a variance of use. See https://www.ocn.me/v21n1.htm?zoom_highlight=haddock

Nina Ruiz, planning manager, Planning and Community Development, summarized the public feedback received as highlighting concerns about the application's visual incompatibility with the rural residential zoning surrounding it, the incompatibility of the use with the adjacent zoning, and that the proposed use was not a good representation of the CC zoning district. Ruiz clarified that the proposed use is allowed under the CC zoning.

Six people spoke in favor, including Terry Stokka, chairman, Black Forest Land Use Committee, Peggy Littleton, former county commissioner, and Judy van Ahlefeldt, a long-time Black Forest resident. An adjacent neighbor spoke against by telephone.

All five commissioners were in support of the application, and it was approved unanimously.

Winsome development

Also at the Jan. 26 meeting, the BOCC voted unanimously to approve a final plat request for the first filing at the Winsome development. The final plat consists of 164.4 acres with 47 single-family residential lots, three tracts for open space, drainage and utility purposes, and rights-of-way. The property is located at the northwest corner of the Hodgen Road and Meridian Road intersection and is the redevelopment of the McCune Ranch. The application was approved as a consent item, meaning there was no further discussion.

The entire property is 767 acres, and the preliminary plan for 143 residential lots and one commercial lot was approved in July 2019. At the same time, 350 acres were rezoned from RR-5 (residential rural) to RR-2.5 (residential rural). A separate portion was rezoned to the CC (commercial community) zoning district. See <https://www.ocn.me/v19n8.htm#epbocc>.

Chair and vice chair appointed, new and re-elected commissioners sworn in

In a ceremony ahead of the Jan. 12 BOCC meeting, Carrie Geitner was sworn in as commissioner for District

2, which was previously represented by Mark Waller. Also sworn in for a second term were incumbent commissioners Longinos Gonzalez Jr. and Stan VanderWerf. Commissioners may serve two four-year terms.

At the Jan. 12 BOCC meeting, the commissioners appointed VanderWerf as chair and Commissioner Cami Bremer as vice chair.

Highway 105 contract

The commissioners approved a new contract with the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) for the second part of the Highway 105 project at their Jan. 26 meeting. The new contract reconciles overall funding and establishes an agreement specifically for the construction part of the project between Lake Woodmoor Drive and Highway 83. Construction is anticipated to begin in 2022.

Annexation of land into the Town of Monument

The commissioners voted unanimously to accept an annexation impact report from the Town of Monument for a 10.7-acre property zoned RR-5 (residential rural) located just south of the intersection of Baptist and Woodcarver Roads. The property owner, Native Sun Construction Inc., is requesting its annexation into the Town of Monument. The county's staff report states that the annexation "is a logical extension of the jurisdictional boundaries and is necessary to develop this portion of El Paso County." The Planning and Community Development Department had no concern with the proposed annexation.

County adopts streets at two Black Forest developments

The commissioners approved the adoption of streets at the Settlers View and Jackson Ranch developments in Black Forest into the county's road maintenance system during January. They also approved the preliminary release of a letter of credit for \$107,930 for subdivision improvements at the Jackson Ranch Filing No. 3. This followed the completion and satisfactory inspection of all the required improvements.

Helen Walklett can be reached at helenwalklett@ocn.me.