

D38 Parent and Community (formerly District Accountability) Advisory Committee, Oct. 11

Committee votes to change name, include new subcommittees

By Harriet Halbig
The District Accountability Advisory Committee voted to change its bylaws at its Oct. 11 meeting in order to change the name of the group and add two new subcommittees.

In an effort to increase community participation, the group will now be called the D38 Parent and Community Advisory Committee. The Colorado Department of Education requires that all school districts have an advisory committee.

The two new subcommittees are the Financial Advisory Committee (FAC) and the Wellness Committee.

School introduction
Principal Seann O'Connor welcomed the committee and gave a brief overview of Lewis-Palmer Middle School.

The student population decreased during the pandemic and now stands at 374 seventh-grade students and 414 eighth-graders. The school has recently shifted from a teaming model to a department model in an effort to improve assessment scores.

Committee members asked about teacher turnover at the school, and O'Connor explained ways the school is working around the shortage of staff.

Board of Education update

Board liaison Tiffney Upchurch reported on recent board activity.

The board resolved in 2018 to share mill levy override funds from the 1999 MLO with Monument Academy (MA) in proportion to their population, which is now about 20% of the district. At a special meeting of the MA and district boards, a resolution was passed to confirm that the same procedure will be applied to the new MLO, should it pass in November. With this understanding, the MA board will support passage of 4A on the November ballot.

Upchurch also introduced a property tax calculator which would indicate how much the MLO would cost a household based on the property's value.

The board submitted three resolutions to the Colorado Association of School Boards for consideration during the upcoming legislative season. All were accepted. The subjects were the buyback of the budget sta-

bilization factor, local control to schools over the use of state funds (at present many grants require a certain use), and local control over curriculum.

Unified Improvement Plan
Assistant Superintendent Amber Whetstone presented the Unified Improvement Plan for the 2021-22 school year.

Committee members were invited to suggest how the district's strategic plan could be implemented to improve the district's support of students and teachers and encourage community involvement.

Priority 1 of the strategic plan is to create a safe and welcoming environment in the schools. Committee members suggested that the district educate parents more thoroughly on social and emotional aspects of instruction and try to advertise opportunities for community participation in the district.

Another suggestion was to improve follow-through on the Multi-tiered System of Support and continue the program through the secondary schools. Trusted adult training for teachers was also suggested.

Priority 2 involves offering high-quality instruction. Committee members suggested that the district explain to parents how Professional Learning Community time is spent when the schools are closed.

It was suggested that the district celebrate individuals who choose alternate pathways after graduation and consider what success would look like for them. Informing parents more thoroughly about assessments would also be useful.

Priority 3 values the district's people and commits to continuous growth. It was suggested that training time and mentor meetings should be scheduled and that the district should listen more to teacher feedback. Increased collaboration between sixth-grade teachers and middle school teachers was also encouraged.

For more detailed information on the Unified Improvement Plans for the district and individual schools, please see the Board of

Education article on page 7.
Subcommittee reports
The Gifted Education Leadership Team held its first meeting and reported that D38 does well in identifying students who require gifted education programs. Ten percent of the district's student population is identified as gifted.

The Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) held its first meeting and found it challenging to increase participation. It was found that offering a virtual option for attendance increased participation, so in the future even meetings held in person will offer the virtual option for participation.

SEAC is working on bringing Trauma Informed Education to district classrooms.

The Wellness Committee had its first meeting and will focus on providing a triannual update to the state Department of Education.

The Financial Advisory Committee held its first meeting and discussed the impact of the mill levy override should it pass in November.

The D38 Parent and Community Advisory Committee meets six times a year. Locations vary. The next meeting will be on Nov. 15 from 6 to 8 p.m. at the Monument Academy East Campus, 4303 Pinehurst Circle, Colorado

Springs. For information, contact tmckee@lewisipalmer.org. Harriet Halbig can be reached at harriethalbig@ocn.me.

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Palmer Lake Board of Trustees, Oct. 13 and 27

Water Fund and municipal code prove contentious

By James Howald and Jackie Burhans
Two issues of long-standing concern to residents of Palmer Lake returned to center stage in October: how to manage the town's water and how to update the town's municipal code. New police officers were sworn in and the board recognized Officer James Bentley and the team that refurbished Palmer Lake's Town Hall. A draft of the 2023 budget

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