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00:17 Hi everybody. Welcome back to our returning listeners and welcome if this is your first time listening. We're so happy to have you all with us today. Thank you for joining us for season two, episode seven of the Lion Pride cast, a podcast created by the Lansing Unified School District 469 located in Lansing, Kansas.

00:32 The purpose of this podcast is to inform our Lansing stakeholders being our community members, students and staff about all things education. We are your host. I am Miles Azzeh, Director of Teaching and Learning in Lansing USD 469. And I am Sharon Burns, the Director of Communications and Marketing. So January is School Board Appreciation Month. And today we are excited to have back a returning guest and a tradition we want to continue on our podcast, our board president, Mr. Jeff Bollin. So thank you for being on again. Yes, I'm glad to be here and thanks for having me on again.

01:02 Excited. I'm so happy that you're here again because we had talked last year. We hoped that you'd be back, and partially I was hoping that we still had a podcast and we do. But then the other part was it would be you, 'cause I love you, Jeff. I think you do an amazing job. Can you reflect on your last year as the board president and as a board member? Yeah. It was a very exciting year. We started out the year as I'm sure everyone remembers with the strategic planning.

01:30 I kind of got in in the middle of that taking over as president and was part of that getting it finished and you guys had a vital part in getting that finalized. And we got that approved and passed, I believe, in April. So extremely excited about that. And then we moved into looking for a new Superintendent with the Superintendent search. So that was another task that not every president would have to go through.

01:57 So that was a little trying in the beginning just because it was right after I took over. So, but it was very learn, very good learning experience, and I think everything went well. And then, of course, transitioning over the summer from Superintendent Wessel leaving to Mr. Kobesa coming in. So going through the whole transitional process was also an experience, but I feel like everything's went pretty smooth. Of course, also with the election year also.

02:27 So yeah, yeah. You really did have a busy January through December. Yeah, because that was November, obviously, with the elections. Yeah. It was a busy year, I will say. Well, you did well. You held your own. Yeah. Thank you. Well, we talked about goals last year. And one of your goals was unifying the district. Do you feel you've done that? How do you feel about that? I feel like from this time last year, we've made very good strides toward that. I think there's always going to be room for improvement.

02:58 But like I talked just a minute ago about the strategic plan that helped bring a lot of the community together and get them in a room with students and staff and board members and everyone working toward the same common goals. I think that really got us a good step in the right direction. And then going from that into Superintendent Search, which was also involving, you know, staff, board members, community, everybody.

- 03:26 And I felt like everybody really came together during that as well to try to make the best choice for the district in the end. And also with that was the with the facility committee planning. We had some open meetings at 10:00 and 2:00 coffee where we invited community members in to talk about the issues we had with facilities because transparency was a big issue.
- 03:53 A lot of people didn't know the problems that we had and the issues we were facing. And having those meetings, it brought in people that don't regularly listen to board meetings and aren't always there. And it was a huge advantage for me as a board member and the other facility committee members to be able to hear those community members speak and really get to know what the issues were. And also staff showed up and brought up issues that we didn't know we had either.
- 04:25 And with that process, that kind of is what got us into the whole facility audit, which we are getting ready to start going through now to really put into place. So yeah, I definitely would say one of your strengths has been you listen, you know, and you welcome people to come to you and talk to you. And we talked a little bit about that last year, but you really do listen and encourage people to come talk to you because that's how we all grope, you know. Well, I appreciate that.
- 04:49 And that's, I mean, it's a very valuable asset to have, especially in the position I'm in to where you have to listen to know what the problems are and what people's issues are. Because if you can't listen to everyone, then. We're not going to all work toward the same common goal. You brought up a couple times. And by the way, I'm really excited about the facilities audit and the direction that we're going with that because even me, myself, somebody who's worked for the district now for over two years and been in the buildings constantly, I didn't realize how many things that were not necessarily wrong, but maybe needed updates or we really needed to put eyes on it.
- 05:28 So I'm really happy that we're moving that direction. But you've brought up the superintendent search a couple times. Can you talk a little bit about that experience for you? You know, I was thinking about it and talked to you earlier. There are some board members that'll go their entire term, couple terms maybe and never go through a superintendent search. So what was that experience like for you while it was probably trying? Are you happy that you went through it? I think in the end, I think it was the best for the district in the end.
- 05:57 And as you said, yeah, a lot of board members have never gone through it and may never go through it. But I believe for us it was good and it was a very eye opening experience for me because I mean, some of our candidates we had in all back up. First, you know, we had a big, large pool of candidates and then once we got them narrowed down, then as the board president, part of my responsibility was contacting all those candidates we wanted to interview.
- 06:28 So I contacted all them, set up the interviews, and I believe you guys had a big part in doing the tours for them. They each spent a whole day with the district. And then the community community members had a Q&A with each each candidate as well. And it was really eye opening to. When the board did the interview process to see that some of those candidates were bringing issues to us that maybe we hadn't even seen yet.
- 06:57 Yeah. Just from their research to apply for the job. And having that outside view looking in from those candidates was really eye opening for us to kind of see things in a different direction. And during that whole process, I feel like it really helped the board kind of come together toward the common goal of what the goal was at the

