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BOCC (Cont. from 1)

impacts of the pandemic, our community members that Crossfire and Tri-Lakes Cares serves are the first to be impacted by any economic downturn and they are the last to recover, and so we are still dealing with that downturn of the economy and the struggle that community members face."

The partners are applying for CIP funding for next year. See <https://tri-lakescares.org>, and www.crossfireministries.org.

Approval for Black Forest four-lot subdivision

At the Nov. 9 BOCC meeting, the commissioners voted unanimously to approve rezoning and minor subdivision applications to create a four-

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lot subdivision, Fairytale Acres, at a Herring Road property. The request was to rezone 7.59 acres of the 14.54-acre property from RR-5 (rural residential) to RR-2.5 (rural residential). The subdivision request includes two waivers, one

to allow a private roadway instead of a public road, and the other to exempt the property from having to provide a fire cistern. The applications were heard at the Oct. 19 El Paso County Planning Commission meeting where discussion

mainly focused on the waivers. The Planning Commission voted unanimously to recommend the applications for approval. See www.ocn.me/v23n11.htm#epcpc. The BOCC heard the applications as consent items, meaning there was

no discussion, and voted 4-0 to approve. Commissioner Stan VanderWerf was absent.

Helen Walklett can be reached at helenwalklett@ocn.me.

PALMER LAKE
(Cont. from 1)

a budget workshop, the board directed the staff to prioritize infrastructure issues such as those for the water system and the roads. Trustee Samantha Padgett asked why sales tax revenue from adult use cannabis sales was lower than projected. Collins acknowledged that the tax revenues had been overestimated. Trustee Kevin Dreher pointed out that without the cannabis revenue, the budget deficit would have been even higher. He said that concerns raised during the town's consideration of adult cannabis sales such as traffic congestion and crime have not materialized.

In response to a question from Stern about the increase in utility costs, Collins answered that utility rates have increased in the last year.

Police Chief Jason Vanderpool said that the proposed reduction to the number of police officers

would make 24-hour police coverage impossible. Traffic enforcement and DUI investigations are currently done by part-time officers, he said, and those services would not be provided if the part-time positions were eliminated. He objected to a 40% cut to the Police Department funding when the current funding is half of what comparable towns provide.

Resident Martha Brodzik raised concerns with the budget proposals. Increased tap fees were not correctly budgeted, she

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said, and tap fees and capital improvement dollars could not be used for operating expenses. She argued grant funds GMS Engineering obtained went into the Water Fund, but GMS Engineering was paid out of the General Fund. She said she did not accept the explanation offered by David Green, of David Green & Associates LLC, the town's auditors. Brodzik also questioned the amount the town proposed to spend on professional services, arguing that more should be done by town staff.

Resident Jim Parco thanked the Town Council and the police and fire chiefs for their hard work. He said he believed sales tax revenues for 2023 would exceed the 2022 amounts by some-

where between 20% and 30%. Parco said he taught economics and was also in the cannabis business and had helped Bass estimate the sales tax revenue from cannabis sales when Bass was mayor. He reminded the board that in 2022 the town had voted to legalize adult use cannabis sales and voted against raising property taxes, even though it was known that the cannabis revenues alone would not solve the town's financial problems. He pointed out that the town had done little to let the public know about cannabis sales, and the sales tax revenue from cannabis sales was delayed from February to April. Parco said he was optimistic about the positive impact cannabis sales would have on the town's finances, especially if Colorado Springs did not approve sales in the next election.

Resident Roger Mosely said he was distressed to hear cuts to the Police Department were being considered. He echoed Brodzik's concerns. In response to Mosely's comments, Town Attorney Matt Krob said the purpose of the hearing was to consider the 2024 budget, not to rehash past decisions.

Havenar closed the public hearing, and the board scheduled a budget workshop to be held on Wednesday, Nov. 29 at 5 p.m. at Palmer Lake Town Hall.

CORE proposes EV charging station

Rob Osborn, CORE Director of Business Development, and Rob Liechty, CORE Member Energy Programs Director, asked the board for permission to place two Level III Fast DC EV chargers in the parking area at Primrose Street and Highway 105 on the west side of the lake. Level III char-

gers can bring an EV to an 80% charge in less than 30 minutes. The chargers would be free for the first month, then would charge residents at rates equal to what they already pay for residential electricity but would charge non-members more. The goal, Osborn said, was to serve members and to support rural development. The chargers would be added to a national network and EV drivers would be able to locate them through their car interface and would be attracted to get off the highway and spend some time in Palmer Lake.

CORE would pay for the installation and would own, operate, and maintain the chargers, they said. They asked the town to commit to a five-year zero payment lease, with the option to renew the lease twice. At the end of the lease, CORE would transfer ownership of the chargers to the town, or the town could ask CORE to remove them. ChargePoint operates a nationwide charger network and would support the proposed chargers.

The board directed Collins to investigate the possibility of a shorter lease and to bring the board a resolution to vote on at a later meeting.

Stormwater enterprise fund rate study debated

At its October meeting, the board asked staff to draft a resolution authorizing a rate study for a proposed stormwater enterprise fund. Collins put Resolution 73-2023 before the board at the Nov. 9 meeting; the resolution authorizes the rate study to be conducted by GMS Engineering at a cost of \$18,500. A stormwater enterprise fund, which would guarantee a revenue stream by charging residents a monthly fee, is required for the town to borrow money to fund stormwater infrastructure that complies with state laws.

Mosely spoke against the resolution, arguing that the discussion has only addressed drainage issues on High Street, that the town does not adequately enforce municipal codes that require property owners to maintain their culverts and ditches, and that it would be a mistake to implement a stormwater enterprise fund until there is a stormwater drainage plan that covers the entire town.

Brodzik proposed using the General Fund to pay for stormwater infrastructure. She argued using the General Fund would eliminate costs required by an enterprise fund and would be fairer to residents. She also proposed the town consider holding a special election to put the question of a mill levy override to fund stormwater infrastructure before the voters. She pointed out that the failure of Proposition HH would mean increased property tax revenue for the town. Brodzik repeated Mosely's suggestion to require property owners to better maintain their culverts and ditches. She suggested that the town hire a contractor to maintain culverts and ditches and bill recalcitrant property owners if necessary.

Collins pointed out that a special election would cost the town between \$12,000 and \$15,000. Havenar said the town did not have the staff to manage Brodzik's proposals and she did not believe a mill levy could pass.

There was consensus on the board to do more to enforce code requiring property owners to maintain the drainage on their properties. Stern suggested waiting to see how much property tax revenues increase due to increased property valuations. Havenar predicted property valuations could begin to decrease in 2026.

The board voted to table the resolution until the end of the first quarter of 2024 and directed staff to add a part-time code enforcer to the town staff in the budget. Dreher voted against tabling; Ball, Ehrhardt, Farr, Havenar, Padgett, and Stern voted in favor of tabling the resolution.

Date set for annexation hearing

At the previous board meeting, the United Congregational Church presented a petition for annexation of its property at 3295 Palmer Divide Rd. to the board. At the Nov. 9 meeting, the board voted unanimously in favor of Resolution 74-2023, which schedules a public hearing on the annexation for Thursday, Jan. 25 at 6 p.m., as part

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of the regular board meeting set for that date.

Fire protection services authorized

In response to a request from El Paso County for the town to provide fire protection services to a small area of unincorporated county land at 5250 Eisenhower Dr., near Limbaugh Canyon, the board approved resolution 75-2023, which authorizes Fire Chief John Vincent to sign an agreement committing to provide the requested services.

Road standards amended

The road standards specified in the town's municipal code have come under consideration during the board's recent discussion of regulating use of the town's undeveloped rights of way. Havenar expressed concern that the existing standards might require property owners to build costly roads to access their property.

