

By RACHEL COLEMAN

• Leader & Times

A regular USD 480 board of education meeting at 6:30 p.m. tonight will set the stage for the district's operations in 2014-15 and beyond, with administrators and directors up for contract renewal.

Wrapping up previously tabled business, the board will vote on whether to extend contracts for Superintendent of Schools Paul Larkin and Deputy Superintendent Renae Hickert through the 2015-16 school year. Both are wrapping up the first year of work in their current positions after earning promotions about a year ago.



In a related but separate item, the board will also vote on re-employment of the following administrators for the 2014-15 school year. The following administrators are being recommended for re-employment for 2014-15:

Directors Vicki Adams, Robert Burkey, Jerry Clay, Lana Evans, Sheri King, Jason McAfee, Neha Patel, Jill Stout;

Principals Keith Adams, Troy McCarter, Gib Rito, Jennifer Workman, Donna Sill, Kendra Haskell, Melinda Cline, Shawna Evans, Kathy Fitzgerald, Cindy Jones, Gloria Quattrone and Traci Mettlen;

Assistant principals at LHS Rafe Begley, Ashley Kappelmann, Roland Van Wyhe and Shiloh Vincent; at South and West Middle Schools Jason Diseker and Ty Hamilton; at Cottonwood and Sunflower Intermediate Schools Jonathan Schneider and Dedre Schneider; and elementary school assistant principal Audrey Johnson.

Tonight's meeting will also address several long-running issues at the state and local levels.

In his report, Larkin provided a brief synopsis of how a recent decision by the Kansas Supreme Court regarding school finance might affect USD 480. It's not clear whether the local board will discuss the ruling at tonight's meeting, but as the lawsuit focused on inequities in how school financing is distributed across the state, it is likely to affect Liberal.

Attending to business of local concern, Hickert listed a Competency-Based Grading update by Liberal High School personnel among the items she plans to present to the board. At the last meeting, board member Tammy Sutherland-Abbott pressed Hickert for more follow-up on the issue. Sutherland-Abbott specifically asked that Hickert include information from teachers who do not support CBG.

In his report, Human Resources and Public Relations Director Jason McAfee discussed teachers new and old.

"Recruiting season is well underway," he stated, listing recruiting trips to Wichita State, Kansas University, Emporia State and the Associated Colleges of Central Kansas in Salina. "Thus far we have interviewed approximately 40 candidates and have a certified recommendation for one of those candidates. Additional recruiting trips are planned through mid-April," he stated.

As for teachers currently employed by the district, awards season is underway. With nominations for Kansas Teacher of the Year due in McAfee's office last month, 42 total teachers

were nominated by their peers, some receiving multiple nominations.

On March 25, the KTOY committee will select a teacher of the year for each building as well as select the overall district elementary and secondary teachers of the year, McAfee reported.

"The overall elementary and secondary winners will be nominated by our district for the state teacher of the year competition," he noted.

Looking ahead to next year's athletic seasons, the basketball team has requested board approval to participate in a basketball tournament in February 2015, one day of which is a Wednesday. The football program has announced its plan to purchase \$11,458 worth of football helmets and shoulder pads, using money from an anonymous donation of just more than \$16,000.

The return of spring means lawn-mowing season will soon begin, and the district is in the market for a new mower. According to information provided by Director of Auxiliary Services Robert Burkey, it's time to buy a new machine. The district owns three Dynamo mowers though the parent company has gone out of business.

"Parts are rare and limited," Burkey noted, reminding the board that the decision was made last year to use one mower as parts in order to keep the other two in working order. The oldest with the most hours, a 1999 model with 3,250 hours, is being parted out.

To add to the district's fleet, Burkey proposed buying a Toro model mower, which he selected based on "durability, price, versatility and reputation of the make and model," for just more than \$18,000.

Burkey will also present the board with his plans for a four-day work week during the summer.