

trict's brand by developing a group of brand ambassadors who would receive information on a regular basis and use it to advocate for support of the district.

Belcher explained that there are already entities which support this mission, including the Parent and Community Advisory Committee (PCAC), the D38 Foundation, and others. The Staff Collaboration Committee and Financial Transparency Committee also support the goal of informing the public.

Belcher said that, once the group of key communicators is in place, information will be sent out on a weekly basis through Microsoft Teams. Information will include such items as upcoming events, policy

updates, and curriculum reviews. Dissemination of this information will provide a reliable source of facts and hopefully will discourage rumors.

When asked whether the goal is to encourage individuals to vote for mill levy overrides, Belcher said that the goal is to show individuals that the district is worth their support, that the schools are safe, and that district graduates go on to successful futures.

Still to come is development of criteria for members of the group.

Belcher said parents and staff already have access to most of the information involved. This would provide a conduit of information for those community members who are not

parents of students and those not on social media

One committee member said that he does not favor the "evangelistic" approach to offering information, but instead suggested presentations to small groups such as homeowners associations. Another suggested going to local spots such as Wesley Owens Coffee and Café where older citizens are likely to gather.

Board of Education update

Board of Education liaison Tiffiney Upchurch offered a brief update following the recent election.

The board will welcome two new members, Patti Shank and Todd Brown. Upchurch and Ron Schwarz

will continue to serve along with Kris Norris, who was appointed in April and elected in November.

Law requires that the oath of office be administered within 10 days of certification of the election. Upchurch estimated that the board will meet on Dec. 5 to administer the oath of office and reorganize its officers, and the regular meeting of the board will be held on Dec. 11.

Upchurch also reported that the staff has been surveyed regarding support for instituting four-day weeks. Results of the survey will determine whether the calendar committee will continue its deliberations.

If the staff does not indicate they will be more likely to stay in the district

with four-day weeks, the issue will not be presented to families.

Upchurch also reported that she and Schwarz have been going to innovation centers to learn how the district can improve its competitiveness by offering programs resulting in certification in such areas as nursing and other fields.

The Parent and Community Advisory Committee meets six times a year. Locations vary. The next meeting will be at 6 p.m. Jan. 9 at Lewis-Palmer High School, 1300 Higby Road. For information, contact tmckee@lewispalmer.org.

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

Lewis-Palmer D38 Board of Education, Nov. 13

Departing board members recognized, Lewis-Palmer High School update, financial update

By Harriet Halbig
The Lewis-Palmer D38 Board of Education bid farewell to two of its members, received a report on activities at Lewis-Palmer High School (LPHS), and discussed a financial update at its Nov. 13 meeting.

Board recognition

Board members Matthew Clawson and Theresa Phillips attended their last meeting on Nov. 13 and were recognized by fellow board members.

Clawson, who had served since 2015, was term limited. Board President Tiffiney Upchurch read a letter she had written in praise of his accomplishment. She said that, when asked about his motivation to serve, he wished to leave the district in a better condition than when he joined the board. She praised him for always putting the students first in making decisions and thanked his family for their sacrifice during his tenure.

Board Treasurer Ron Schwarz also praised Clawson for his time commitment while he also volunteered for other causes and ran a business.

Later in the meeting, Clawson commented that his only regret was the inability to improve compensation for teachers and staff.

Upchurch then read a letter she had written to Phillips praising her ability to listen deeply and ensure that students feel safe, secure, and comfortable in their environment. Phillips made herself available to all who had suggestions or comments and was willing to pose hard questions during board discussions.

Schwarz commented that he admired Phillips'

passion for results and her focus on the future. He also admired her efforts to ensure safety within the district by supporting obtaining new radios to make it easier to communicate with first responders, her support of security vestibules, and research and action in the area of social emotional wellness.

Schwarz also admired Phillips' support of improving literacy in grades K through 3, the fact that she met in person and by phone with many stakeholders, and support of the arts in the district, realizing the link between music and mathematics. She is genuinely interested in individual members of the staff and always willing to listen, he said.