The board voted unanimously in favor of Ordinance 23-2023, which removes the require-

ment that all roads be paved, and instead specifies that new roads must comply with county standards, which allows for less expensive roads to be built if usage will be low.

Executive session

The board meeting was preceded and followed by an executive session to consider the possible sale of public property, an asbestos estimate claim, the town administrator's evaluation and contract, a personnel matter, and a Police Department claim.

The next board meeting is scheduled for Dec. 14. The board will have one regular meeting in December to accommodate the Christmas holiday. See the town's website at www.townofpalmerlake.com to confirm times and dates of board meetings and workshops. Meetings are typically held on the second and fourth Thursdays of the month at the Town Hall. Information: 719-481-2953.

Monument Town Council, Nov. 6, 2023

Supplementary budget items and signs ordinance discussed

By Chris Jeub

One regular meeting of the Monument Town Council took place in November, and the regularly scheduled second meeting was cancelled for the Thanksgiving holiday. Issues covered in the four-hour meeting included symbolic gestures and police force promotions, local government initiatives and financial insights, budget talks, and the town's temporary sign ordinance.

Israel support and police advancement

Mayor Mitch LaKind steered discussions toward a motion to change the town's lighting to blue and white throughout the second week of November, a gesture aimed at showing solidarity with the State of Israel. The proposal was approved by the rest of the councilmembers and direction given to Town Manager Mike Foreman.

Police Chief Patrick Regan brought positive news with the announcement of promotions and swearing-in of key personnel, including Christine DeRienzo and Joe Barraza to sergeant positions, along with the welcome of Chris Sullivan to the Police Department.

Local initiatives and financial insights

Lu Ann Pyatt presented a comprehensive overview titled "Meet the Local Government Team." Key points included the provision of a free State Geographic Information System (GIS) system for tax understanding, the team's role in ensuring the functionality of the sales tax system processing \$209 million per month, and the educational focus behind the 139 audits conducted last year. Residents were directed to explore tax-related information on tax.colorado.gov.

Max Mojab from Piper Sandler provided insights into the Investment Portfolio of the Town of Monument. The 2023 performance review showed promise, with an estimated revenue of about \$250,000. Mojab expressed confidence in a projected 2024 revenue of \$500,000 from investments.

Budget talks

Director of Finance Mona Hirjoi presented the 2024 budget and 2023 amended budget, sparking some fervent discussions. Notable points of attention included Foreman's proposal for a new line item for a PR contractor, resulting in a \$30,000 reallocation from the supplemental budget. Mayor LaKind expressed surprise at the revelation of a \$300,000 allocation for upgrades to the 259 Beacon Lite Building, leading to discussions about the availability of grants and the necessity for more comprehensive data in the budget presentation.

Employee concerns took the spotlight during the budget discussions, with some expressing

the need for part-time jobs to make ends meet. Councilmember Steve King delved into the intricacies of the merit pay system, revealing that over 90% of employees receive merit pay. However, concerns about the budget's transparency emerged, with Mayor LaKind expressing dissatisfaction and Councilmember Ken Kimple echoing the call for better data. LaKind and the rest of the council began calling the preliminary budget a "wish list" to where voting would take place in December.

Temporary signs controversy

A significant portion of the meeting ignited with a debate over the town's temporary signs ordinance. King read a letter accusing Amy Stephens, wife of former Councilmember Ron Stephens,



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of initiating a lawsuit and condemning the new council for enforcing an ordinance that forbids signs on the town’s rights of way. LaKind emphasized that the town ordinance prohibits signs in rights of way, underlining the need for a politically neutral approach. LaKind also emphasized that the problem is particularly with political

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signs. Community members voiced opinions, with diverse perspectives on private property sign regulations and concerns about freedom of speech. Mayor LaKind proposed a community workshop and a more extensive discussion in 2024 to address the temporary signs issue comprehensively, recognizing the urgency and complexity of finding a balanced solution that respects both individual expression and town aesthetics.

Monument Planning Commission, Nov. 8

Maverick station approved

By Leslie Hanks

The first agenda item at the Nov. 8 meeting of the Monument Planning Commission was 3A and 3B, Maverick Junction, Lot 1, Monument Junction West, Filing 1—Preliminary/Final PUD Plan. The property at 1530 Laughing Lab Way is at the intersection of Highway 105 and Jackson Creek Parkway. The proposed final PUD ordinance approving 1.5 acres is for a Maverick, a convenience/fuel store.

Planning staffer Jeff Liljegren found that the proposal is generally consistent with the Monument Comprehensive Plan. Planning staff explained that the proposal was “more likely consistent than less likely consistent” with the Future Land Use Map (FLUM).

Community concerns continue to focus on views, strong small-town community identity, adequate open space, and noise deterrence.

Staff found the proposal is consistent with most of the goals of the Comprehensive Plan.

Additionally, staff found two items consistent with Monument land use policies: transportation and economic opportunities.

The associated traffic study found 4,149 weekday trips anticipated. The proposed Maverick convenience store is expected to generate an average of 4,000 trips per weekday. This will be a Level of Service (LOS) of F or better (F is a low score) for peak drive time in afternoons. A traffic signal will be warranted at Jackson Creek and Fat Tire Drive due to the LOS—F rating.

Staff explained that Lot 1 (Maverick convenience store) and Lot 4 (Whataburger) were already approved. According to records, the Final Plat for Monument Junction West, Filing 1—the two lots—was recorded on May 19, 2022.

This hearing was originally scheduled for the September and October meetings, which were cancelled. Proper notice was given for all three Planning Commission hearings.

Applicant Kevin Dice has met all 13 criteria for preliminary PUD review and all nine for final review.

Dice, senior planning manager for Maverick, gave a presentation about Maverick’s history, including a merger with Flying J. In September, Maverick completed a purchase of Kum & Go, making the Maverick holdings a total of 800 stores; 400 Maverick stores and 400 Kum & Go. Dice explained that the store is a 24/7 operation which will carry beer, wine, and tobacco but no spirits. The store will have fresh food prepared daily, and restrooms will be open to the public. Although there is a high flow component to the business, which will accommodate trucks, it is not a truck stop.

Consultant Mark Horton, a civil engineer, gave a brief presentation on Jackson Creek/Highway 105 improvement plans. “We’re on phase 2 with the Colorado Department of Transportation, El Paso County and Monument [three jurisdictions] reviewing transportation needs and we’re hopeful we can get started [in the] next year to 18 months, which should greatly improve the intersection of Highway 105 and Jackson Creek Parkway.”

Commissioner Martin Trujillo called for public comments in attendance and online, and there were none.

Trujillo then asked for commissioners’ comments and questions.

The commissioners discussed the proximity of the new Maverick station to the Kum & Go on Highway105 only 700 feet away. Dice explained that they have many locations where they have stores across the street from each other. Concerns were raised again about truck traffic. The applicant explained that the only 18-wheeler traffic onsite should be for fuel deliveries.

The measure passed on a 6-0 vote. It will now be considered by the Monument Town Council.

The Monument Council usually meets at 6:30 p.m. on the first and third Mondays of each month at Monument Town Hall, 645 Beacon Lite Road. The next meeting is scheduled for Monday, Dec. 4, and Monday, Dec. 18. Call 719-884-8014 or see www.townofmonument.org for information. To see upcoming agendas and complete board packets or to download audio recordings of past meetings, see http://monumenttownco.minutesondemand.com and click on Town Council. Chris Jeub can be reached at chrisjeub@ocn.me.

