



**Independent School Dist. No. 857**  
**100 County Road 25**  
**Lewiston, MN 55952**  
**(507) 523-2191**

*Gwen Carman, Superintendent*  
*Cory Hanson, High School Principal • Dave Riebel, Elementary/Intermediate Principal*

**Superintendent's Report to the School Board**  
**February 8, 2021**  
**Submitted by Gwen Carman**

**Board Meeting Agenda Notes:**

- Contract with Arnold's for Custodial Services We have been unable to hire a replacement to fill our open custodian position. This has been problematic because it has required our existing staff to do much more shifting between buildings, and we are even more short staffed if anyone is absent or the grounds or sidewalks need attention due to winter weather. As you know the required sanitizing has also added additional work this year, and we most recently have added winter sports in the high school. This short term contract (through May 2021) will enable us to have more consistency and make us less vulnerable to not getting the necessary daily cleaning/sanitizing done. This contract will focus on the elementary school classrooms, bathrooms, hallways and the early childhood wing- Cardinal Club closes at 6:00pm. With Mr. Thein's upcoming retirement (on the Consent Agenda), we will be reviewing our custodial and staffing needs for 2021-2022.
- Teacher Hire (Retro) On the Consent Agenda is an item to hire Kaleb Stoppelmoor to be our Agricultural Education teacher, with a retro hire date of 5-11-2020. Mr. Stoppelmoor was offered and accepted a position with the district prior to May 11, 2020. However, he inadvertently was never officially hired by the School Board even though he has been teaching here for the entire school year.
- Board Officers Policy/Check Signing In talking with Merchants Bank and MinnWest Bank, I have become aware that we need to establish greater consistency in who are approved check signers at the banks, Board Policy and which Board signatures are actually on our checks. The updated MSBA recommended policy (on the agenda for a first reading) reads that the Board Chair and Clerk sign the checks. It is my recommendation we proceed to follow this practice. If supported by the Board, I will coordinate with Chair Brummer and Clerk Meisch to get the appropriate authorizations in place.

In addition, I recommend that our Business Office establish a more consistent pattern to have the Treasurer review our monthly bills in greater detail prior to the monthly Board meeting. The Treasurer could ask questions the Business Manager or I questions about the bills, and then report to the Board on her review, e.g., bills to note that might be atypical or significant, or that all bills are typical - and she recommends approval. I suggest this just as 'good practice' to make sure the Board has a more intentional process to review our expenditures.

- Closed Session Logistics: The last agenda item will be to go into Closed Session for the purposes of discussing my mid-year evaluation. This is one of the select reasons a Board can go into closed session. At the March meeting, Chair Brummer will need to publicly provide a summary of the evaluation. Because we are meeting remotely, this is how this will work:
  - Board Chair will announce that the meeting is going into closed session and why.

- We will all 'leave' the public ZOOM meeting, and re-enter a different ZOOM meeting. I will send that link/invite to in a separate email to you. I will record the ZOOM Closed Session but it will not be made available to the public.
- At the end of the Closed Session, we will return to the public meeting ZOOM link and adjourn the meeting.

### **COVID-19 Related Updates**

- Vaccinations for Staff: I will have an update for the Board at the meeting. This has been an evolving situation. It was very exciting that 17 of our staff were able to be scheduled for vaccinations this week alone (through Feb 6<sup>th</sup>). This included multiple sources of distributions, including directly from Winona County Public Health.
- COVID-19 cases in our schools: As I write this, we have still only experienced one quarantine situation from one student and there was no classroom spread. Many area schools have experienced numerous quarantine situations.
- Learning Models: We will continue to monitor vaccination timelines, case rates and guidance from MDE as we consider whether or not we could invite all 7-12 grade students to be in school every day. We would also need clarity what/if any transportation restrictions we may have under this scenario.

### **Additional Updates**

- Invitations to Interview to Construction Firms Attached is a draft letter that I would like to send to the three school construction firms that we have identified to interview on March 22. Please read through the letter to make sure we all have the same understanding of the process we are beginning.
- L-A High School Graduation Planning Principal Hanson and the senior advisors have begun having preliminary discussions about Commencement. It is our sincere hope that we will be able to have a 'traditional' Commencement ceremony with parents (only) of the graduates socially distanced in the gym. This is tentative of course, pending COVID-19 case rate data and any future guidance from MDE or Governor Walz. We will monitor space to see how many additional teachers or how many Board members can also attend the ceremony. We will also plan to livestream the ceremony.

In regard to handing out the diplomas, I am told that this has been handled in different ways the past few years. At the request of the senior advisors and with support from Dr. Hanson and myself, we recommend:

- 1) The superintendent and Board Chair are on the stage to hand each graduate their diploma.
- 2) If any other board member has a son or daughter graduating, then that Board member has the option to come to the stage for their child's diploma presentation (the Board Chair steps back). After the child receives his/her diploma, the "parent" Board member leaves the stage and the Board Chair resumes handing out the diplomas.

I understand completely the emotional pride a parent feels when a child receives his/her diploma. I think it is appropriate for Board members to be able to present their child's diploma if s/he would like to do that. However, I believe it is important to be consistent with this year to year and we should limit the stage to one Board member as best practice, and this is most typical for high school graduations.