time. Yeah. And we heard that on the tour when we did because we did get to know each of them spending a day with them.

- 07:25 They were, you know, very strong candidates and we were, we knew that they were gonna, you were gonna pick the best person and and I really feel like you did. So because we're very pleased with Superintendent Cobsa. Yes. So how has it been working with him? It's been quite a change from Mr. Wessel to Mr. Cobsa. I'm sure it has been a big change and I mean everything's been great and I'll give Mr. Cobsa a shout out right off the bat because I mean as soon as he accepted the job.
- 07:51 He wasn't supposed to start till July one, but I mean there was phone calls and e-mails and he was already sending out suggestions or things he wanted to get going before he got here. So he could when he landed back in Lansing, he could hit the ground running and I mean he exceeded my expectations of what to expect going in. Yeah, I couldn't ask for anything more right now. Everything in my eyes looks pretty positive moving forward and.
- 08:19 He's really easy to work with and easy to talk to and he's willing to listen to anything you have to say and. I'm just really excited right now for the future. Yeah, that's pretty accurate. One thing I like about Superintendent Cobes of that we've both talked about Sharon and I, and I imagine as a board member, you feel the same way, which is his wealth of experience, that there's really nothing that kind of shakes him, or at least nothing that he hasn't probably ran into before.
- 08:51 And I just find that the aspect very comforting as a in a leader. Every issue or problem I've brought to him, he either has a solution or knows where to go to get one. And it's very refreshing. We like that a lot. So you like working. What are your goals moving forward? So let's go back to that. We talked about unifying last year and I think you did a wonderful job of that. What are your goals moving forward for this year, your second year as board president? Well, I think a second year is, I mean, to keep continuing on with that first goal because I believe that you can never unify too much.
- 09:25 So you need to continue that process as we move forward. But I believe my goal for this year is to really get moving on the facility issues we have. We just established our new facility committee at the meeting on Tuesday. So now we're going to start having meetings, I think, next week to really look into the audit and really buckle down and put issues in place of importance so we know what we're looking at, what we need now, what we need five years from now.
- 09:59 So then we can start looking at that no tax increase bond possibility because an important thing to remember is there's a lot of issues that we have. And I know as everyone knows, prices have gone up drastically with everything and that includes construction. Everything there is needs fixed. Prices have gone up. But the issue is the longer we wait to fix them, the more it's going to cost because I don't think anything's going to come down. Yeah, very drastic very soon.
- 10:28 So the sooner we can get moving with all that, the better off it's going to be for the district in the end. OK. I like it. I'm going to shift gears now. Last year we talked about your wife, Amber, working here and for the district. And if you were concerned about the additional attention and pressure put on her, you have two kids that are in the district, an eighth grader and a sophomore, great kids. I know them very well. Has this affected them at all with you being board president or just being on the board in general? And really quick, I'm very sorry.
- 10:56 We've been referring to you as board president and Jeff, and maybe we should have been saying your holiness or Bill Padre. It's an Italian father. We'll explain it. Everybody relax. They're getting all pissed and ready to e-mail. There's a reason that I

say that Pope. What's going on there? Yeah, that's a one day. My daughter in high school, she came home and she said, yeah, my one of my friends said that you're like the Pope. What?

