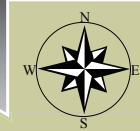


Happy New Year! from the all-volunteer staff at

# Our Community News

Volunteers reporting on community issues in Monument, Palmer Lake, and the surrounding Tri-Lakes area



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## Local Events

See pages 26-31 for details of these and many other local events.

- County's Annual Treecycle, Sat.-Sun., Dec. 30-31; Jan. 6-7, 9 a.m.-4:30 p.m.
- Christmas Tree Recycling with WMMI and Boy Scout Troop 78, Sat.-Sun., Jan. 6-7, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.
- Town of Monument Workshop: Planning 101, An Overview of the Planning Process from Start to Finish, Mon., Jan. 8, 5:30 p.m.
- Tri-Lakes Land Use Committee Meeting, Mon., Jan. 8, 6:30-8:30 p.m.
- Monument Police Department Active Shooter Class, Wed. Jan. 10, 10 a.m.-noon
- Winter Woodland Wonders Walk at Fox Run, Sat., Jan. 13, 10 a.m.-noon
- Tri-Lakes Community/Centura Blood Drive, Tue., Jan. 16, 3-7 p.m.
- Senior Trip: Pueblo Weisbrod Aircraft Museum, Fri., Jan. 19, bus leaves 9 a.m.
- Warriors Ice Fishing Tournament, Sat., Jan. 20, 9 a.m.-1 p.m.
- NEPCO Meeting, Sat., Jan. 20, 10 a.m.-noon. Trails and Open Space.
- Rocky Mountain Music Alliance Concert, Sat., Jan. 20, 7 p.m.
- Tri-Lakes Chamber Monthly Education Series: Multi-Channel Marketing Panel, Wed., Jan. 24, 11 a.m.-1 p.m.
- WMMI Winter Writer's Nonfiction Writing Class, Sat., Jan. 27, 9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
- High Altitude Gardening, Tue., Jan. 30, 10-11:30 a.m.
- 2017 State of the Region Lunch, Wed., Jan. 31, 11 a.m.-1:30 p.m.
- Community Emergency Response Training (CERT), Wed.-Sat., Jan. 31-Feb. 3, 6-10 p.m. Wed.-Fri., 8 a.m.-4 p.m. Sat.
- Palmer Lake Art Group Winter Art Show & Sale Opening Reception, Fri., Feb. 2, 6-8 p.m. ■



**Above—Santa on Patrol:** Santa, Mrs. Claus, and lots of elves descended upon the Tri-Lakes area on Saturday, Dec. 23. They came to town just a bit ahead of schedule in support of the Monument Police Department's annual Santa on Patrol event. Sleigh bells and reindeer hooves were replaced on this festive and sunny morning with equally exciting police sirens and flashing lights. A well-coordinated parade of police vehicles and fire trucks made its way from the Monument Police Department to several local neighborhoods, the unmistakable blaring sirens of each vehicle heralding the arrival of the Head Elf himself. Kids and parents excitedly ran from their homes along the parade route and in the neighborhoods where the parade made planned stops. Santa and Mrs. Claus, aided by police and fire personnel from several area units, handed out toys to wide-eyed kids as well as gift cards and other needed items to parents. Monument Police Chief Jake Shirk helped create this event to serve local children in some of the communities served by the Monument Police Department and the Tri-Lakes Monument Fire Department. The event takes weeks of work and planning by volunteers to collect and sort donated toys. On the morning of Dec. 23, the event came together in the parking lot of the Monument Police Department, where, after trucks and vehicles were loaded beyond full with toys, books, and games, Chief Shirk donned white beard and red suit. He gathered the volunteers to swear them in as "honorary elves" in a moving ceremony that reminded many of the magic of the season as seen through the eyes of children. *Photo by Erin Poole.*

### Monument Board of Trustees special meeting, Dec. 2

## Resolution increasing police base salary approved

By Lisa Hatfield

The Monument Board of Trustees had to hold a special meeting on Saturday, Dec. 2 to finalize discussion of its budget draft for 2018 so the trustees would be able to approve it on Dec. 4. The budget must be turned in to county and state on time to avoid possible sales and property tax revenue withholding, town Treasurer Pamela Smith said.

The additional meeting was necessary because at a budget workshop on Nov. 18, which OCN did not attend, Trustee Jeff Bornstein introduced last-minute changes to the Monument Police Department (MPD) salary schedule that had not previously been in any of the budget drafts. His goal was to make Monument more competitive when recruiting police officers. And at

the Nov. 20 board meeting, the board directed town staff to revise the 2018 proposed budget to reflect an increase in base salary for MPD sworn officers to \$52,000 and to draft a resolution they could formally vote on to increase police base pay. See [www.ocn.me/v17n12.htm#mbot](http://www.ocn.me/v17n12.htm#mbot).

**Note:** In 2015, newly hired officers earned a \$43,000 base salary, and in mid-2017, Police Chief Jake Shirk apparently requested this be increased to \$46,000. Several officers have left in the last few years, one empty officer position has been unfilled for over a year, one candidate who had applied recently just withdrew his application, and Shirk has reported difficulties in finding qualified candidates to apply.

MONUMENT (cont. on page 4)

Donald Wescott Fire Protection District, Dec. 5

## 2018 budget and resolutions adopted; transparency questioned

By Jennifer Kaylor

The Donald Wescott Fire Protection District (DWFPD) Board of Directors on Dec. 5 reviewed and approved the district's 2018 budget and passed resolutions that certified tax levies, appropriated funds, appointed a designated election official (DEO), and established 2018 board meeting dates. All directors were present for this end-of-year meeting.

### Chief provides review of 2018 budget

Chief Vinny Burns reported that there was very little difference between the 2017 and 2018 budgets. He noted that the general property tax revenue had been separated into two categories: one for the northern sub-district—which is taxed at 14.9 mills—and one for the "underlying or ... standing" district—which is taxed at 7 mills. Other budget features included:

- Estimated 2018 revenue of \$2.36 million, about 2 percent less than budgeted for 2017.
- Estimated 2018 expenditures of \$2.36 million, about 20 percent more than budgeted for 2017.
- A 50 percent increase in payments to Social Security for when additional part-time firefighters are hired.
- A 20 percent increase in overtime to better account for "red flag" days and cover the station if more than two firefighters are out.
- A 9 percent increase from the 2016 budget to reinstate training classes, tuition, and workshops. Training funds were unavailable during the 2017 fiscal year.
- A 24 percent increase in station operations to reopen Station 2.
- Savings of about 25 percent on property and vehicle insurance.
- Savings of about 31 percent on workers' compensation due to completion of a claim.

Burns stated that he is not requesting raises for any of the employees except for a 23 percent increase for the "horribly underpaid" administrative assistant position. He added that he plans to postpone firefighter raises at least one more year to establish stability and sustainability of the district's revenue stream.

Directing the board's attention to the 2017 budget, Burns requested a one-time retention bonus from the budget reserve for the remaining employees. The reserve is generally rolled into the next fiscal year. Estimating a rollover of \$500,000 to \$600,000, the board approved \$60,000 from the 2017 budget reserve to be divided among

DWFPD (cont. on page 2)

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