ZEAL at Jackson Creek

The next proposal on the agenda was measure 3B “ZEAL at Jackson Creek” Preliminary/Final Plat application. The property is at Higby and Bowstring Roads, off Jackson Creek Parkway. The property is 20.1 acres, zoned PRD10 Residential attached.

Staff reported that the proposal was substantially in compliance with the FLUM. They clarified that it is “more likely than less likely” consistent.

“Triview Metro District’s proposed improvements to Higby Road and adequate turn lanes make this proposal more than 50% in compliance with the Comprehensive Plan,” staff noted. Zoning for this proposal was approved in March 2015. This property is part of Regency Park 6th Amended and rezoned Plan—PRD10 Planned Residential District, Multi-Family land use.

The traffic study indicates this proposal would generate 1,238 trips daily. A roundabout is planned for traffic control through 2048. The project was rated LOS-C or better.

Still in question is the matter of whether the Higby Road right of way (ROW) of 95 feet is enough. Further discussion ensued about whether Higby Road should be a major collector (90 feet) or be a minor arterial (120 feet).

Jim Doby of Doby Development Group presented the ZEAL for Living “From Living to Thriving” proposal. Jim McGrady, district manager for Triview Metro District, also gave input about transportation matters.

Commissioner Trujillo closed the hearing after no public responses were received. He asked for commissioners’ input.

There was quite a bit of discussion about the nature of the proposal being more rental space while the Monument community has made it quite clear that it prefers single-family residential to multi-family attached.

Also, there was much discussion about the transportation concerns over Higby Road and whether there will be enough ROW with this proposal. After much input from Vice Chair Danny Ours and Commissioner Kathy Green, there was consensus for a continuance to further explore the transportation issues and whether the proposal, as presented, would actually be what will be developed in the event the property would be sold after the Preliminary/Final Plat was granted.

Commissioner Ours asked, “Could this 20-acre parcel be combined with other acreage and do a totally different proposal?”

Commissioner Green raised the concern, “Is this whole thing about circumventing code for a narrower ROW?”

After much debate, there was a request for a continuance for more time to study maps, roadways, and ROWs to better understand long-term Higby Road needs.

Commissioner Ours asked staff whether the owner was advised about Monument not wanting more rental properties. A staff member replied, “That isn’t the role of staff to ask those questions or make those comments.”

At this point the applicant stated that he hoped the Planning Commission will be following the Fair Housing Act.

The Commissioners voted 6-1 (Commissioner Ray Egley dissenting) for a continuance and suggested that at future hearings they would appreciate having legal representation available to answer questions for which they might need legal advice.

The Monument Planning usually meets on the second Wednesday of each month at 6 pm at Monument Town Hall, 645 Beacon Lite Road.. The next meeting is scheduled for Dec. 13. To see the options for remote public participation in each meeting, visit www.townofmonument.org/263/Planning-Commission-Board-of-Adjustment. To see upcoming agendas and complete board packets or to download audio recordings of past meetings, see http://monumenttownco.minutesondemand.com and click on Planning Commission. Info: 719-884-8028. www.townofmonument.org.

LeslieHankscanbereachedatlesliehanks@ocn.me.

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Monument Academy School Board, Nov. 9

Board hears first read of gender transition policy, plans to address East Campus budget issues

By Jackie Burhans
The Monument Academy (MA) School Board met on Nov. 9 to hear a first reading of a new gender transition policy, to discuss how to address East Campus budget issues, and to hear committee reports.

Gender transition policies

The MA board heard a first read from the governance committee on a JRT Gender Transition and Parental Rights Policy to codify its June 27 resolution on gender issues and student protection. See www.ocn.me/v23n8.htm/ma0627. The resolution:

- Declared that anti-discrimination state laws SB08-200 and HB21-1108 exposed students to gender dysphoria.
- Encouraged students to set boundaries and report boundary violations to staff.
- Said MA would violate state and federal anti-discrimination laws.
- Mandated that minor students who wish to express a different gender be affirmed by their parents or guardians, update all related school records, and follow their expressed gender dress code.
- Directed administration to notify the community that a student whose expressed gender differed from their biological gender might be in bathrooms or locker rooms.
- Advised parents to consult with their attorney about bringing legal action against the parents of children they felt violated their child's Fourth Amendment right to privacy.

- Affirmed that political leaders have a moral obligation to challenge laws.
- Appealed to the MA community to contact their representatives.

The policy, developed by board Treasurer Joe Buczkowski and board Director Karen Hoida and approved by legal counsel, is called JRT Gender Transition and Parental Rights Policy. Its purpose is to provide a procedure by which a student can transition to a different gender with respect to school records, policies, and facilities. The draft states that MA supports the rights of students to transition and the rights of parents to oversee the care, custody, and control of their minor children. The policy defines various terms and provides a background focusing on the fourth and fifth bullet points above.

The procedures include the staff's initial contact with a student who wishes to transition, referral and follow-up by the school principal with the students and their parents, required record changes, and community notification.

Buczkowski said that the committee received input from the administration and the principals and wanted to address the concerns of all involved, so it took a few months to develop. Board President Ryan Graham asked for advice on soliciting community input. MA's lawyer, Brad Miller, advised that there is an exception to the Open Records Act that would let them keep this as a private draft. Hoida noted that it was public now since they read it aloud and asked about the process



Above: At Monument Academy's Nov. 9 board meeting, board Vice President Lindsay Clinton, right, spotlighted arts teacher Deborah Hulting for her warmth and patience with artists of all ages. Photo by Natalie Barszcz. Caption by Jackie Burhans.

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for feedback. Miller said it could be published in the board packet, the minutes, or on the website. Miller advised against using Google Docs for all board members to add comments as that would constitute a board meeting. Miller advised the board not to vote on this at the next meeting, saying if substantive changes exist, the final version should be discussed in an open meeting before voting at a subsequent meeting.

In discussion, Graham and board Vice President Lindsay Clinton objected to the statement that MA supports a student’s right to transition. Hoida suggested a better word would be acknowledge rather than support. Board Secretary Emily Belisle suggested simply saying that supports all students. Miller said the statement could be eliminated without changing the substance. Belisle wants the policy to better reflect the resolution, especially the part that supports “natural law and moral truth,” to address how this affects the community, to change some of the definitions and word usage, and to change some procedures. Graham noted that some of the language came straight from the Colorado Revised Statute and asked Miller, who said it would be legal advice that would require an executive session.

Belisle suggested that the principal should inform the parents and schedule a meeting. Buczkowski said that was left out to protect students for whom a forced conversation might not be in their best interest. Board Director Matt Ross suggested that this gave unwarranted trust to students. Hoida said that if the school said they would contact the parents, the student might not want to proceed with the transition. Clinton said she would want to know as a parent, and the policy should protect parental rights and not give authority to students.

There was a discussion about how to handle discipline, and interim Chief Operating Officer Kim McClelland said it was on a case-by-case basis depending on whether it was a student or staff violating policy. Belisle pointed out that this policy assumes a binary choice of genders, which is not always the case; Buczkowski said it’s not a

problem unless they choose an opposite gender.

Buczkowski thanked the board for its input and said a lot of the changes were minor wording changes, but the biggest question was when staff needed to tell the principal and when the principal had to contact the parents, even against the will of the student. The policy was drafted to try to be realistic about the relationships students may have with coaches and teachers with whom they may be closer than their parents. It would be easy to just say minor students and their parents must come to see the principal, he said, but asked if that was realistic.

Graham said that community feedback is encouraged. Belisle said that all staff and teachers are mandatory reporters, and it’s incumbent on them to report concerns about home life. Miller said there is another set of laws that hasn’t been addressed about a student’s rights around mental health and counseling that interposes in this discussion; he said he would prefer to talk to the board privately in more detail.