- 11:27 Well, I guess and I believe it was history class or I'm not sure which class they were in, but they were talking about, you know, history and everything. And they were talking the pope was part of the conversation. And I guess my daughter's friend said, yeah, your dad, he's kind of like the pope. You know, he's the board president. He's like the pope of the district. He's the pope of the district. I guess in a roundabout way, you could say.
- 11:53 Yeah, I'm not personally going to refer anything like the Pope. Has it been weird for them, though, with you being, I mean, does it affect them at all or is it just? I mean, honestly, I don't think it's affected them much at all. They're pretty much go with the flow. Yeah. Type kids, and I don't think it's affected them in class or with students or anywhere else.
- 12:21 The only thing it might affect them is that I might be at the school a little more often than they would like, but just like any other kid, you know, oh, there's my parent in the school, I'm gonna avoid them. It's a good thing, though, for them to see you being a leader and volunteering your time and all this, 'cause this is not an easy job. Yeah, no, it's been, I mean, it's been great, and they support me in what I do. They're not. Good example. Mad at me for anything I've done or anything that happens at meetings or anything like that.
- 12:50 So that kind of continues on. You had talked last time about your dad being a board president, right? So now they get to see some of those like leadership qualities, like you just said, Sharon. So that is a really cool thing. Yeah. And I doubt they're running away from you when they see you. Yeah. Maybe the high schooler. Yeah. But no, both, I mean, my daughter, especially she's really been and I don't know if it probably doesn't have anything to do with me, but she's really been involved in leadership stuff and it really interests her. So that's good to see is maybe some of the things I've done can get passed along to her.
- 13:21 Absolutely. Carry on. She'll have someone to come and ask questions to. Love it. So we've talked before about the purpose of the podcast, one of the reasons that we do this is the idea of having that growth mindset, new learning, stuff of that nature. Can you talk to us a little bit about some ways you've grown as a board member, some things that you've done this past year? Well, I think a lot of the things this year that has helped me grow is, like I said before, just a lot of the processes we've went through this year with the Superintendent search the facility committee stuff, strategic planning.
- 13:57 And then once Superintendent Cobza got in, we, myself and Mr. Cobza and Carla Uighur's former board member, we all went to the KSB convention. And that was really a great opportunity for us as board members to, number one, kind of bond with our new Superintendent, kind of get to know him on a professional level as he's interacting with the other superintendents around the state.
- 14:26 And then also to be able to involved in some of the meetings with him to see his point of view and to see other people actually ask his opinion because he's been a Superintendent for so long is really. I believe he was the first Superintendent actually. I think we'd hit that in our Yeah, I think you might have been remember that episode. Yeah. He was the superintendent. You remember that episode.
- 14:54 But between all those, I mean, I feel like that's I've learned quite a bit this year and been through a lot of experiences that has kind of helped me grow in my way of

thinking toward things. Gotcha. That's wonderful. We also want to give a shout out to Pete Robinson and to Carla Uighurs. You mentioned Carlos a second ago and to Michelle McQuillan, who are our outgoing board members who you worked with for a while. And now you're getting the opportunity to work with Kerry Brungart, Pete M. And Kirsten Workman. How do you feel about that change?

- 15:22 I think it will be a shift just mainly because with Pete Robinson and Carla and Kirsten or Carla and Michelle, you know, we have been together for two years. So we kind of we knew each other, knew how our personalities were, how we were going to react, how we thought about things during the meeting, you know, and during executive session discussions, you learn a lot about your other board members.
- 15:51 And to go from that point of really knowing your board members and then transitioning almost half the board to where you don't really know much at all about them, I think that's going to be a transition. And it does. It takes time to really know your other board members if you haven't known them before this. But I think it'll be good. I think over the next couple of months we'll really learn a lot about each other and hopefully. They will do the same.
- 16:20 You know, on them coming in, we'll learn about the current members as well. So we can all kind of mesh together and get on the same page and really start moving forward. Yeah. Well, I do want to say on behalf of the district that we're very appreciative of you. You know, I know January is Board Appreciation Month, but this is not an easy job. I mean, we've talked about it, and I know you guys gotta get a lot of heat. You can't make everybody happy, but we are very appreciative. You don't get paid well.
- 16:45 So yeah, the paycheck isn't very good, but it is a really, it's a group effort. Every board member on the board brings their own unique talent to the board and they have their own way of researching and doing things. Just like I was talking about the conference a few minutes ago and Carla Uighurs, she brought, she got a great idea about a DOD grant down there and we would have been eligible for that for many years and we didn't know anything about it.
- 17:18 Yeah. And she went to part of the showcase down there and learned about it and she hit the ground running and brought it to Marty and I believe you guys are working on it now. Hopefully we can get to be a piece of that. And that's one of the great things about the conferences like that. KASB and bringing so many people across the state together. That's a perfect example of that was in Wichita, but we were eligible for that same grant and we knew nothing about it. Yep.
- 17:47 And if it wasn't for that conference, we probably still wouldn't know. Yep. We've conversed with the gentleman from Derby and he's told us a little bit about that. And I've got something set up with the Fort Leavenworth Superintendent. I'm going to reach out about getting even more information and you're right. It was all the way there and we didn't know about it and we're going to probably qualify for much of that since it's such a military-based grant. And just by that, I mean that's increasing our relationship with Fort Leavenworth with Leavenworth with our local districts.
- 18:20 It's just crazy to think that you go three hours away to a convention and it strengthens your relationships with everyone closer to home. Exactly. That's the good thing. Well said. Well said. Yeah. Well, we're going to switch gears here a little bit to, let's be honest, one of our favorite parts of the interview. It is trivia time. You ready for some trivia? Sure. OK, do you want to explain the trivia? Yes, we're really excited about today. This is a fun one. Yeah, so we are going to put you up against your wife.

