Board hears Grandparents Day plans, treasurer’s report

By Jackie Burbans

The Monument Academy (MA) School Board met on Jan. 18 to hear about plans for a Grandparents Day event. Board members Patrick Hall and Principal Lisa Richards were absent.

Grandparents Day

Parents Amy Torrence and Angela Leighty presented plans for a Grandparents Day event scheduled for April 28. They said they had dreamed of having a Grandparents Day and appreciated the enthusiastic support of the board this year. They want to bring grandparents into the fold of the school, introduce them to the environment, and bring them into the classrooms. They thanked grandparents for their contributions and encouraged them to volunteer. The event will include a combination of FHPE (Friends of the Parents and Teachers) performances and an opening assembly, and will culminate in spending time in their grandparents’ classrooms. Teachers are very supportive and parents are excited. There are corporate and family-funded sponsorships available. Torrence and Leighty asked for the board’s consideration of sponsorship at some point.

The plan is to send 1,000 invites with an expectation of 400 to 500 attendees. They will have offsite parking and shuttles. Board President Sonya Camarco noted that the event will yield a promotional piece of MA with a professional logo, a video crew and drone footage of the school. This will be available for use on the school’s website. Standing boards with information about the school and its activities will be created and available for use at other events.

Treasurer’s report

Treasurer Nancy Tive reported that revenue for December higher than expected due to receiving READ Act and G&T funding in December. District Fee Income exceeded the budgeted amount due to spending on traveling to Utah National Park. The budget for text books was increased due to the hybrid model.

Expenses for December were higher than budgeted due to the salary, tuition, bonuses, stipends, and master teacher payment costs. The line item for technology is at 99 percent of the budget, due to unexpected payments for upgrades that were financed with a capital lease from First National Bank. The savings in the maintenance (PARC) base revenue was lower than budgeted.

Read Act grants were higher than expected due to receiving the full amount of the grant from the state. The full amount of the grant was $38,107 for December and $58,711 year-to-date. The budget will be revised to reflect this spending. The project included upgrading a total of 130 computers; however, 24 of them were paid for by the Parent Teacher Organization.

Other board highlights

• Parent Cynthia Fong Smith reported that two of the four expanded character curriculum lessons had been delivered before the Christmas holiday and were well-received. All who attended the first lesson returned for the second lesson. Fong Smith also reported that 79 percent of the school’s parents have attended the Neighborhood Night.

• MA’s membership in the El Paso County Coalition of Charter Schools was renewed. It receives information on what is going on in Denver and works with other charter schools to craft a charter school coalition.

• The board unanimously approved the 2017-18 School Calendar, which includes a four-day break in the fall and eight or nine days of the state mandatorily required for account for snow days.

• The board entered an executive session to discuss the next steps concerning the high school, with regard to authorizers, timelines, and the application process.

The next meeting will be on Wednesday, Feb. 9 at the Monument Academy Library at 1150 Village Ridge Point. The Monument Academy usually meets at 6 p.m. on the second Thursday of each month. Information on the MA School Board, including meeting minutes and committee and finances can be found at http://www.mona-schooldistrict.com/school-board.

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Lewis-Palmer D-38 Board of Education, Jan. 19

Board reorganizes, receives report from Monument Academy

By Harriet Halbig

The Lewis-Palmer D-38 Board of Education reorganized its assigned positions and received an operation report from Monument Academy at its Jan. 19 meeting.

Following Mark Pfiffkoff’s resignation as president of the board at its December meeting, members re-assigned to include Sherri Hawkins as president, Matthew Clawson as vice president, Mark Pfiffkoff as secretary, and Dr. John Magerko as treasurer. Sarah Sampayo will serve as a director. Hawkins and Clawson were elected, and the remainder of officers were appointed.

Monument Academy operations report

Dr. Don Griffin, executive director of Monument Academy, reported to the board.