A second reading will be conducted at its Dec. 14 meeting. The board solicits community feedback on this draft policy, which is available at: <https://bit.ly/ma-draft-gender-policy>. Feedback should be submitted directly to McClelland at kmcclelland@monumentacademy.net no later than Dec. 1.

Plans to address East Campus budget issues

Buczkowski reported that the Finance Committee reviewed the audit results and the substandard state of the debt service coverage ratio and cash reserves as of June 30, 2023, at the East Campus. The committee discussed plans for the West Campus to lend \$300,000 to the East Campus and the importance of establishing a balanced budget for the remainder of the 2023-24 school year. It also talked about cost-cutting measures to bring the East Campus budget back in balance. A lot of the 2024 budget depends on the results of the Employee Retention Tax Credit (ERTC) application MA submitted to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), which might not be known

by the time the board is required to set a budget, he said.

- Highlights**
Board meeting highlights include:
- Clinton spotlighted Deborah Hulting, who has been a kindergarten teacher and is now an art teacher. She exudes warmth, fun, and patience with artists of all ages, Clinton said.
 - Graham reported that a road is being constructed on the south side of the school to connect to the top of the “s” curve. The roundabout at Knollwood and Highway 105 may be completed in December or January.
 - Board member Emily Belisle reported that the Curriculum Committee learned that MA could continue to use the current Saxon Math for another year, and the committee decided, in consideration of the budget, to table moving to a new curriculum. This will provide extra time to review the proposed final candidates: Reveal Math and Everyday Math.
 - Ross reported for the Student Accountability and Advisory Committee (SAAC) of West Campus that MA had collected the most food in a recent food drive, and he highlighted recent and upcoming PTO events. SAAC reviewed questions for the mid-year survey, which was available on Nov. 15 and will be open until Dec. 1.
 - Clinton reported for SAAC East

- that it began reviewing questions for the mid-year survey and noted that MA hosted the district Parent and Community Advisory Committee (PCAC) at its west campus on Nov. 14. She also gave a roundup of activities for the East Campus PTO.
- The board discussed the quarterly dashboard and how to interpret the data and plans to improve achievement and behavioral outcomes.
 - The board unanimously approved the Emergency Operating Procedures with changes discussed at a previous meeting.
 - The meeting ended with an executive session to discuss property transactions; to address D38 charter contract updates and related financial and bond covenant issues, and school security protocols and proposals; to discuss personnel performance and contract matters regarding school principals, Human Resources, and executive director; and to address related hiring processes and conflict of interest questions regarding a substitute hiring possibility.
- *****

The MA School Board meets at 6:30 p.m. on the second Thursday of each month. The next regular board meeting will be on Thursday, Dec. 14, at 6:30 p.m. at the East Campus. See more information at <https://bit.ly/ma-boe>. Jackie Burhans can be reached at jackieburhans@ocn.me.

D38 Parent and Community Advisory Committee, Nov. 14

Committee hears reports on staff and family surveys, Key Communicator program

By Harriet Halbig
The D38 Parent and Community Advisory Committee (formerly District Accountability Advisory Committee) received reports on recent surveys of staff and families and an explanation of a new initiative to inform community members about district activities and priorities.

The meeting was held at the West Campus of Monument Academy (MA) and opened with a presentation by Principal Kurt Walker.

MA was chartered in 1996 and located in modular buildings on Woodmoor Drive until its current building was completed in 2008. It was originally called Lewis-Palmer Charter Academy, but the name was changed to avoid confusion with other schools in the district.

Upon the opening of the East Campus, in 2021, the West Campus became a school serving grades K through 5.

MA offers a classical-based education with emphasis on developing student character and educating future exemplary citizens. Its Board of Directors consists of parents and now features a program called Watchdogs, which is a group of fathers of grade-school students making their presence known during arrival and departure of students and recess.

Fall surveys of staff and families

D38 Director of Human Resources Alicia Welch presented a report on the results of surveys of staff and families conducted this fall.

The surveys were administered by an outside source. Welch stated that while results are shared in a number of different ways, all responses are anonymous.

The survey consisted of 20 questions and three open-response questions. All staff members were invited to participate. A total of 469 staff members participated out of a possible 810. The surveys were sent out via email.

Welch said that experience indicated that often fewer people participate at the first opportunity,

so such surveys will be conducted annually.

Staff members were asked whether their work positively impacts those who they serve, whether they have a clear understanding of the mission and goals of the organization, and whether they have a sense of pride in where they work. Responses to these questions were largely positive.

In terms of opportunities, staff responded that resources were not always allocated to maximize effectiveness, feedback on improving performance was lacking, and support in embracing work responsibilities could be improved.

Family responses were positive in that they feel the schools are clean and well maintained, parents are treated with respect, and the children’s learning is treated as a high priority.

In terms of opportunities, families said that they wished to receive more direct communication regarding their student’s progress and that school rules were sometimes not enforced equally.

There were 540 responses from families.

The committee then broke into groups to discuss the results of the family survey. A dominating opinion was that parents didn’t receive more direct communication from teachers due to time constraints, but teachers on the committee said that if parents contact them directly they are always open to discussion.

Another criticism from the parents’ standpoint regarding enforcement of rules is that district policies are very complex and the district should develop a way in which parents can view them more directly.

The general result of the surveys was that both staff and families were at least satisfied with the district’s performance.

Key Communicators program introduced

Director of Communications Mark Belcher offered a presentation on a new program, Key Communicators, designed to strengthen the dis-

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trict’s brand by developing a group of brand ambassadors who would receive information on a regular basis and use it to advocate for support of the district.

Belcher explained that there are already entities which support this mission, including the Parent and Community Advisory Committee (PCAC), the D38 Foundation, and others. The Staff Collaboration Committee and Financial Transparency Committee also support the goal of informing the public.

Belcher said that, once the group of key communicators is in place, information will be sent out on a weekly basis through Microsoft Teams. Information will include such items as upcoming events, policy

updates, and curriculum reviews. Dissemination of this information will provide a reliable source of facts and hopefully will discourage rumors.

When asked whether the goal is to encourage individuals to vote for mill levy overrides, Belcher said that the goal is to show individuals that the district is worth their support, that the schools are safe, and that district graduates go on to successful futures.

Still to come is development of criteria for members of the group.

Belcher said parents and staff already have access to most of the information involved. This would provide a conduit of information for those community members who are not

parents of students and those not on social media

One committee member said that he does not favor the “evangelistic” approach to offering information, but instead suggested presentations to small groups such as homeowners associations. Another suggested going to local spots such as Wesley Owens Coffee and Café where older citizens are likely to gather.

Board of Education update

Board of Education liaison Tiffiney Upchurch offered a brief update following the recent election.

The board will welcome two new members, Patti Shank and Todd Brown. Upchurch and Ron Schwarz

will continue to serve along with Kris Norris, who was appointed in April and elected in November.

Law requires that the oath of office be administered within 10 days of certification of the election. Upchurch estimated that the board will meet on Dec. 5 to administer the oath of office and reorganize its officers, and the regular meeting of the board will be held on Dec. 11.

Upchurch also reported that the staff has been surveyed regarding support for instituting four-day weeks. Results of the survey will determine whether the calendar committee will continue its deliberations.

If the staff does not indicate they will be more likely to stay in the district

with four-day weeks, the issue will not be presented to families.

Upchurch also reported that she and Schwarz have been going to innovation centers to learn how the district can improve its competitiveness by offering programs resulting in certification in such areas as nursing and other fields.

The Parent and Community Advisory Committee meets six times a year. Locations vary. The next meeting will be at 6 p.m. Jan. 9 at Lewis-Palmer High School, 1300 Higby Road. For information, contact tmckee@lewispalmer.org.

