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School board meets tonight

By RACHEL COLEMAN

• Leader & Times

Getting back to school after a long summer can pose a challenge, but children from two trailer-home parks on Liberal's north end are having an even tougher time this year. That's because USD No. 480 altered its bus boundaries, trimming back the neighborhoods eligible for bus service. Among them were the Western and Cimarron Mobile Home parks on north Western Avenue.

At its regular meeting tonight at 6:30 p.m. at the Education Service Center, the USD 480 Board of Education will hear about a petition from parents, asking the district to reinstate eligibility.



In his report to the board, auxiliary services director Robert Burkey noted that on Sept. 13, “a file folder containing a petition to reinstate the busing eligibility for students in the Western and Cimarron Mobile home parking lots was left at Central Office.” With the start of the 2013-14 school year, “that area does fall outside of the new parameters for intermediate-, middle-, and high school-aged students,” Burkey’s report stated.

Boundaries for busing of elementary-age children did not change.

“All concerns expressed to us are taken seriously,” Burkey stated. Though the district’s transportation committee has already discussed the issue, it’s expected to spark discussion at tonight’s USD 480 board meeting.

In other business, the board will hear reports from various directors including Sheri King, director of federal programs. King’s report noted two issues that require thought as the board looks to the future.

The first, dual-language instruction in Liberal schools, has come to the board’s attention in previous meetings.

“The resonating question asked deals with funding, and is the funding for the program benefiting the most number of students possible,” King stated in her report. To find an answer, King has begun to assemble “a core committee of BOE members, staff, and parents to evaluate information regarding staffing, curriculum, assessment, and associated costs of the dual language program at McDermott Elementary and Sunflower Intermediate.”

Meeting twice a month from October until the end of the year, the committee will aim to make recommendations about whether and how USD 480 should pursue dual-language programs. King is requesting at least one board member join the committee.

King also provided information about the early childhood advisory board, which is scheduled for

its first meeting at 11:30 Thursday, at the Education Service Center. After a tumultuous summer, with Liberal's daycare and preschool options in upheaval, the group will take a look at pre-kindergarten opportunities currently available for students in Liberal. Board members Chris Jewell, Tammy Sutherland-Abbott and Matt Friederich sit on that committee.

In special action, the board will also vote on who should represent the USD 480 Board of Education in negotiations with the City of Liberal. As recommended by Superintendent of Schools Paul Larkin and Director of Finance Jerry Clay, BOE president Delvin Kinser, and members Steve Helm and Friederich have been nominated as Long Range Financing Committee members. As such, they would meet with the Liberal City Commission's panel to discuss financing options for the district's upcoming bond issue.

The entire school board agenda, along with reports from directors, is available for viewing online at www.usd480.net. Tonight's meeting is open to the public, beginning at 6:30 p.m. at the ESC, 624 N. Grant Ave.

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