

Monument Academy School Board, Jan. 13, 21

Board increases COO coaching budget; hears plans for modulares

By Jackie Burhans

The Monument Academy (MA) School Board held its regular meeting on Jan. 13 followed by a special meeting on Jan. 21. The board heard a request from the Human Resources (HR) committee to increase funding for COO coaching, discussed pricing and plans for modular classrooms at the East Campus, and heard an update from the Highway 105 Committee on the recirculation project.

HR Committee

The newly-formed HR committee reported on its progress interviewing HR consultants to perform a school survey and review MA's grievance policy. The committee chose Employers Council (EC), an 80-year-old, 200-employee U.S.-based company. Board member Joe Buczkowski said there were two phases and that the initial budget of \$10,000 was insufficient.

For phase one, MA has joined EC's annual membership for \$1,500 per year and engaged them to review the grievance policy and perform an anonymous climate assessment survey of both campuses for a total commitment of \$4,200. Phase two would include COO coaching for \$7,500, staff and faculty team building for \$2,250 and an ethics hotline for \$50 per month. The total for phase two would be an additional \$10,150.

Buczkowski said the grievance policy review was complete with EC recommending eliminating the policy in favor of a problem-solving approach, moving harassment and discrimination outside of this area, and using EC's third-party ethics hotline. The hotline would be a toll-free phone number employees could call anonymously to report ethics violations, grievances, or other issues. The survey will include a question asking employees if they would like this hotline.

Buczkowski moved to increase the budget for the HR Committee to \$15,000 to ensure action could be taken after the surveys are completed. The board unanimously approved the request.

Modulars for East Campus

MA COO Merlin Holmes discussed his efforts in looking for availability and cost to lease used modular classrooms for the East Campus for 2022-23. Costs vary based on condition, how far they must be moved, and whether they include bathrooms, he said. He noted several options and said MA needs a minimum of four classrooms, but that six classrooms would help alleviate staff stress caused by the need to share and switch rooms. Depending on where they are placed, students could access doors near locker rooms for bathroom access.

After much discussion on how grades and classes might be allocated to the main building and modulars, the board unanimously voted to confirm that sixth grade would remain at the East Campus and to direct the COO and chief financial officer (CFO) to find the most effective accommodations. The board also called a special meeting for final approval of the budget for modulars.

At the Jan. 21 meeting, the board heard that a four-classroom modular complex was available in state at a good price from a company called Vesta, with an additional two-classroom modular available from a company called Satellite. The modulars are heated, Holmes said, and MA has determined the best location to be just west of the school, where it would not be near any phase two construction. The board asked about security and fencing, which Holmes said hadn't yet been discussed at great length. He said that the administration team had considered having all of one grade in the modulars but found it challenging to put science labs there. While no decision has been made, he emphasized, they have also discussed having a single department there such as English or History.

CFO Marc Brocklehurst provided a three-year cost analysis to include delivery, rental, skirting and tear-down of modulars to show the fiscal impact. The four-classroom modular complex would cost \$56,000 in the current budget, \$48,000 in Fiscal Year (FY) 23 and have a FY24 tear-down expense of \$15,000. The Satellite two-classroom modular would cost \$64,000 in FY23 and \$10,000 in FY24 to tear down, he estimated.

Brocklehurst noted that this cost would push MA into reserves for the coming years. While he wasn't aware of any grants that could offset the costs, he noted that there is a lot of talk at the state level about putting more into schools, and increased enrollment can also help. A parent noted that MA would not likely recoup the cost of the modulars with additional per pupil revenue but the modulars would have a positive impact for the school with space teachers need to spread out.

The board unanimously voted to give authorization to the COO and CFO to make a contract with Vesta and/or Satellite with a budget of up to \$225,000 over three fiscal years.

Highway 105 Committee

Holmes, who attended the latest meeting with El Paso County, reported that the group walked the area affected by the recirculation plan to remove MA traffic from Highway 105. The county is committed to the start time, but the finish date is not as clear cut as MA would like, before the August school start date. Due to property lines and Preble's meadow jumping mouse mitigation, the county had proposed moving 25 feet of the existing turf field from the north end to the south. This presents challenges due to an existing drainage ditch and represents significant costs. MA would prefer the county add more retaining wall to the northeast corner of the field to avoid moving the goalposts and long jump pit.

MA also asked the county to re-think moving the fire truck turnaround from the west to the east of the circle where benches are located and kids exit the building to go to the play-

ground, Holmes said. The current plan would leave only a narrow sidewalk for kids to use, slowing down access to the playground.

Holmes also discussed the timing of a plan submission to the state, setting

up a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between MA and the county and which approvals would be handled by whom. Applications can sit in a pile for 10 weeks, Holmes said, which is what raises concerns with the project timeline.



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