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By RACHEL COLEMAN

- Leader & Times

Summer may be in full swing but the upcoming school year will get off to a start at tonight's USD 480 board meeting.



Newly elected members Matt Friedrich and Crystal Clemens will join the board, and various appointments are scheduled. Among those are board of education president and vice president, clerk and assistant board clerks, board attorney, treasurer and assistant treasurer and auditor, all for the 2013-14 school year. With board organization in place, the board will then consider a thick sheaf of resolutions, primarily “housekeeping” measures that must be updated annually. These include:

- Time, date and place for the 2013-14 school board meetings
- School lunch prices and procedures, particularly in regard to reduced-price applications
- Truancy officer appointment for each attendance center

- A calendar for the upcoming year
- Procedures for the administration of petty cash funds and purchases
- Updates to the policy handbook

Though the beginning of the next school term is just six weeks away, the board continues to view and approve employment matters, including resignations, transfers and hiring decisions. Tonight's agenda lists a variety of positions, including that of the district's human resources director, principal and administrative positions at Sunflower Intermediate School, nurse's position for both middle schools, and nearly 10 teaching positions.

New business for the night includes three large items, the broadest of which is proposed changes to the district's busing policy and requirements. According to director of auxiliary services Robert Burkey, the district continues to juggle the increasing number of students who use the bus with the limited availability of bus drivers.

"The district must look at ways to reduce the number of eligible riders and maintain a pool of bus drivers," he noted in his proposal. Burkey suggests that USD 480 change the mileage restrictions for all age groups except for the youngest students who attend kindergarten and first grade. He also wants to increase driver pay, increase benefits, guarantee full-time hours and ensure the drivers' jobs are listed as 12-month positions.

Director of technology Neha Patel will also ask the board to consider a larger expenditure for her department, as the media specialist position remains unfilled. Listed at a salary of \$35,000, the job's pay has "been the deciding factor for [qualified applicants] not accepting the position," Patel said in her report. Patel proposes the district move a current district employee, currently earning a salary of \$53,000, into the media specialist position for the same rate of pay.

The position focusses on the district's media presence on Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, its

New school board members take seats tonight

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newsletters and website content, as well as work with district employees and networks.

Finally, the board will vote on a proposal by McDermott Elementary School to install an artificial-turf soccer field on the school's playground. The school's booster club raised funds to build and install the synthetic field. The board may consider installation of a 10-foot-high fence to surround the new equipment. Cost of the field is \$54,500, which is what the agenda item requests, and cost of the fence would be \$10,560.

USD 480 board meets at 6:30 p.m. tonight at the Education Service Center, located at 624 N. Grant. As always, the meeting is open to the public, and its agenda and reports are available for viewing online at www.usd480.net.

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