Harriet Halbig may be reached at harriethalbig@ocn.me.

Lewis-Palmer D38 Board of Education, Nov. 13

Departing board members recognized, Lewis-Palmer High School update, financial update

By Harriet Halbig

The Lewis-Palmer D38 Board of Education bid farewell to two of its members, received a report on activities at Lewis-Palmer High School (LPHS), and discussed a financial update at its Nov. 13 meeting.

Board recognition

Board members Matthew Clawson and Theresa Phillips attended their last meeting on Nov. 13 and were recognized by fellow board members.

Clawson, who had served since 2015, was term limited. Board President Tiffiney Upchurch read a letter she had written in praise of his accomplishment. She said that, when asked about his motivation to serve, he wished to leave the district in a better condition than when he joined the board. She praised him for always putting the students first in making decisions and thanked his family for their sacrifice during his tenure.

Board Treasurer Ron Schwarz also praised Clawson for his time commitment while he also volunteered for other causes and ran a business.

passion for results and her focus on the future. He also admired her efforts to ensure safety within the district by supporting obtaining new radios to make it easier to communicate with first responders, her support of security vestibules, and research and action in the area of social emotional wellness.

Schwarz also admired Phillips’ support of improving literacy in grades K through 3, the fact that she met in person and by phone with many stakeholders, and support of the arts in the district, realizing the link between music and mathematics. She is genuinely interested in individual members of the staff and always willing to listen, he said.

Director Kris Norris also thanked Clawson and Phillips for their service and thanked Phillips for her welcome when he was appointed a member in April.

Lewis-Palmer High School update

Schwarz introduced two students from LPHS, Lily and Taylor. They both serve as officers of the student body, and Schwarz explained that beginning last month, two high school students would be welcomed to participate at board meetings to learn about community government. They are non-voting members and welcome to ask questions, to report on school activities, and to report back to students on board activities.

The student representatives reported on the recent Harvest of Love campaign in support of Tri-Lakes Cares. They said that it is important to tell students why they are requested to

participate in such an activity to ensure success.

This year, several techniques were used to encourage donations such as carnival games, daily announcements, and a competition between departments. Students also participated in packing snacks for those in need.

LPHS collected 2,846 cans of food and money. Combined with Palmer Ridge High School (PRHS), they received 6,000 total cans of food.

Congratulations were given to the women’s volleyball team for making it to the state semi-finals and the football team for making it into the playoffs. Praise was also given to the fall musical production of You’re a Good Man, Charlie Brown.

Superintendent update

Superintendent KC Somers was out of town, and the update was reported by Assistant Superintendent Amber Whetstine.

Whetstine recognized the PRHS women’s gymnastics and volleyball teams for their state championships and spoke of Veterans Day events at several elementary schools.

Lewis-Palmer Middle School had its second All School Reads program followed by an author’s visit.

The district also held a Troops and Trades showcase showing various post-graduation pathways for district graduates. Fifty colleges and others participated. LPHS completed its first structure in its home build program.

Whetstine also spoke of surveys of staff and families. For details on these surveys please see the article on the Parent and Community Advisory Committee on page 8.

Financial planning update

Chief Business Officer Brett Ridgway reported on the status of the district budget.

He said that the governor had announced an end to the budget stabilization factor, which was instituted in 2008 when the state could not fully fund education. He cautioned that the factor could be reinstated in the future.

Ridgway said that last spring the estimated per pupil revenue from the state was \$9,800. That amount was increased to \$10,000 in June.

He cautioned that there are two student counts to be considered, one a head count of the number of individuals in the district and the other the number of full-time equivalent (FTE) students. The FTE is important because, for example, home school students count as one-half FTE. He also explained that the new preschool program is no longer under the School Finance Act. He said that in the 2022-23 school year, there were 40 FTE preschoolers. Whetstine said the number of preschool students is dependent on staffing and other concerns.

Regarding enrollment, Ridgway reported that the district as a whole is down by 113 students, 80 of whom were forecast to attend Monument Academy.

Due to a state policy of student count averaging, Ridgway said that the district will report a decline of 84 rather than 113.

Ridgway reported that

the district is using a new auditor this year. He said the firm has been in the Colorado Springs area for a while, and he has confidence in its ability. It currently is completing the Monument Academy audit.

Praise for contributions

In her board member comments, Theresa Phillips praised two women for their contributions to the district.

One of these, Lisa Glen, was instrumental in forming the Monument Warriors, a local Special Olympics team. She thanked the high school volleyball and basketball teams for their mentorship and said an athletic letter would be awarded to participants.

Amber Newberry was praised for her contributions regarding appropriate behavior and boundaries as part of the Consent Task Force. Newberry is also active in reviewing district policies in this area.

Phillips also thanked several district employees who modeled collaboration and listening, acknowledging that students who feel accepted and respected learn best.

The Lewis-Palmer D38 Board of Education usually meets on the third Monday of the month at 6 p.m. at the district’s learning center, 146 Jefferson St. in Monument. Due to the holiday break, the December meeting will be held on Dec. 11.

Harriet Halbig may be reached at harriethalbig@ocn.me.

Black Forest Fire Rescue Protection District Virtual attendance unavailable

By Janet Sellers

On short notice, the Black Forest Fire Rescue Protection District (BFFRPD) did not provide a virtual attendance option for the Nov. 15 board meeting. This reporter was unable to attend in

person and make a recording.

For more information, updates, and Zoom meeting joining instructions, see www.bffire.org or contact Administrative Officer Ra-

chel Dunn at 719-495-4300. Meetings are usually held on the third Wednesday of the month.

Janet Sellers can be reached at janetsellers@ocn.me.

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Monument Fire District, Nov.15

2024 budget approved; homeowners petition for inclusion

By Natalie Barszcz

At the Monument Fire District (MFD) meeting on Nov. 15, the board approved the 2024 budget, the mill levy, the wage scale, a fee schedule, the board's meeting schedule, and the employee handbook. The board heard about a number of homes requesting inclusion into the district and received updates on the new combined Career Firefighter Academy and a wildland fire exchange program. The board also received an update on the Donald Wescott Fire Protection District (DWFPD) sub-district dissolution process and heard about a resignation.

Secretary Jason Buckingham attended via Zoom.

2024 budget approval

President Michael Smaldino opened the public hearing on the proposed 2024 budget and the corresponding appropriations, and closed the hearing after receiving no public comments. See www.ocn.me/v23n11.htm#mfd and www.monumentfire.org.

In a roll call vote, the board unanimously approved Resolution 2023-05 approving the 2024 budget, appropriating funds, and accepting the mill levy certification at 18.4 mills for 2024.

The board unanimously approved the following:

- A 3% cost of living adjustment to the 2024 Wage Scale.
- The 2024 Fee Schedule (includes an EMS fee for ambulance requests to the Town of Palmer Lake at \$588.25 per transport).
- The 2024 Board of Directors schedule, maintaining the fourth Wednesday every month at 6:30 p.m., except for the No-

vember (third Wednesday) and December (first Wednesday) meetings.

- The 2024 revised Employee Handbook.

Smaldino said he had no questions or concerns regarding the 68-page employee handbook, and he thanked the executive staff on behalf of the Board of Directors for a good 2024 budget, a competitive wage scale, and the 2% matching 457 retirement plan. The board is supporting not only the district but the firefighters too, he said.

Vice President John Hildebrandt said the 2024 budget decreases the mill levy back to the original 18.4 mills after setting the mill lev at 18.83 mills for 2023 to offset the loss of revenue anticipated from the drop in the Residential Assessment Rate. The board are good stewards of the revenue received, and although the property tax assessments are increasing for 2024, the majority of the property taxes for DWFPD are decreasing significantly, he said. There is still uncertainty about future revenue due to the scheduled emergency legislative session to discuss property tax relief, but I am proud of the product the district puts out for the citizens, he said.