18:50 This is Amber Bowlin, who works here in the district office with us. And the real, real quick recap of how we do the trivia, just in case first time listeners, we give our guests 10 seconds to answer a question by naming as many of a certain topic or product or whatever it may be. And they go against somebody. A lot of times we use a college recruit that we have and it's a great way for them to listen and know how cool we are. This one was just too good of an opportunity. Oh, we had to do it. So you're against your wife, Amber Bowlin. You ready? Yes. So we've already asked her a question.

19:17 I don't know if this is really fair though, 'cause usually it's against a recruit. Yeah. Did you just, are you saying our recruits are not very smart or something? No, I'm just worried about what the question is. Maybe she has an unfair advantage. I'm just worried about what you think of our recruits. Actually, she actually said you might have an unfair advantage on this one. She said you do have an unfair advantage. So I think you're going to like the question. Are you ready? Ask the question. I'll get the time going. The minute we say it, we pretty much press play.

19:47 Okay, so you're going to tell me go. Okay. Yeah, we'll say go. Okay. Name as many types of soda. Let that set for a second. Just give you a second to reflect as you can in 10 seconds. Are you ready? I'm ready. Go. Go. Pepsi Coke, Diet Coke, Dr. Pepper, Mr. Pibbs, Sprite, Mountain Dew, Fanta, root beer, barges, A&W, mug.

20:17 Wow, you got 11. I am amazed by that. I want to say why you have an unfair advantage because we picked it before and then she was like, that's not fair. Do you want to say why she might have thought that? Probably because I drank more soda than she does. Well, also because you work the soda at Oh yeah. Work concession stands all the time for the chiefs of the chiefs. Yeah yeah You went deep with those root beers. That root beer saved you, you named three in a row. Once you say root beer, you gotta hit all three. Yeah, you did.

20:45 I forgot about dad's old fashioned. Oh yeah, oh yeah. You know what I have to say. The other really funny thing about it was, I really think for the first like seven, you guys named the exact same ones almost in order. Oh, did they really? I was just like, Mountain Dew came halfway through. Let's hear the recording. Dr. Pepper, Mr. Pibb, Sprite, CRM 7UP, Pepsi, Coke, Mountain Dew, Squirt, Fanta.

21:16 Do you have 11 or 10? Yeah. I think I accidentally counted one in there. Yeah. Congratulations. You're bragging rights. Yes, yes, yes. You beat your wife at trivia. Some tells me she's actually going to be OK with it. She was pretty much sure that you were going to win and she nailed it. So all right. Well, I think that is not a great way to wrap up the episode because we have another question that we'd like to ask. Oh yeah Well, I have to tell you, I'm going to brag a little bit here for us for the podcast.

21:45 I rarely do this. And so for our seven, no eight listeners now, we found out we have a new listener. For eight listeners, please listen up because it's good for you to know. Your episode last year was our highest listen to FA? Was it that? It was up there. The parties was up there too. But it was one that we use because a lot of people brought it up and talked about it. We submitted our podcast for a couple of awards, a national and a local award. Sharon, do you want to take it from there?

