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By VICTORIA CALDERON

• Leader & Times

On Monday night, members of the USD No. 480 Board of Education interviewed several qualified candidates, but had to choose only one to take Crystal Clemens's spot. They chose Matt Durler to do the job.



Although not a Liberal native, Durler was born and raised in Dodge City, so he is familiar with life in Southwest Kansas. He moved to Liberal in 2007 and has been here with his family ever since.

Durler, the Vice President of marketing for Conestoga Energy Partners, has proved his commitment to the community through his involvement with the Finance Council at Saint Anthony's Parish and as a member of the Knights of Columbus.

Durler has connections within the school district: his sister is a second grade teacher at Lincoln

Elementary. This gives him “unique insight into what a teacher actually goes through,” he said.

He also has two daughters enrolled in the dual language program at McDermott Elementary: Hannah, who is in first grade, and Rebecca, who in kindergarten.

Durler also answered a few questions about his upcoming experience with the board.

Question: What are your expectations for the school board?

Answer: “I see the board as being supportive to our administration, looking for ways to support but also push the envelope as far as helping our students differentiate themselves through the experiences we can offer here in Liberal,” Durler said.

Q: What are you looking forward to most in regard to this experience?

A: “There’s a wealth of knowledge among the existing board members... Superintendent Larkin seems to be a very sharp individual. So just being a part of it and trying to help out whenever I can.”

Q: What are you most worried or concerned about when it comes to serving on the board?

A: “I believe I have a very steep learning curve, being new to the school board and 480 in general. So making sure that I carry my own weight and am able to provide value to the school board.”

Q: Why do you believe that you are qualified for the position?

A: "With my two young children at McDermott right now... I bring a fair bit of business experience that can parlay into this but also have a vested interest in seeing our kids as well as our community succeed."

Q: How do you think your job at Conestoga and your business experience could help you bring a different perspective to the school board?

A: "While we want to provide all the opportunities that we can to our students, we also have to run it as a business. We have to be very budget conscious. I'm very fiscally conservative personally; I think it's very important to make the most of the resources that we have, and always evaluate new cost expenditures on their merits rather than being an open checkbook."

Q: What made you decide to join the school board?

A: "I was very encouraged by the ingenuity the board showed by the way they put the bond package together, and presenting a unique approach to finding the funding they needed. So I was very encouraged by that, and by seeing the amount of momentum we have in the community right now, and a bond that passes by 70 percent is really something we can build upon. So this is a great time to get involved and do my part to help ensure that we keep taking those steps forward."

Q: Do you have any other comments?

A: "I'm just excited about the opportunity to work within the district and with the people here in Liberal," Durler concluded.

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