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Tonight's meeting addresses buildings, bus fuel, state tests

By RACHEL COLEMAN

• Leader & Times

The USD 480 board of education will meet at 6:30 p.m., its first official event of 2014 after a year-end flurry of special meetings in December.

Tonight's agenda is routine, with reports from administrative staff about the biggest issues ahead. In his report, superintendent of schools Paul Larkin outlined the timeframe for the district's upcoming bond issue.



A special board meeting is set for 5:30 p.m. Jan. 13 (a week from today) to hear a summary presentation from the community Vision Team, which has spearheaded the facility improvement effort. That meeting may also include results from the citizen phone survey conducted during the holiday break.

No action will be taken by the board next Monday. A regular meeting on Jan. 20 is the target date for approval of a resolution.

Another key issue the district faces in the next calendar year is state assessments. After discarding the No Child Left Behind and AYP measurements, districts in Kansas are in the process of adopting a new system to evaluate how schools are performing. At tonight's school board meeting, deputy superintendent of schools Renae Hickert and director of data and testing Jill Stout will introduce the district's new measuring stick, "Annual Measurable Objectives," or AMO.

"This is the new AYP," Hickert noted in her agenda item. "Mrs. Stout and I will present a brief overview of this new accountability system."

Along with routine reports about building use, maintenance and transportation, auxiliary services director Robert Burkey submitted information about a potential money-saver for the district — Compressed Natural Gas. Burkey and Larkin attended a Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) presentation in December in order to explore more cost-effective fuel measures. Burkey hopes to learn more in an upcoming trip.

"We continue to watch CNG and other alternative fuel sources for the district," Burkey stated. "As much travel in and out of district as we do, it is imperative that we keep an eye on anything that might benefit us now and in the future."

An agenda item submitted by Burkey requests permission to attend a one-day conference at Independence, Mo., to see firsthand how a school district implemented use of CNG. In many cases, CNG costs just one third the price of diesel fuel, "and is therefore worth our attention," Burkey noted.

Other items on tonight's agenda include:

- Introduction of a new course at Liberal High School, "Applied Nutrition for Health," in conjunction with Seward County Community College/Area Technical School. The class would

be part of the district's ongoing efforts to provide career pathways coursework. If approved, the class would be added to the 2014-15 academic roster of course options.

- Acceptance of a grant from Blue Cross Blue Shield of Kansas, awarded to Garfield Elementary School on the basis of its "healthy school" status.
- Approval of the sale of unneeded and used textbooks to the Follett company, which buys back such items in good condition. The district proposes selling 273 used books with an estimated value of \$532. As with all used-book sales, the final payment will depend upon the condition of the books.

The USD 480 board of education meeting will take place at the Education Service Center, 624 N. Grant, and is open to the public. The agenda items and accompanying reports may be viewed via the district's website, www.usd480.net.

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