Fire Chief Andy Kovacs thanked the board for its support and said he is proud of the staff for putting the budget together, and 2024 will be an exciting year for the district, the community, and the firefighters. The district will continue to develop the training center and stay ahead with fire apparatus and equipment. The district expects to receive an ambulance and a Type 3 “Wildland” engine in December, and another ambulance in early 2024. The

district chose not to increase the fee schedule again and is trying to be mindful to the community after the increase in property taxes. The district may still have to pivot on any state legislation that may decrease the district's property tax revenue, he said.

Local 4319 President and district Engineer Christian Schmidt thanked the board for approving the wage scale and said the firefighters are excited about the 2% per pay period matching 457 retirement plan. He thanked Kovacs for the negotiation process.

Note: The total revenue budget for 2024 is projected to be about \$22 million (includes revenue for the provision of emergency fire and EMS services to the DWFPD). The total expense budget for 2024 is projected to be about \$25.6 million. The district's capital expenses are projected to be about \$9.8 million in 2024 (about \$8.6 million for the purchase of land, the rebuild of Station 3 to include the district administrative offices, the remodel of Station 4, and fleet and equipment purchases). The budget includes a total fund transfer of \$3.7 million (includes \$1.5 million in Impact Fees collected only within the Town of Monument) as the district continues to set aside funds for capital purchases. See www.monument-fire.org.

Financial report

Treasurer Tom Kelly presented the October financial report and said the district had received over 100% of the projected revenue budget in all categories for a total of about \$16.2 million year to date. The annual revenue income was projected to be about \$16.5 million.

Overall expenses year to date are “tracking pretty well” at about \$11.8 million of the projected 2023 total expense budget set at about \$14 million, he said.

Hildebrandt questioned the cost of \$3,253 for air duct cleaning at Station 4.

Kovacs said several firefighters had complained of sinus and allergy related symptoms during shift, and cleaning the ducts resolved the issue.

Division Chief of Administration/Fire Chief Jamey Bumgarner said the ducts were dirty and multiple quotes were much higher, with one as high as \$6,000. It was the second station to undergo air duct cleaning, he said.

Director Tom Tharnish said the cost was considerably less than the bill of about \$12,000 for air duct cleaning at Monument Town Hall.

Kelly said the district total in checking/savings is about \$15 million (includes about \$6.2 million for the Operations/General Fund).

The board unanimously accepted the financial report as presented.

Petitions for inclusion

Kovacs said the El Paso County Sheriff's Office (EPCSO) had provided the district with an audit of several homes within the district not provided with fire and EMS service by it. The district drafted letters to the homeowners in the Red Rock Ranch area and the northeast of the county (within the district's service area), and so far five properties have petitioned for inclusion into the district; more homeowners are yet to respond. A public hearing to include the homes into the fire district is expected to be made at the January meeting after the district's legal counsel and Director of Administration Jennifer Martin have collected the data. A responding homeowner was surprised to learn they were not included within the district for services and was eager to be included. Somehow the properties were overlooked by the county assessor or missed after homes were built on empty lots. The properties should have been included within the district a long time ago,

he said.

Hildebrandt asked about the potential for the homeowners should a fire occur and they have no protection.

Kovacs said the EPCSO provided the letter to allow the district under state law to bill property owners that were not included in the fire district. The district would collect for services rendered if the district provides fire and EMS to those properties, he said.

Division Chief of Administration/Fire Marshal Jamey Bumgarner said that a property owner's insurance would be billed if services are rendered, but not only would the district claim, the mutual aid partners would also be eligible to file a claim.

Donald Wescott sub-district dissolution update

Kovacs thanked the L4319 members for working diligently to educate the voters in the DWFPD, and their efforts helped pass ballot initiatives 6A/6B. The next steps will be for the DWFPD district counsel to continue the legal steps and complete the dissolution process and dissolve the Wescott district, he said.

Career Fire Academy development

Kovacs said that Division Chief of Operations Jonathan Bradley led the charge in short order to create a new Career Fire Academy with the first class of 24/01, to commence January 2024. The district developed the academy over the past couple of months with Pikes Peak State College and Black Forest Fire Rescue Protection District (BFFRPD). The instruction will be provided by Colorado Springs Fire Department (CSFD) employees. The firefighters will complete a 640-hour Career Fire Academy course with college credit, and all certifications provided during the academy are required by the state. Several other districts within the region have expressed interest in sending recruits to the joint academy. It is another strong collaborative effort that MFD has been leading in the county by recognizing the value of community partnerships and making things happen, he said. See www.ocn.me/v23n11.htm#mfd.

Battalion Chief Micah Coyle said the oral board interviews for the new recruits set to attend the Career Fire Academy had concluded the interview process, and eight conditional offers had been made. The final phase of psychological, background and medical tests were underway, and the new hires have a variety of experience and age ranges.

Bradley said the Career Fire Academy course will begin with 14 students in January (nine from MFD and five from BFFRPD). The Career Fire Academy will be held at the BFFRPD Training Center and students will also attend Fort Carson for training three days per week. The goal is to have a permanent regional fire academy, he said.

Hildebrandt said the addition of a fire academy is commendable, noting that the district had a fire academy for one year in 2013.

Chief's report

Kovacs said the following:

- Mutual aid request to American Medical Response had returned to three requests in October after reaching 11 requests in September. Hopefully it was an anomaly, and the requests will remain low for the rest of the year.
- The district assisted the Colorado National Guard and Drug Enforcement Agency with Red Ribbon Week activities in the local schools.
- The district is applying for a grant from the International Firefighters Association to send two firefighters to gain valuable

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wildland fire experience in an exchange program in Orange County, Calif., from Feb. 5-9, 2024. The exchange program is organized by the International Association of Fire Chiefs' Fire Department Exchange Program, Wildland Program Division.

- Lt. Chris Keough resigned from the district to take a position with CSFD. The district will identify a replacement internally.

Fire hydrants added
Tom Tharnish, Town of Monu-

ment Director of Public Works, said the 2-million-gallon water tank installed in Forest View Acres (west Monument) is operational along with the 19 fire hydrants installed from Forest View Way, some neighborhoods in Red Rock Ranch, through Cloven Hoof Road and east along Highway 105. A newly installed water pipeline connects the system from Monument Lake along the same route as the fire hydrants, under the Burlington Northern and Santa Fe Railroad bridge, and south on Beacon Lite Road.

Tharnish said the hydrants are

active and should a disruption occur, the Fire Department should use the new hydrants with the higher capacity opposite the old hydrants in Forest View Acres. The water tank on Monument Hill is still active for the commercial zone and one tank can feed the other should a line go out of service. The Public Works Department will provide the district with the technical data and a fire hydrant location map. There should be a good supply of water, Tharnish said.

The meeting adjourned at 7:28 p.m.

Meetings are usually held on the fourth Wednesday of the month. The next regular meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, Dec. 6 at 6:30 p.m. at Station 1, 18650 Highway 105. For Zoom meeting instructions, agendas, minutes, and updates, visit www.monumentfire.org or contact Director of Administration Jennifer Martin at 719-484-9011.

Natalie Barszcz can be reached at nataliebarszcz@ocn.me.

Donald Wescott Fire Protection District

Rescheduled meetings occurred after publication

By Natalie Barszcz
The Donald Wescott Fire Protection Volunteer Pension Board of Trustees meeting and the regular Board of Directors meeting originally scheduled for Nov. 15 were rescheduled for Nov. 27, which was after the OCN publication deadline. The content of the Nov. 27 meetings will be published in the Janu-

ary edition. See the MFD article on page 10.

