



Above: Members of the 4A Champion Cross Country Team from Palmer Ridge High School are, left to right, Jeremy Meadows, Assistant Coach Larry Rudnicki, Liam Cox, Quinn Tirpak, Drew Lester, Eric Hamer, Andrew Rudnicki, Jacob Tellez, James Espinosa, Coach Kelly Christensen, and Tommy Herebic. Coach Christensen was also named the Gazette Boys' Cross Country Coach of the Year by the Colorado Springs Gazette. Photo by Harriet Halbig.

D-38 (Continued from page 19)

New graduation requirements discussed

Beving reported on the development by the state of new graduation requirements. She said that the primary change will be from evaluating readiness by credits to demonstrated competency in math, English, science, and social studies in preparation for entry into the workforce, military or higher education.

Each local board has the authority to establish its own standards providing they meet or exceed those of the state.

Board President Mark Pfoff asked whether there will be a graduation test. Beving responded that the current methods of assessment will continue to be used, including the SAT, ACT, PARCC, and concurrent enrollment (where students receive college and high school credit for a course) records.

Board Vice President John Mann expressed concern that the new system would favor students going to college over those attending vocational schools and those in rural districts.

Discussion of policy on staff's technology use

The board discussed updating its policy on staff use of technology regarding use of social media by staff to contact students. Brofft said that the district's Facebook and Twitter accounts are monitored. Principals and ad-

ministrators discuss this issue with staff during their orientations.

Pfoff said that staff needs to be educated about new social media.

The board then discussed a policy regarding avenues for complaints about teachers. Pfoff said that he would prefer that complaints be taken first to the principal involved rather than inserting a board member into the process.

These two policies will be voted on in January.

Other matters

Wangeman reported that enrollment in the district has increased by 13 full-time students since Oct. 1 and that the number of students on free/reduced-price lunch has increased by 43. She said that diesel fuel prices are declining, but not at the rate of gasoline prices.

The board approved a list of routine matters such as hiring and resignation of staff, minutes of previous meetings, lists of substitute and support staff, and a monthly budget summary.

The Board of Education of Lewis-Palmer D-38 meets at 6 p.m. on the third Thursday of each month in the district's Learning Center, 146 Jefferson St., Monument. The next meeting will be on Jan.15.

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

Baptist Road Rural Transportation Authority, Dec. 19

County staff to take over district management

By Jim Kendrick

On Dec. 19, the Baptist Road Rural Transportation Authority (BRRTA) board unanimously approved an intergovernmental agreement (IGA) with El Paso County to have county staff take over district management from consultant firm CliftonLarsonAllen LLP, starting in 2015. The IGA will save BRRTA about \$53,000 in administration fees.

El Paso County Engineer Andrei Brackin announced that the county now has full funding for improving West Baptist Road from I-25 to Hay Creek Road and building a bridge over the railroad tracks.

The BRRTA board consists of two elected officials of the Town of Monument and three elected El Paso County officials. The current members are Monument Mayor Pro Tem Jeff Kaiser (chair), Monument Mayor Rafael Dominguez, County Commissioner Darryl Glenn, and County Commissioner Dennis Hisey.

Former County Clerk and Recorder Wayne Williams did not attend this special board meeting. He was elected to become the next Colorado secretary of state on Nov. 4. He has not been replaced yet.

IGA for county takeover discussion

Senior Assistant County Attorney Lori Seago briefed the board regarding the proposed IGA between the county and BRRTA. The county has agreed to make various members of county staff available at no cost to BRRTA to assist with the legal, administrative, and financial functions of the authority. The county may seek reimbursement for any actual "out-of-pocket" costs incurred by the county for services provided other than staff time.

In the event that a legal or financial conflict of interest arises between BRRTA and the county, BRRTA will contract with outside personnel for services necessary to resolve the conflict. Seago said that BRRTA would still have to pay the total of \$12,400 listed for four "out-of-pocket" line items in the 2015 BRRTA budget: annual audits, bank fees, insurance, and miscellaneous items.

BRRTA District Manager Denise Denslow, of CliftonLarsonAllen LLP, said the current BRRTA road use fees are the only source of revenue in the BRRTA general fund budget for all of BRRTA's general and administrative line items, including the four line items noted above.

The total amount of revenue in the road use fees line item for the general fund in the final 2015 BRRTA budget

is \$100,000.

The county imposed a county-wide road use impact fee in 2012 that applies to Baptist Road because it is a county road. The I-25 Baptist Road interchange (Exit 158) belongs to the state and is administered by the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT.) Developers are now complaining to the county, BRRTA, and the Town of Monument about the long-standing BRRTA road use fee. Because of the newer county fee, the BRRTA road use fee now appears to be a form of dual taxation for new developments that would use Baptist Road for access.

Denslow stated that all BRRTA sales tax revenue is separately dedicated solely to paying BRRTA's remaining bond debt. Denslow also noted that the total amount proposed in the draft 2015 BRRTA budget for CliftonLarsonAllen to perform administrative functions had been reduced from \$68,000 to \$53,000 in the final 2015 budget.

For more information, see: www.ocn.me/v14n12.htm#brrta1114.

Seago noted that on Nov. 14, Williams had asked how BRRTA would pay for future litigation costs if BRRTA were sued after collection of BRRTA road use fees was stopped, as proposed by the county. Seago said the county budget officer had suggested that BRRTA place \$400,000 of the BRRTA general fund's beginning 2015 balance of \$588,783 in a legal reserve fund contingency line item. The remaining \$188,000 would provide about \$15,700 per year to cover the \$12,400 annual expense for the four "out of pocket" costs noted above over the 12 remaining years of bond debt reimbursement. Seago said the remaining \$3,000 per year would make suspension of BRRTA's road use fee "realistic" at this time. She added that BRRTA could participate in the county's annual audit to save some more money.

Kaiser stated that insurance costs are rising annually, like a "hockey stick," and that the other costs could "jump" as well.

Denslow said that the BRRTA board from time to time has taken portions of the general fund balance to use as "surplus revenue" to help pay for Baptist Road capital construction, such as some of the West Baptist Road improvements to be constructed in 2015. This \$400,000 would no longer be available for that purpose under the county's proposal. However, the BRRTA board remains hopeful that CDOT will make further state reimbursements, so that more portions of the BRRTA debt can be retired early.

Seago concluded that the county finance office could provide a "closer look" at BRRTA finances to determine whether BRRTA's road use fee could be eliminated in return for the county providing administrative services for BRRTA operations. The county finance office could also help calculate the minimum road use fee needed to pay for general fund expenses if total suspension of BRRTA road use fees proves to be too risky.

Hisey said, "When the county implemented its road

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