Director Kris Norris also thanked Clawson and Phillips for their service and thanked Phillips for her welcome when he was appointed a member in April.

Lewis-Palmer High School update

Schwarz introduced two students from LPHS, Lily and Taylor. They both serve as officers of the student body, and Schwarz explained that beginning last month, two high school students would be welcomed to participate at board meetings to learn about community government. They are non-voting members and welcome to ask questions, to report on school activities, and to report back to students on board activities.

The student representatives reported on the recent Harvest of Love campaign in support of Tri-Lakes Cares. They said that it is important to tell students why they are requested to

participate in such an activity to ensure success.

This year, several techniques were used to encourage donations such as carnival games, daily announcements, and a competition between departments. Students also participated in packing snacks for those in need.

LPHS collected 2,846 cans of food and money. Combined with Palmer Ridge High School (PRHS), they received 6,000 total cans of food.

Congratulations were given to the women's volleyball team for making it to the state semi-finals and the football team for making it into the playoffs. Praise was also given to the fall musical production of You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown.

Superintendent update
Superintendent KC Somers was out of town, and the update was reported by Assistant Superintendent Amber Whetstine.

Whetstine recognized the PRHS women's gymnastics and volleyball teams for their state championships and spoke of Veterans Day events at several elementary schools.

Lewis-Palmer Middle School had its second All School Reads program followed by an author's visit.

The district also held a Troops and Trades showcase showing various post-graduation pathways for district graduates. Fifty colleges and others participated. LPHS completed its first structure in its home build program.

Whetstine also spoke of surveys of staff and families. For details on these surveys please see the article on the Parent and Community Advisory Committee on page 8.

Financial planning update

Chief Business Officer Brett Ridgway reported on the status of the district budget.

He said that the governor had announced an end to the budget stabilization factor, which was instituted in 2008 when the state could not fully fund education. He cautioned that the factor could be reinstated in the future.

Ridgway said that last spring the estimated per pupil revenue from the state was \$9,800. That amount was increased to \$10,000 in June.

He cautioned that there are two student counts to be considered, one a head count of the number of individuals in the district and the other the number of full-time equivalent (FTE) students. The FTE is important because, for example, home school students count as one-half FTE. He also explained that the new preschool program is no longer under the School Finance Act. He said that in the 2022-23 school year, there were 40 FTE preschoolers. Whetstine said the number of preschool students is dependent on staffing and other concerns.

Regarding enrollment, Ridgway reported that the district as a whole is down by 113 students, 80 of whom were forecast to attend Monument Academy.

Due to a state policy of student count averaging, Ridgway said that the district will report a decline of 84 rather than 113.

Ridgway reported that

the district is using a new auditor this year. He said the firm has been in the Colorado Springs area for a while, and he has confidence in its ability. It currently is completing the Monument Academy audit.

Praise for contributions
In her board member comments, Theresa Phillips praised two women for their contributions to the district.

One of these, Lisa Glen, was instrumental in forming the Monument Warriors, a local Special Olympics team. She thanked the high school volleyball and basketball teams for their mentorship and said an athletic letter would be awarded to participants.

Amber Newberry was praised for her contributions regarding appropriate behavior and boundaries as part of the Consent Task Force. Newberry is also active in reviewing district policies in this area.

Phillips also thanked several district employees who modeled collaboration and listening, acknowledging that students who feel accepted and respected learn best.

The Lewis-Palmer D38 Board of Education usually meets on the third Monday of the month at 6 p.m. at the district's learning center, 146 Jefferson St. in Monument. Due to the holiday break, the December meeting will be held on Dec. 11.

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

Black Forest Fire Rescue Protection District

Virtual attendance unavailable

By Janet Sellers
On short notice, the Black Forest Fire Rescue Protection District (BFFRPD) did not provide a virtual attendance option for the Nov. 15 board meeting. This reporter was unable to attend in

person and make a recording.

For more information, updates, and Zoom meeting joining instructions, see www.bffire.org or contact Administrative Officer Ra-

chel Dunn at 719-495-4300. Meetings are usually held on the third Wednesday of the month.

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