Meetings are scheduled to be held every month through May 2024 in person at Station 1, 18650 Highway 105, Monument and via Zoom at 4 p.m. on the fourth Wednesday of the month. No meeting in December. A special meeting via Zoom

will be scheduled to certify the district mill levy in early January. The next regular meeting is scheduled for Wed., Jan. 24, 4 pm. For Zoom meeting instructions, agendas, minutes, and updates, visit <http://www.monumentfire.org> or contact Director of Administration Jennifer Martin at 719-484-9011.

Natalie Barszcz can be reached at nataliebarszcz@ocn.me.

Triview Metropolitan District, Nov. 13

Commercial property inclusion; cell tower contract approved

By Natalie Barszcz
At the Triview Metropolitan District (TMD) meeting on Nov. 13, the board approved an inclusion of commercial property and a cell tower lease agreement, and agreed to approve an amendment to the Colorado Springs Utilities (CSU) agreement to convey, treat, and deliver district-owned water. The board received updates from Kiewit representatives on the Northern Delivery System (NDS) pipeline installation project, and an update on the Northern Monument Creek Interceptor (NMCI) pipeline project. The board held an executive session to receive legal advice and discuss negotiations regarding water supply contracts, property acquisitions, strategic planning and change cases.

President Mark Melville was excused.

Inclusion of property
District counsel George Rowley said a commercial property owner had petitioned for an inclusion of property into TMD Subdistrict A, about 19.88 acres south of the southeast corner of Higby Road and east of Jackson Creek Parkway.

District Manager James McGrady said commercial property would add substantial mills to the district's revenue, and the additional revenue will help pay for the Higby Road improvements.

The board approved resolution 2023-09, 4-0.

Cell tower contract
McGrady requested the board review and consider a cell site lease agreement for \$1,800 per month between Dish Wireless LLC and the TMD for a cell phone tower at the district's C Plant in Sanctuary Pointe, and authorize the district manager to sign the contract after the Monument Planning Commission had reviewed the plan.

Several board members raised concerns regarding esthetics and the removal of equipment from the water tank should the contract end.

McGrady requested Rowley add the obligation to remove equipment to the contract, and a stipulation to maintain an esthetically pleasing look with the intent to match the color of the equipment to the tank, to include the shed.

The board approved the lease agreement contingent on the additional conditions, 4-0.

Convey, treat, and deliver contract amendment
Water attorney Chris Cummins requested the board review and ap-

prove an amendment to TMD's convey, treat, and deliver water contract with Colorado Springs Utilities (CSU). The amendment provides greater clarity for TMD to include additional lands into the service area, to provide water service outside of the TMD boundaries pursuant to contracts/commitments, and to wheel water through the NDS to other entities, specifically including Forest Lakes Metropolitan District. The amendment is pending review and approval by Colorado Springs City Council and the CSU board. Upon approval of the measure by the TMD Board of Directors, the district manager is authorized to execute such amendment on behalf of TMD, subject to approval by City Council/Utilities Board in January, he said.

The board agreed with the revision and expected to approve the addition in early 2024.

Northern Delivery System update
Construction/Operations Manager Mike McDonald of Kiewit Infrastructure said the NDS pipeline project began as promised in May 2023, the installation was on schedule, and overall the public is happy and only a few complaints were received. He thanked the board and the executive team for the opportunity to complete the pipeline.

Project manager Max McClean said 29,000 feet of pipe had been installed and the Pump House tank was enroute from France. The electrical equipment is expected to be in the district in March and the metal building will be constructed in December 2023.

McGrady said Kiewit Infrastructure had been on board for three years and had kept the price within 10% despite inflation. The district has spent about \$16 million on the project so far, and the road overlay and completion of the pump house remain to complete the contract. The project is expected to total about \$21.8 million. Fire hydrants are now installed every 1,000 feet along the pipeline route.

Cummins said that besides the Cherokee Sundance Pipeline that runs down Volmer Road, Rollercoaster Road is the second road in Black Forest with a continuous number of fire hydrants in a heavily wooded area within the county.

Kiewit will complete the Segment D pipeline installation to a new proposed road in the Conex development on the west side of I-25. On completion, the NDS



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pipeline will connect northern El Paso County to CSU. There is nothing else like the NDS other than the Southern Delivery System in southern Colorado, he said. See www.ocn.me/v23n10.htm#tmd and www.triviewmetro.com.

Northern Monument Creek Interceptor update

McGrady said four vendors submitted bids for the NMCI design, and it makes sense to the district and Forest Lakes Metropolitan District to participate in the project. The district will know if the project will make financial sense in July 2024 and should budget accordingly for the potential for the project to move forward and be completed in 2026. The NMCI pipeline project would move wastewater from the district to the J.D. Phillips Water Resource Recovery Facility in Colorado Springs, located off Mark Dabbling Boulevard.

Participating in the NMCI will lower operational costs and gives

the district certainty that upgrades will not be needed in the future. The Upper Monument Creek Regional Waste Water Treatment Facility (UMCRWWTF) is land locked and the mandatory upgrades will be difficult to install should expansion be needed at the facility, he said.

Vice President Anthony Sexton said that in the past some quotes for the upgrades to the UMCRWWTF were estimated at about \$30 million, and the customer rates to accommodate those upgrades would be high. The cost for the NMCI would be split with other communities participating in the project, he said.

Superintendent Shawn Sexton said the district's wastewater flows will need to be known and accurate before fully participating in the NMCI. Bai Engineers of Greenwood Village began a six-month study in August to examine the fluctuating wastewater flows at the UMCRWWTF. The past couple of years saw

slight increases in the flows, but not as significant as 2023. The district will know more in three months, he said.

Sanctuary Pointe Park update
McGrady said Classic Homes had decided to postpone the Sanctuary Pointe Park Grand Opening until June 2024. The park rental fees will be held in an escrow account for future maintenance and turf replacement, he said.

Assistant Manager Steve Sheffield said the district will look at how the county and city park rentals are managed, but the district will give priority to local teams.

Secretary/Treasurer James Barnhart suggested blackout periods to allow the residents to use the field.

Sexton said the district will need to collect enough funds to pay for the artificial turf replacement in about seven to 10 years. The replacement is estimated to cost about \$1 million.

Executive session
The board moved into an executive session at 8:03 p.m., pursuant to Colorado Revised Statutes 24-6-402(4) (a), (b), (e), to receive legal advice, discuss negotiations regarding; water supply contracts, property acquisitions, strategic planning and change cases.

District Administrator Joyce Levad confirmed that after the meeting, no actions were taken by the Board of Directors when the regular meeting resumed.

The meeting adjourned at 9:03 p.m.

Meetings are usually held on the third Thursday every month at the district office at 16055 Old Forest Point, Suite 302. The next regular meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, Dec. 13 at 5:30 p.m. For meeting agendas, minutes, and updates, visit <https://triviewmetro.com>.

Natalie Barszcz can be reached at nataliebarszcz@ocn.me.

Woodmoor Water and Sanitation District, Nov. 13

Budget hearing opened; fee and rate increases proposed

By James Howald

At its November meeting, the Woodmoor Water and Sanitation District (WWSD) board held a public hearing on its proposed 2024 budget. It also scheduled a public hearing on water and sewer tap fees and usage rates, to be held at its Dec. 18 board meeting. The board also heard financial and operational reports.

Budget hearing opened
Board President Brian Bush opened the public hearing on the proposed budget for 2024. District Manager Jessie Shaffer said he had made three small changes to the draft budget presented at the previous meeting:

- Field investigation showed that a sewer line at Jackson Creek Parkway and Higby Road does not need replacement as expected; the \$103,000 estimated for that work will be moved to reserves.
- An upcoming meeting with Mountain View Electric Association may require a higher amount to be budgeted for

- electrical costs.
- Approval of the final budget for the Chilcott Ditch Co., of which WWSD is the largest shareholder, may require small changes to the WWSD budget.

