

By Rachel Coleman

- Leader & Times

With a monthlong flurry of special meetings and planning sessions bringing them together, members of the USD No. 480 school board might not be blamed for feeling they've got to stop meeting like this. Nonetheless, the board will convene for its regular meeting at 6:30 p.m. today at the district's Education Service Center, 624 N. Grant.

Packed with routine and new matters, the evening's agenda is a long one. Part of it relates to events planned for later in the week.

- Tuesday, representatives from the district are scheduled to meet with the Liberal City Commissioners at their regular meeting. Superintendent of schools Paul Larkin, along with board members Delvin Kinser, Steve Helm and Matt Friederich, will present the sales tax question to the city. At the Sept. 21 meeting, the board appointed Kinser, Helm and Friederich to the Long Range Financing Committee to that job.



- Wednesday, the board will meet at 6 p.m. at the ESC for a Competency Based Grading work session open to the public. Liberal High School principal Keith Adams is slated to make a

presentation, along with several teachers, and the public will be invited to take part in an open session. In his report to the board, Larkin noted that it is his intention “following the public comment for board members to have the opportunity for questions.”

Directors’ reports presented to the board included information about the ongoing school year. Robert Burkey, director of auxiliary services, noted an increase in the number of students enrolled in the district’s free- and reduced-price school meal plan. At this time last year, 3,107 students had signed up for lower-cost food; this year, the total sits at 3,192. Burkey also explained the district’s new approach to disposing of surplus items, which include outdated electronic equipment — overhead projectors, VHS camcorders, stereo systems, televisions, cassette players and VHS players — as well as some furniture items, most of them broken.

“We will be hosting a public view and bid sell of those items,” he stated in his report. The district is still looking for the best place to display the items for inspection by potential buyers. Dates and times for the viewing and sale date will be published in the newspaper and on the district’s website.

“If the process is successful, we will plan on holding more as items become available,” Burkey added.

According to director of human resources Jason McAfee’s report, the district gained students this year, though not as many as expected. Based on the Sept. 20 enrollment count, USD 480 increased by 42 students from the same time last year. The largest increases came among the oldest and youngest classes in the district: kindergarten increased by 56 students, and 12th grade by 61. The next largest increase in class size appeared in the 4th-grade classrooms, which grew by 40 students in all.

The board will tackle a long list of new business items, including discussion of the purchase of a new bus for the district, acceptance of grants and gifts, and needs in the special education department.

In preparation for the district’s upcoming bond issue and facility needs projects, the board will also discuss hiring a Construction Manager at Risk (CMAR) in order to help sort through project proposals and potential costs. The district has yet to formulate a specific construction plan,

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because it hopes to gather more information from the public about what taxpayers and voters would be willing to approve. In the past, the district's construction committee evaluated potential plans, prices and contractors. However, at the recommendation of DLR architects, the board might opt to hire a professional CMAR.

The Monday board meeting is scheduled to wrap up with an executive session, called for the purpose of discussing personnel matters, in order to protect the privacy interests of an individual non-elected person working in the district.