

duties. One full-time teacher would lead the instructional classes that are required to receive funding. MA should hire a classroom assistant for lunch and recess monitoring, she said, and those three positions would make up the core of the MA Homeschool Partnership (MAHP) program. Classes would be held on Tuesday and Thursday with a maximum of 44 students and a minimum of 25 students required to break even. The program would be funded by the state, with each student receiving 50% of per pupil revenue (PPR). MA could decide to start with fewer students and accept an initial loss.

McClelland said she had discussed a marketing plan with Marketing Manager Kendra Kuhlmann and discussed developing a section on MA's website and holding a Town Hall meeting to gauge interest. She said startup costs would be \$3,000, and MAHP would have a curriculum lending library for homeschool parents.

The board consented to extend Skalla's contract through the Town Hall meeting to move forward with considering the program.

**Executive director succession plan**

McClelland, who has been acting as executive director (ED) for MA, gave an overview of a succession plan for her position. Graham said the board could approve this plan at the meeting so it could

post the position in early February.

Noting that choosing an ED is one of the board's most important responsibilities and that she has enjoyed being at MA but was not throwing her hat into the ring, McClelland laid out the steps, committees, and processes needed:

1. Understanding strategic priorities, strengths, weaknesses, and competencies.
2. Standing up three essential committees: Informal Advisory, Screening, and board HR committees.
3. Communication and transparency.
4. Transition and onboarding.
5. Setting and following a timeline.
6. Talent pipeline and emergency ED plan.

The committee will draft the job description, including compensation, and post it in early February. The screening committee would review applications, and the HR subcommittee would choose the three top candidates. In mid-March, before spring break, a special board meeting would be called for candidate interviews. In early April, the board would identify the finalist and start the transition process.

**Enrollment and election policies updated**

At its Jan. 5 meeting, the board considered policy JG-MA Enrollment and Placement. The policy, which MA had

vetted and approved by legal counsel, sets the date to Aug. 15 by which incoming students must be 5 years old while grandfathering in any student who has been added to MA's waitlist by Jan. 5.

The board then considered policy BBB-E-MA Board of Directors Election Process, which has been reclassified to follow the Colorado Association of School Boards (CASB) nomenclature and had various spelling and grammatical corrections as well as terminology corrections. The most substantive change was to supply a missing form required by applicants. The board unanimously approved the policy and indicated that board member Ross should use them to start the process for the upcoming election of two three-year-term board positions.

For more discussion on these policies, see <https://www.ocn.me/v24n1.htm#ma>. All MA board policies can be found at <https://www.monument.academy.net/school-board>.

**Highlights**

Board meeting highlights include:

- McClelland noted that the high school had been hit hard by a virus in December, resulting in 40 missed exams, which it was working hard to make up.
- McClelland said that HR Director Krista Pelley was working hard on the ABACUS payroll system transition, which was going smoothly.

- McClelland reported intent-to-return rates use a range as some students are undecided and show for elementary school 82-90%; middle school 91-96%; ninth grade 26-37%; and 10-12th grade 81-83%.
- Graham reported on the Highway 105 project that lights were removed and access to the church was closed. The project is working to complete a road to connect to the top of the "S" curve to create a loop in front of the school. He said the goal is to get vehicles off Highway 105 to provide safety, but that traffic was still backing up onto 105. West Campus administration is diligently looking at solutions as it works through Phase 3 over the next four months, he said.
- Buczkowski said the governance committee was working on prioritizing policies to review.
- Board member Karen Hoida said the Safety and Security Committee is pleased that a second school resource officer (SRO) has been added.

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The MA School Board meets at 6:30 p.m. on the second Thursday of each month. The next regular board meeting will be on Thursday, Feb. 8, at 6:30 p.m. at the East Campus. See more information at see <https://bit.ly/ma-boe>.

Jackie Burhans can be reached at [jackieburhans@ocn.me](mailto:jackieburhans@ocn.me).

*Lewis-Palmer D38 Board of Education, Jan. 9 and 22*

**Mill levy certified; staff recognized for work during weather emergency**

By Harriet Halbig

The Lewis-Palmer D38 Board of Education held a special meeting on Jan. 9 to certify its mill levy for the coming year. Chief Business Officer Brett Ridgway explained that the assessed value of taxable residential and non-residential property increased by over 30% in the past year.