Griffin reported that the academy has its own Board of Education, with four members present at this meeting. Enrollment for this school year is 907.86 full-time equivalent (FTE) students. Enrollment has increased by 62 students over last year, and the eighth-grade class of 369 is the largest in the school’s history.

There have been slight increases in the exceptional student and gifted student populations, and the school has received a state leadership award as a choice school.

The largest expenditure last year was $130,000 for a new turf field, and the school added high-definition cameras and fences as recommended.

Griffin reported that 200 middle school students are now involved with athletic programs, and dramatic arts and music are also offered. The middle school band won this award this year.

The biggest concern of academy board members and parents is the proposed addition of a median on High-way 105 that would restrict access to the school and the church next door. The school is working with the church to make their concerns known.

Monument Academy would like to expand its offer-ings to add a high school in the near future. Planning is underway to make that happen.

Community recognition

The board recognized the contributions of Tri-Lakes Ra-dio. General Manager Michael Bailey reported that the station is streaming hockey and basketball games to the community and has sold advertising to support the dist-ric. Bailey presented checks from JI Tracks and Act II (a new thrift store) to Superintendent Karen Broff. Demonstration of communication

Lewis-Palmer High school teacher Michele Baxter explained her Project Lead the Way curriculum in the area of biomedical sciences. She explained that the program is based on the reality of the human body systems with an emphasis on communica-tion.

Students worked with members of the board to demon-strate how every area of the body is linked. Baxter said that all classes in the curriculum are inquiry-based, rather than lectures. Each unit includes discussion questions.

Superintendent update

Broff spoke of the actions of the district in response to the previous week’s storm, acclaiming the ex-cellent coordination in getting kids home in the wake of having to discontinue bus service as required by the Colorado Department of Transportation.

Broff also mentioned the value of the PathEmpa-thy program in special education, a virtual reality pro-gram at the middle school that reflected the experiences of a local veteran at the attack on Pearl Harbor, and con-tinuing professional development on such subjects as mental health training, CPR, and other areas.

The district is once again accredited with distinc-tion with low participation. This refers to the fact that, although federal guidelines require a 95 percent par-ticipation rate in standardized testing, the Colorado De-partment of Education (CDE) has allowed a waiver to students whose parents have opted out. Therefore, the district must develop a program to improve participation, she said.

Broff reported that the annual open enrollment pe-riod is underway. The district has 300 students choosing open enrollment (referring to attending a district school other than the neighborhood school, or someone from another district attending school in District 38).

The rules of open enrollment require parents to reap-ly each year, and school principals determine whether there is space and sufficient staff to accept additional stud-ents.

Assistant Superintendent Cheryl Wangeman reported that the outflow of students as opposed to inflow dur-ing the 2014-15 school year was 130 students. In 2016 only nine more students left than entered the district. She pointed out, however, that as district buildings reach ca-pacity this trend may change.

Regarding the windstorm, Wangeman reflected that the district should have been notified earlier because the winds at 2 a.m. were already dangerous.

Superintendent of Personal and Special Services Bob Foster offered a first reading of the proposed 2018-19 school calendar.

The board approved policy DC-B regarding debt management. Wangeman said that the district’s financial planner suggested the usefulness of such a policy. The first reading was presented at the December meeting.

The board voted to request a waiver on the proce-dure for application for a new charter school. The state requires that an application for a charter school must be submitted by Oct. 1 of the year before the opening of a school. The board is requesting that the deadline instead be April 1 of the previous year, allowing more time for response to a question, Haastad said that the Committee for Political Achievement is only active dur-ing years of school board elections.

Another committee member pointed out that a charge to the committee is still mentioned in the bylaws and suggested that it be removed or revised to reflect the purpose of the committee. The vote will be taken on this revision at its February meeting.

The Lewis-Palmer D-38 District Accountability Advisory Committee meets at 7 p.m. on the second Tuesday of the month. Locations vary. The Feb. 7 meeting will be at Lewis-Palmer Elementary Schools, 1315 Lake Wood-wood Dr., Monument.

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