

Lewis-Palmer D-38 District Accountability Advisory Committee, May 7 Allocations proposed for expected budget increase

By Harriet Halbig

The Lewis-Palmer District Accountability Advisory Committee discussed several end-of-year matters at its May 7 meeting. The school district expects to receive a \$1 million increase in funding next year regardless of whether voters approve a state education budget increase in November.

Assistant Superintendent Cheryl Wangeman summarized the state's budget for the coming year. She explained that K-12 education comprises 38 percent of the state's budget, and this portion decreases as the baby boomer generation ages and requires more funding for Medicare and other benefits.

She said it appears that per pupil funding for the next year will be \$6,311, an increase of \$185 per pupil.

If the School Finance Reform Bill, SB 13-213, is passed by the public this November, it will add \$1 billion to the state's K-12 education budget. While this sounds generous, Wangeman said that this would merely restore funding cut over the past four years.

This billion-dollar increase would be applied to items such as longer school days and years, more funding for special education, additional teacher training, adding preschools to underfunded districts, filling positions in rural areas, charter school construction, and other needs determined by the CDE. District 38 may not benefit from all of these.

Other changes would include more frequent students counts (now only once a year), availability of full-day kindergarten, and full funding of high school students regardless of how many classes they take.

At present, it is estimated that the district will receive \$1 million more for next year regardless of the fate of the finance reform bill. Of this \$1 million, \$250,000 will go to funding the Public Employee Retirement Administration (PERA), \$25,000 will cover increases in district insurance costs, and it is hoped that \$250,000 could be

applied to a 1 percent raise for employees. The remainder could be applied to such investments as the purchase of an additional school bus and improvement in the district's

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