



Above: Superintendent KC Somers praised staff in the areas of maintenance, grounds, and transportation for their quick and vital response during the extreme cold weather earlier in the month which resulted in major damage to some schools, including ruptured pipes, flooding, and boiler issues. From left are Somers, Transportation Manager Julie Abeyta, Executive Director of Operations and Development Chris Coulter, Building Maintenance Manager Leo Poirier, Operations and Grounds Manager Ricky Vestal, Head Custodian Andy Stout, and High School Custodial Supervisor Eric Wall. *Photo by Jackie Burhans.*

each bus and drivers would have their tablets updated nightly.

Schwarz asked whether the system is dependent on cellular service. Abeyta said she would check.

Upchurch asked whether the system would make it possible to adjust over-full or under-full routes. Abeyta said that it would.

Ridgway also proposed the purchase of two new buses. He said that ideally the average age of a school bus in service should be six to eight years. The district's buses average 10 years.

He said that ideally the district should purchase two or three per year.

Abeyta said that when new buses are purchased, the old ones are held as spares. Maintenance is less expensive on new buses.

The motion to make these changes in the transportation fund was approved.

Other business

The board received a report on the audit from 2022-23. The auditor said that the audit was clean and that all problems from the previous year were re-

solved.

Whetstine introduced new curriculum for seventh- and eighth-grade social studies and high school biology. She said that the materials were available for public review earlier in the month.

Following discussion, it was decided to extend the review period.

Board Secretary Dr. Patti Shank said she had reviewed the social stud-

ies materials and said she preferred that books include controversial topics. For example, the right to bear arms was not included.

Whetstine responded that the printed materials are just a starting point and that teachers individually can supplement the curricula with their own discussion topics. She said the district has a six-year system for reviewing materials to ensure that they meet state standards.

Upchurch asked whether the choice of materials reflects local control.

Whetstine responded that the policy requires that the district teach according to state standards, but choice of materials is a local decision.

The Lewis-Palmer D38 Board of Education usually meets from 6 to 10 p.m. on the third Monday of the month at its learning center, 146 Jefferson St. in Monument. Due to Presidents Day closure on the 19th, the next meeting will be on Feb. 26.

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D38 Parent and Community Advisory Committee, Jan. 9

Discussion of Priority 1, D38 Foundation report

By Harriet Halbig

The Lewis-Palmer D38 Parent and Community Advisory Committee (PCAC), formerly known as the District Accountability Advisory Committee, had a lengthy discussion of Priority 1 of the district's strategic plan regarding the provision of safe and healthy schools, a report on grants from the D38 Foundation, and a presentation on Lewis-Palmer High School at its Jan. 9 meeting.

Priority 1: Cultivate safe, healthy, and welcoming schools

Executive Director of Student Services Rick Frampton reported on the district's efforts to implement Priority 1.

The district executed a number of actions to ensure safety in schools. These included the construction of security vestibules at several schools, crisis response and preparedness training, and improvement of communications between the schools and first responders in the event of an emergency.

The district worked to ensure mental and social wellness among its students by offering support in partnership with parents. The goal is to make students feel welcome in the school environment and feel to be members of the school community.

In a recent student survey, 85% of elementary students and 74% of secondary students said they feel safe at school, while over 70% at each level reported feeling to be a member of the school community.

Frampton reported on discipline issues in the district where there were 135 suspensions at the elementary and secondary levels in the 2022-23 school year and 18 expulsions.

He said that suspensions and expulsions are effective when combined with efforts to bring students back into the school environment.

In response to a question from a committee member, Frampton said that a major problem is vaping on school grounds. The district is fortunate not to have experience with fentanyl exposure, he said, but all schools have a supply of Narcan on hand and staff has been trained to use it in case of overdoses. He said that fights and weapons have not been a problem.

A committee member commented that student mental health became a problem following the 9/11 attacks, and the problem has increased following the COVID pandemic. She said the district does not have enough counselors and that students need to learn to treat each other with respect. She said the advantage of being in a relatively small district is that we know each other and should be able to look for those students who don't have a stable family life.

Frampton described the district's seven-member security team, some of whom are district employees and two of whom are school resource officers associated with the Sheriff's Office. He said all members of the team have extensive law enforcement experience.

Staff training was provided in such areas as crisis response, risk assessment, threat assessment, discipline, attendance, and mandatory reporting.

D38 Foundation report

Executive Director Stephanie Palzkill of the D38 Foundation reported on the first set of Inspire Grants.

The foundation is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization which was founded in 1994 and active through 2009. It then was dormant until 2022, when it was reactivated. The district had maintained the nonprofit paperwork during the inactive period.

The foundation's Board of Trustees and officers are all volunteers from the community, with a liaison from the Board of Education and the superintendent serving as a non-voting member.

The goal of the foundation is to foster creativity and innovation in the classroom beyond district funding capabilities.

Representatives of the foundation visited all district schools including Monument Academy during the fall to encourage applications for the first set of grants for student projects.

This year the foundation had \$17,000 available for grants and received \$70,000 in requests.

The foundation committee funded six projects:

- Lego Spike Robotics program at Lewis-Palmer Elementary.
- Ceramics kiln at Monument Academy.
- Outdoor learning lab at Palmer Ridge High School.
- Sensory room at Prairie Winds Elementary School.
- Sensory room at Bear Creek Elementary School.
- Drama program at Lewis-Palmer High School.

Recipients of grants must submit mid-term and final reports on the projects, acknowledge the funding source, return unused funds, submit photos or videos illustrating the project, and complete the project by the end of the school year.

For further information on the foundation, please go to d38foundation.org.

Lewis-Palmer High School presentation

Principal Bridget O'Connor and four student assistants offered a presentation on Lewis-Palmer High School. Included were examples of student projects, goals of the school, multiple pathways past graduation including advanced placement classes and concurrent and dual enrollment enabling students to earn college credit while in high school, career and technical education offering the possibility of earning an associate degree in biomedical science or engineering while in high school, and career education offering internships and training in such areas as business and marketing, computer science, construction, technology, graphic arts, newspaper, and video production.



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