

PALMER LAKE (Cont. from page 1)

decision to close the trail. Most of the public comments supported the council's decision to increase the fines for behavior on the trail that endangered the town's water supply, and the council debated ordinances that codified the process for closing the trail and raised fines for fires and pet-related violations.

At the April 27 meeting, the council returned to the topic of regulation of marijuana-related businesses within the town boundaries.

The council transferred a liquor license to the new proprietors of The Villa.

Forester emphasizes risk to town

Connelly said that current forest conditions are very dry, and forest management practices over the years have increased the amount of fuel present and the risk of wildfire. Intense wildfires sterilize the soil and prevent trees and plants from regenerating, she said.

She illustrated many of her points with details of how the Waldo Canyon Fire affected property she owned, pointing out that erosion following the fire can also be extremely damaging. In the case of Palmer Lake, a fire adjacent to the reservoirs that supply the town's drinking water would be catastrophic and could potentially lead to erosion that would cause the reservoirs to fill with silt and gravel. In that case, the town might need to truck in water for years.

Public questions council's decision to close trail

Many of those present took advantage of the public comment period to express their disagreement with the council's decision to close the trail to the reservoirs. They made the following arguments:

- Most hikers are responsible and would assist the town by reporting open fires

and other violations.

- Many of the town's residents chose to live in Palmer Lake specifically because of the proximity to trails and forests.
- People who chose to live in Palmer Lake accept the risk of fire.
- Eliminating access to the forest makes people not care about it as much.
- There are too many ways to access the trail to be able to effectively close it.
- The trails bring people to the town and support the local restaurants and businesses.
- Police do not respond when violations are reported.

Many of the speakers applauded the council's decision to increase the fines for fires, smoking, fishing or swimming in the reservoirs, and failing to clean up after pets. Several of the residents volunteered to donate their time to work on these issues.

Council decides to reopen trail

After the comments from the public, and to the vocal approval of the attendees, the council voted to reopen the trail immediately and to proceed with the rewriting of ordinances that clarified how the trail would be managed. People who see activity that is not allowed (listed in the ordinances below) can call the town at 481-2953 on weekdays, and a phone number for after-hours reporting is planned.

Council approves ordinances to protect town water

The council approved the following ordinances related to the discussions about fire safety and protecting the town's water:

- Ordinance 5 of 2017: The ordinance uses El Paso County fire restrictions to determine fire restrictions in Palmer Lake; it also gives the town the ability to keep those restrictions in place after the county restrictions are removed. When Palmer Lake fire restrictions

are active, the fine for an open fire is \$1,000 and for a lit cigarette is \$500.

- Ordinance 6 of 2017: The ordinance protects the water system, prohibits fishing in the reservoirs, and establishes these fines:
 - \$400 for washing, swimming, wading, or bathing in the reservoirs
 - \$1,000 for a campfire within the water system
 - Up to \$150 for any dog off leash
 - \$400 for allowing any animal to swim in the reservoirs
 - Up to \$150 for failing to remove dog feces
 - \$200 for being in the water shed area in violation of a posted sign

Council enacts ordinances to regulate marijuana-related

businesses

At the April 27 meeting, the council approved two ordinances addressing businesses that cultivate or sell marijuana in the town:

- Ordinance 8 of 2017: The ordinance puts in place a three-month moratorium on licenses for new marijuana-related businesses, with the intent of giving the town time to redraft the ordinances for these businesses.
- Ordinance 9 of 2017: The ordinance increases the maximum fines for violations from \$1,000 to \$2,650, to align with state laws.

The council also conducted a preliminary discussion of the town's ordinance on the cultivation and sale of marijuana, with the goal of consolidating the ordinances on this

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