

Tonight's meeting starts at 5:30

By RACHEL COLEMAN

• Leader & Times

It's an earlier-than-usual start time for their meetings, but members of the USD 480 board of education will meet at 5:30 tonight at the Education Service Center, 624 N. Grant Ave.

The evening's agenda includes just two items, hefty in scope and detail. Local accounting firm Byron Bird & Associates will present the 2012-13 audit required by law.

The 50-page document may be viewed by the public through a link on the district's website. To access the file, click on "school board" on the home page of www.usd480.net, then pull down the menu to show "agendas." A small calendar highlighting dates of school board meetings will display. By clicking today's date, then the appropriate agenda item, a site visitor can download and/or view the audit.



Tonight's meeting also includes the item "Future Facility Needs." On the heels of a three-month project to gather public input, the board is expected to firm up details — or possibly even vote on — a plan for a school bond issue to bring to the public in a special election in April 2014. With deadlines relating to election practice and scheduling, as well as possible changes to state funding for school construction, architectural consulting firm DLR has strongly advised the board to work faster rather than slower as the year draws to an end.

Another factor in crafting a tight schedule is the inclusion of a sales tax component in the upcoming bond issue. Through an arrangement with the Liberal City Commission, the school board will ask voters to approve a 1/2-cent sales tax. This will appear as a separate question on the ballot.

The idea, all parties have agreed in discussion, is that the election will be a "double yes" proposal. If voters say "yes" to the sales tax, it will only take effect if they also say "yes" to the bond issue. If they say "yes" to the bond issue, its implementation rests on a "yes" vote for the sales tax. If either measure fails, nothing will be done.

However, no formal language has specified this structure, and that is the kind of fine-tuning the board will take up tonight and in the coming months.

Tonight's meeting is open to the public.