Committee determines calendar for 2015-16, discusses teacher evaluations  

By Harriet Halbig  
The Lewis-Palmer D-38 District Accountability Advisory Committee determined its meeting calendar, finalized its charge for presentation to the Board of Education, and discussed the teacher evaluation process during its Oct. 13 meeting.

The committee will not meet each month this year. In the past, the commit- tee examined each school’s unified improvement plan (UIP) and the district’s plan during the meetings in the winter. This year, the plans will be reviewed at individual schools with the schools’ Building Accountability Advisory Committees (BAACs), and detailed summaries will be reviewed with the committee in April. The entire committee will meet in November, January, February and April.

The committee approved the year’s calendar.

At these committee meetings, the group will also receive updates on the dis- trict’s communication plan, technology developments, the Community-Family Partnership, Gifted Learning, Special Edu- cation, safety and security, and the budget.

Committee charge  
Director of Assessment and Gifted Edu- cation Lori Benton reviewed the commit- tee’s charge before final presentation to the Board of Education. The charge will be virtually unchanged from the previous year. Responsibilities include:

- Overseeing the Special Education and Gifted Education programs (including English Language Learners).
- Advising the board regarding budgetary matters.
- Overseeing the staff evaluation process.
- Aiding the board in community out- reach through such things as hosting forums among candidates for the board.
- Committee for Political Achievement, a subgroup of the committee, acts to monitor legislative and other activity that may affect the district.

Evaluation updates  
Director of Personnel and Student Serv- ices Bob Foster spoke about Senate Bill 191 and recent changes in the evaluation process for teachers and other staff in the district.

Foster listed the stages of the process, including orientation to the process, self-assessment, meeting with the evaluators, and classroom observations by evaluators.

This system was introduced in the 2013-14 school year and is still develop- ing. The first year was “hold-harmless” as districts worked through their methods of compliance. The 2014-15 school year was the first in which staff could be ruled ineffective, which effects probationary status.

A primary aspect of the system is to have a large part of the evaluation score based on student performance. The re- mainder is based on a detailed review of professional practices.

A major drawback of the system is the fact that many employees are not teach- ers subject to rules for which there is data such as test results to measure student perform- ance. This includes such employees as media specialists, librarians, teachers with dual- diagnosis students, teachers of the arts, and instructional coaches. For these individuals the district has had to devise its own methods of evaluating student perfor- mance and submit these techniques to the state for approval.

Another weakness is the fact that performance is based on growth from one year to the next, and the assessments being applied are changing frequently.

Foster and Benton said that they will keep the committee informed regarding any future changes in the process.

Superintendent update  
District Superintendent Karen Broffl re- ported on the district’s strategic vision to encompass a focus on the community, a variety of learning opportunities, contin- ued performance in the top 10 percent in ACT scores, continuing Advanced Place- ment offerings and scores above the na- tional average, a high graduation rate, and acclaimed music, performing arts, and sports activities.

The primary goal of the board this year, in addition to continuing excellence in the above areas, is to improve the avail- ability of up-to-date technology in the classroom.

Broffl also said that she wishes to focus on 21st-century skills such as data-based decision-making, enhanced on-line education, and keeping the public’s trust in the district through trans- parency, and engaging in long range plan- ning.

Some of this year’s initiatives include a focus on technology in the classroom, continued interaction with focus groups such as businesses, homeowners groups, and churches, and a revamping of the dis- trict’s website.

District Accountability Advisory Committee, Oct. 13

Alpaca Holiday Extravaganza  
Join the Southeastern Colorado Alpaca Breeders celebration of the 10th Annual Holiday Alpaca Extravaganza. Come meet the alpacas and experience the soft luxury of alpaca from animal to fashion. All kinds of alpaca garments, fashion apparel and accessories will be available for early holiday shopping. For crafters there will be fiber for sale, a wide variety of colors. This FREE event is open to children of all ages.

Mark Your Calendar
Saturday, Nov. 21 from 9AM to 5PM  
Black Forest Community Club is located at 12350 Black Forest Rd. just north of Shoup Rd.  
For latest information see our web page at http://secab-extravaganza.weebly.com/ or call 719-456-4603

Campus introduction  
Lewis-Palmer High School Principal San- di Brandl spoke of her school of 977 stu- dents, of which 17 percent are gifted, 16.6 percent are minority, 9 percent qualify for free/reduced lunch and 9 percent are dis- abled. Eighty-five percent of the class of 2015 plans to attend two- or four-year post- secondary programs.

The school offers 21 advanced place- ment (AP) courses, giving 502 tests to 363 students. Brandl said that she encourages students to take AP courses in areas that excite them, because these courses give them a good view of college-level classes. Also, the school shares a partnership with the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs, which allows students to get college credit for specific classes.

The school is also a participant in Project Lead the Way, offering classes in engineering and biomedicine. It has been named a John Irwin School of Excellence nine times and has one of the highest grad- uation rates in the state.

The next meeting of the District Account- ability Advisory Committee will be at 7 p.m. on Nov. 10 at Palmer Lake Elemen- tary School, 115 Upper Glenway, Palmer Lake.

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Donald Wescott Fire Protection District, Oct. 20

New insurer sought; salary increase proposed  
By Jennifer Green-Lanchoney
The Donald Wescott Fire Protection Dis- trict board discussed the need for a new insur- er and a proposed salary increase at its Oct. 20 meeting.

Proposed 2016 budget change  
Despite being on the list of approved insur- ers, Colorado HealthOp has now gone un- der, leaving Wescott and many others to search for new insurance. While the in- crease of only $2,400 a year was a win over the $36,000 increase proposed by their pre- vious insurance agency, it was too big to be too big to be turned down, administrative assistant Stacey Popovich.

Because Wescott will search for new insurance, this will change the bottom line of the proposed budget. The other line that will change is workers compensation. Popovich is working with Pinnacle insur- ance, which has recently gone through a structural rework and didn’t have the num- bers available for Popovich to accurately adjust the budget.

Proposed salary increase  
A line in the budget proposes Wescott sala- ries to be increased by 7 percent. Some posi- tions, like paramedic, will be increased a bit more to keep competitive with other organizations. Wescott paramedics contract with the station to work four months on duty and then work for Wescott when they com- plete their education. Keeping competitive wages will hopefully entice them to stay beyond their contract with the station. Adding just paramedic pay meant also having to adjust the officers’ pay to stay in line with a tiered pay scale. Chief Vinny Burns also implemented step raises in the budget to be calculated into pay.

The board continues to move steadily toward a Dec. 1 approval of the 2016 bud- get, Burns said.

Administrative
The September financial statement totaled $1.33 million, which is $160,362 less than the August financial statement. The reason for the large difference is that wildland firefighting expenses came out in Septem-