- Amended Budget & Planning 2021-22 We are in the process of reviewing this year's budget and I plan to have an amended budget recommendation for the March 8<sup>th</sup> meeting. Teresa and I will be meeting with the principals and department heads to discuss both the current year's budget as well as anticipated needs/changes for 2021-22.
- January Wellness Walking Challenge As a member of the Districtwide Wellness Committee (Chaired by Sharon Manley), I coordinated a walking challenge January 1-31. 25 staff members faithfully recorded our steps and reported them (most) weeks. Our month total was 7,809,332 steps! This was done as part of a Southeast Service Cooperative challenge done with 10 area schools. We finished in 7<sup>th</sup> in the 'avg steps per person.'

Special recognition to our Top 5 Finishers:

1. Kari Huddleston: 698,705 steps
  2. Ginny Reszka: 462,803 steps
  3. Amy Benke: 417,985 steps
  4. Erin Spencer: 413,239 steps
  5. Marcia O'Duggan: 366,401 steps
- High School Student Board Representative: I met with Ms. Spencer and the high school student council and discussed the upcoming process for juniors and seniors to apply to be a non-voting member of the School Board. The student would share a monthly report on high school activities, and also be a 'voice' on topics important to students. It is our plan to have a member selected in time for the March 8 Board Meeting.
  - Retirement Bells: Connie Meyer and I presented retirement bells to staff who retired last year. Admittedly, this was a late recognition, but still very important and appreciated. Pictured here Karen Gatzlaff (31 years, Paraprofessional) and Linda Lehnertz (17 years, Food Service). Not pictured but also receiving bells were Michelle Egland (10 years, Cardinal Club) and Dawn Church-Webster (21 years, Paraprofessional).





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*Gwen Carman, Superintendent*  
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February 9, 2021

*Nexus, ICS, Ingensa*

Dear

The Lewiston – Altura School Board invites you to interview to conduct a comprehensive review of the needs of our school facilities and to be a potential long-term partner in addressing our facility needs.

Specifically, we will interview three firms at the Lewiston High School Library on Monday, March 22. Your firm's presentation will begin at (6pm, 6:45, 7:15pm)\_\_\_\_\_. Please plan for no more than a total of 40 minutes for your time with the School Board, including at least 10 minutes for questions from the Board members. It is our hope to do this in a 'live face to face' setting. However, if the COVID-19 factors prohibit this, I will notify you by March 10<sup>th</sup> so you can plan accordingly.

What you should know about us:

- Our community, staff and Board members are extremely committed to our students and school district. It is our strong belief that together, we will establish a shared vision on how we can maintain a strong and sustainable district and prepare each of our students with an exemplary 21<sup>st</sup> Century education with assurance that each student will graduate career and/or college ready.
- Our district has three separate locations- Lewiston Elementary (PK-4), Altura Intermediate School (Gr. 5-6) and Lewiston High School (Gr. 7-12). Our bus facility is located at the Elementary School site.
- Our enrollment is currently 725 K-12 students. In 2013 it was 745 students.
- We are currently financially healthy, but we recognize that we must identify strategies to be more cost efficient and 'right size' for the declining enrollment our district has experienced. In addition, we have increased expenses in providing a broad spectrum of academic opportunities to meet the diverse needs of students.
- We want the facilities assessment to occur April – June 2021. We will determine a public presentation date for your findings to happen in June 2021.
- Specifically, we are looking for your professional work in summarizing the current physical conditions of our buildings, grounds, classrooms, offices and needs for improvements with cost estimates.

- We would also like you to meet with administrators, teachers and other staff to understand our current working and teaching conditions, our challenges and hopes for improvements to better meet the needs of students and the school district.
- We will also be engaging in a Community Engagement Process in the upcoming months. We will be hiring a facilitator for this that is not directly affiliated with a construction firm. We tentatively anticipate this will be completed by October 2021. It is our intent for the facility assessment information to be an integral part of these discussions with our community and staff. We will utilize both written surveys and public meetings as part of this process. We plan for the community engagement process summaries (with the facility assessment information) to be essential for the School Board to develop a detailed Strategic Plan for 2022-2027.

Through your March 22<sup>nd</sup> interview, the School Board will expect to learn from you:

- Your company's history, current size and structure, and examples of work you have done with similarly sized school districts. Please provide references.
- Specifics on how you would conduct a facilities assessment and what we could expect as a final product.
- Your proposal of how you would partner with our School Board through the community engagement process, strategic planning and potentially a referendum process for comprehensive facility improvements.
- Your costs and fees for your services – for the facility assessment process and potentially as a Construction Manager, General Contractor and/or as a Owner's Representative if we were to commit to a larger construction project(s). Please be clear, specific and complete. Please provide us with this information in written materials as well.
- What would the cost to the school district if you complete the facility assessment, but a large construction project does not happen?
- How does your company manage construction projects, and select/work with sub-contractors? What components of the work would you use your own company's labor and what components would you bid the work to others?
- Anything else you would like to share with us to help us know everything about your company and to assist the Board in their decision making.

Prior to March 22<sup>nd</sup>, I invite you to visit our school district, tour our facilities and meet with our Building and Grounds Supervisor and myself. We can plan up to 3 hours for this. Please contact me if you would like to schedule a date/time for this. Please understand all COVID-19 health and safety protocols must be adhered to throughout your visit.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me. My phone number is 507-522-3401 and my email address is [gcarman@lewalt.k12.mn.us](mailto:gcarman@lewalt.k12.mn.us).

Thank you for willingness to be part of this exciting process for the Lewiston – Altura School District!

Sincerely,

Gwen Carman  
Superintendent