In the past, the mill levy was certified in December, but because of the special session of the state Legislature

during that month, assessments were not determined until January. The mill levy had to be certified by Jan.10.

Last year's mill levy was 40.4 mills. Due to the increased value of property in 2023, this year's levy will be 37.5 mills. To view the presentation on the subject please see the district website, [lewispalmer.org](http://lewispalmer.org), board of education, boarddocs.

**Calendar approved**

Assistant Superintendent Amber Whet-

stine presented the proposed calendar for the 2024-25 school year.

She said that a primary change is the cancellation of two-hour delayed school days. Instead, teachers will return three days before students after winter break to do their planning and training. This change was requested by the Staff Collaboration Committee and the Calendar Task Force.

Whetstine said that a goal of the task force is to broaden its membership to include families and students and to draft polices to aid in creating the annual calendar.

**Staff recognition for emergency response**

Superintendent KC Somers praised staff in the areas of maintenance, grounds, and transportation for their quick and vital response during the polar vortex earlier in the month which resulted in major damage to some schools, including ruptured pipes, flooding, and boiler issues.

Executive Director of Operations and Development and Building Maintenance Manager Leo Poirier praised their staffs for answering their phones and being willing to brave the record cold to come to the schools and do what was needed.

Coulter said there was flooding at Lewis-Palmer High School, and the boiler needed to be restarted. At Prairie Winds Elementary, water was coming down the walls, and at Palmer Ridge High School there was a break in the sprinkler system.

Transportation Manager Julie Abeyta said that block heaters were used to ensure that the buses would start.

Operations and Grounds Manager Ricky Vestal said that in one instance snow shovels were used to remove water and snow from floors.

At Prairie Winds, a great deal of drywall will need to be replaced. The initial indication of a problem at Prairie Winds was a fire alarm.

High School Custodial Supervisor Eric Wall was also recognized. He said that this was not the first flood at Palmer Ridge and there was also flooding at the middle school.

**Superintendent search firm selected**

Before the Jan. 22 meeting, the board interviewed two firms to potentially conduct a search for a new superintendent.

These firms were McPherson and Jacobson, and Hazard, Young, Attea and Associates (HYA).

During its discussion before the vote, board members noted that McPherson and Jacobson had more experience in Colorado while HYA has a greater reach nationwide, which could result in a larger pool of applicants.

Somers commented that both firms are reputable and HYA did three Colorado searches recently and had

70% of its applicants from out of state.

Board President Tiffiney Upchurch commented that the district doesn't pay as well as many others and asked whether this would be a disadvantage.

Somers referred to a study by the Colorado Association of School Executives that addressed this issue. He reminded the board that when he was hired he was not a superintendent in his previous location. He said salary will not make or break a search, and some might even accept a cut in salary because of the high performance of the district and the quality of life here. He said it is important that the firm recognize the uniqueness of this community.

Board Treasurer Ron Schwarz suggested that the board have a business discussion with the selected firm before signing a contract. For example, does the firm offer on-boarding services and what would happen should the selection not be a good fit.

The board voted to hire McPherson and Jacobson. Upchurch asked board Executive Assistant Vicki Wood to notify both firms of the decision and to thank them for the research they did about the district.

**Budget discussion**

For the benefit of new board members, Ridgway explained that there are three important dates in the budgeting process of the district.

A proposed budget is presented to the board on May 31. The budget must be approved by June 30 and the current year's budget can be amended until Jan. 31. After January, amendments can be made only if new funding becomes available.

He said the Taxpayers Bill of Rights (TABOR) requires that the district maintain a 3% reserve for emergencies.

Ridgway called attention to the Transportation Fund. He said that because of its specialized use, funds should not be carried over from year to year. He said \$867,000 remained at the end of the 2022-23 school year and suggested that \$300,000 of that balance be returned to the general fund and the remainder be spent to purchase the Smart Tag system to provide tracking capabilities for school buses and new ID tags for students which could be used for bus rides and for lunches and other school-related activities.

Smart Tag puts an iPad in each bus, which would allow the district and parents to see where buses are. It is also useful for new drivers because it includes GPS and would provide turn-by-turn directions for new routes or for those who might be acting as a substitute or driving to a field trip.

Transportation Manager Julie Abeyta said Smart Tag would allow parents to locate their children and be notified of delays.

She said Douglas County uses this system, and it also would provide information on road problems.

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