22:12 By the National School Public Relations Association for your episode, as well as the Kansas Public Relations Association. Awesome award. I like to think that it was social media, yes. No, but thank you. Yes, it's you. I like to think it's you, but I'd also like to think, and it also kicked off sort of a tradition. Yes, I did. I think the rocky conversation is what put it over. I think it probably was. I had to go in and edit the episode because you guys talked about Rocky for so long. I was worried that we would get counted off. I did.

- 22:41 You cut some of the Rocky part? Well, you know what? I don't even want that award anymore. It's tainted. Doesn't mean anything. The award is tainted. The episode was talking about Rocky. Well, the award is tainted, and I don't want it. I don't want the award. Forget it. We don't have any awards. Anybody that heard that, make sure to cut that later on. So how you been doing? You know, I have to tell you, you're a Rocky fan. I'm a Rocky fan. She's not since she likes number three. But although it's not going to make sense what I'm about to say, our district attorney here in Leavenworth County, Todd Thompson, was our last guest, and he is one heck of a Rocky fan.
- 23:16 Like he knows his stuff. Really? Yeah. So just We sat and talked for probably 10 minutes after the episode was over about Rocky. Yeah. And his favorite was number three. Really? Yeah. I mean, I have to say I'm a little weirded out because he is so knowledgeable and he is obviously extremely intelligent and I love the guy. And then he said number three. So I'm having a little cognitive dissonance on that one. But we'll let it go. We'll let it go. So have you been watching? Have you watched Rocky lately?
- 23:47 I haven't watched any Rocky since the last episode. I'm sorry. I apologize. The calendar year went on without watching Rocky? Calendar year, yeah. That's not good. You went through 2023 without watching Rocky? Yeah. It was a rough year. It's still January of '24. Okay, so I expect you to watch. You know what, you deserve to be punished, so you should watch Rocky 5 first. Okay. Just because, you know, you just got to, you know, and then you can go and watch the better one. And I don't think we talked about this after the episode. We got you the Rocky shirt, and I'm kind of sad you're not wearing it today.
- 24:17 Well, it's a short sleeve shirt and it's a little cold out for that. You could have zipped down and hey, look what I got here. I got it. I got it on. So. But all right. Well, I was a little unprepared. Yeah, I should have came a little more prepared. I should have got it out of the closet. You know what's so funny is I actually think that he just gave a slight to us. That was a little unprepared. I think we weren't the most prepared today. I think that's what he's doing right now. He's smart. He's like, you're going to come at me. I'm going to come right back at you. All right, I see you with your passive aggressivism. All right, I see you. I see you.
- 24:47 Did you have a good time? Yeah, great time. Thanks for having me on again. Yeah, this is great. And we'll see you next year. Consider you a friend now after last time. You know, we barely knew you when you were on last time. Yeah. Yeah, I was a newbie now. Yeah. Yeah. Been here forever now. Like a chick. The veteran, the veteran. Yeah. All right, well, seriously, thank you for coming in. We appreciate your time and you're doing a fantastic job and we appreciate everything you and the other board members do. So thank you so much, especially during board appreciation month. We want you to know that. All right.
- 25:17 Well, I appreciate it too. And like I said, I appreciate everything you guys do and look forward to the year. Yeah, it's going to be a good one. Love it. Before we wrap up the episode, another quick shout out to the great sound quality, thanks to our LEF grants. And so thank you for the Educational Foundation. And as always, for more updates and stories on Lansing USD 469, you can visit us at [www.usd469.net](http://www.usd469.net). And if you don't already have it, download that free Lansing USD 469 app on Apple and Android.
- 25:45 That app allows you to be the first to know about all the fantastic things happening in our district. Definitely snow days because we've had a few of those recently. I cannot get over how many we've gotten and it's just this weather's nuts right now. So if you like our content, want to stay up to date on the latest episodes, please follow us wherever you are listening to us and leave a review to help others find us and learn more about our great district. We are available on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, Google

Podcasts, Amazon Music, YouTube, iHeartRadio, Castbox, Stitcher, and Pocket Cast. Let me down again. And I'm sorry.

26:13

And if you would like to be a guest on the podcast, please send us an e-mail at Sharon.burns@USD469.net. And that is a wrap on episode seven of season two. And as always. Woo. Thanks everybody.