Shaffer said a copy of the proposed budget was available to the public at the WWSD office.

There were no comments on the budget from the public. The board voted unanimously to keep the public hearing open until the next board meeting, which is scheduled for 1 p.m. on Dec. 18.

Increases to water tap fees and some rates announced

The board scheduled a public hearing on proposed tap fee and usage rate increases for its Dec. 18 meeting.

The proposed tap fees and usage rates are published on the WWSD web page.

Water tap fees, which are one-time fees used to fund infrastructure improvements required by new development, will increase significantly in 2024. The most

common water tap fee, for a three-fourths-inch water tap for a single-family residence, will increase from \$29,788 to \$37,235. A three-fourths-inch water tap for a multi-family residence will increase from \$22,341 to \$27,927.

The fee for supplemental water service will remain unchanged at \$29,000 per acre-foot.

The water service base fee for a three-fourths-inch meter, the size used for most residences, will increase from \$10.59 per month to \$11.01.

Monthly water volume charges will also increase:

- Block 1, for 0 to 6,000 gallons, will increase from \$6.71 to \$6.98.
- Block 2, for 6001 to 25,000 gallons, will increase from \$11.06 to \$11.27.
- Block 3, over 25,000 gallons, will increase from \$17.68 to \$18.39.

The Renewable Water Investment Fee will remain unchanged at \$40 per month.

The monthly base rate for residential sewer service will increase from \$34.32 per month to \$35.69, and the monthly sewer volume charge for each 1,000 gallons over 6,000 gallons per month will increase from \$4.47 per month to \$4.65.

A complete list of proposed rate and fee increases is published on the WWSD web page at: <https://www.woodmoorwater.com/>. Scroll down to find attachments A and B.

Financial, operational and engineering reports

Board Treasurer Roy Martinez said water use returned to normal in October, compared to lower usage in the unusually rainy spring and summer months. Water sales were down for the year, he said; at the end of October water sales stood at 76% of the annual budgeted amount with only two months remaining in the year. Repair and maintenance costs were also down by about \$50,000, he said. Operations Superintendent Dan LaFontaine explained that some projects would wrap up by the end of the year and some of that difference would even out.

In his operational report, LaFontaine told the board that the Chilcott Ditch operations were winding down for the year and the staff at Woodmoor Ranch was focusing on vehicle maintenance.

LaFontaine reported five line breaks in October, resulting in about 1.25 million gallons of lost water. In response to a request from Martinez, LaFontaine calculated the costs of some of the leaks. The largest leak, in which 397,000 gallons of water was lost, cost the district around \$12,000, which includes costs for water treatment, road base and asphalt, and labor. The second largest leak cost the district just under \$10,000, he said.

LaFontaine said that by the end of the year, 1,708 water meters will have been replaced with newer, more capable models. The meter replacement project will take another two years to complete, he said.

District Engineer Ariel Hacker told the board that El Paso County wants the district's design for the second phase of the Highway 105 expansion project to be submitted by the end of December. The district's portion of the first phase is on schedule, she said; work on the non-potable water line at the Monument Creek Exchange will start the third week of November.

Hacker also addressed an error in JVA Inc.'s bid for the first phase of the Highway 105 expansion. She said JVA had not included costs for asphalt removal and replacement of pipeline at the intersection of Morning Canyon Road and Highway 105. Those items will add \$110,000 to the cost of the district's portion of the expansion, she said.

Hacker updated the board on work related to new wells. Well 22, which is south of County Line Road just east of I-25, is waiting on a permit from the county. Well 19, which is adjacent to the Southern Water Treatment Plant and was taken out of service for economic reasons a few years ago, will be reconnected to the district's infrastructure once water quality testing is complete. Well 19 is expected to produce 35 gallons per minute when it is back in production, she said.

The next meeting is scheduled for Mon., Dec. 18 at 1 p.m. Meetings are usually held on the second Monday of each month at 1 p.m. at the district office at 1845 Woodmoor Drive; please see www.woodmoorwater.com or call 719-488-2525 to verify meeting times and locations.

James Howald can be reached at jameshowald@ocn.me.



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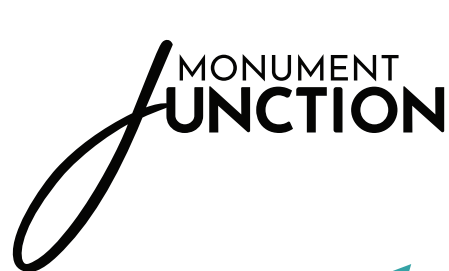
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Monument Sanitation District, Nov. 15

Board approves budget, leaves rates unchanged

By Jackie Burhans and James Howald
At its November meeting, the Monument Sanitation District (MSD) board held a public hearing on its 2024 budget and voted on two related resolutions.

Budget approved; funds appropriated
District Manager Mark Parker opened a public hearing in consideration of the 2024 budget and told the board that he had made only minor changes since the last board meeting. The amount budgeted for contingencies had been increased, he said. He made a conservative estimate of the revenue the district would receive from sewer tap fees, pointing out that phase two of the Willow Springs development would require 32 new taps. Parker explained the tap fees could only be used to fund infrastructure maintenance and improvement. User fees fund ad-

ministrative and operational costs, he said. The 2024 budget anticipates \$945,000 in user fees, an increase of \$80,000 over the amount budgeted in 2023.

Parker said he anticipated two more years of substantial revenue from tap fees, as the Monument Ridge North development along Beacon Lite Road and the RAO Investment’s development on Rickenbacker Avenue proceed.

Parker closed the hearing on the 2024 budget and the board voted unanimously in favor of Resolution 11152023-2, which adopts the budget and appropriates \$2.27 million from the General Fund to operate the district.

Rates remain unchanged
The board voted unanimously in favor of Resolution 11152023-1, which adopts wastewater service and tap fees for 2024. The monthly resi-

dential use fee remains unchanged at \$40 per month. Parker said rates and fees have not been increased since 2020.

The complete schedule of fees can be found on the MSD web page here: <https://monumentsd.colorado.gov/schedule-of-fees>.

Monument Sanitation District meetings are normally held at 9 a.m. on the third Wednesday of the month in the district conference room at 130 Second St., Monument. The next regular meeting is scheduled for Dec. 20. See <https://colorado.gov/msd>. For a district service map, see <https://colorado.gov/pacific/msd/district-map-0>. Information: 719-481-4886.

Jackie Burhans can be reached at jackieburhans@ocn.me.
James Howald can be reached at jameshowald@ocn.me.

Donala Water and Sanitation District, Nov. 16

District ends 2023 under budget

By James Howald and Jackie Burhans
At its November meeting, the Donala Water and Sanitation District (DWSD) board heard a financial report from General Manager Jeff Hodge and operational reports from Water Operator Ronny Wright and Waste Plant Operator Aaron Tolman. 2023 finances in the black

Hodge told the board that at the end of October, the district was about \$400,000 under budget. Lower than usual water sales due to the rainy weather were offset by the fact that DWSD spent less than expected—about \$300,000—on having Colorado Springs Utilities convey, treat, and deliver water from the district’s Willow Creek Ranch to DWSD customers. Hodge said the district would not need to spend more this year on “The Loop” water re-use project, in which it participates with the Cherokee Metro District, the Town of Monument, and Woodmoor Water and Sanitation District. The Loop may refund \$100,000 to DWSD, Hodge said. Higher interest rates benefited the district in 2023, Hodge said.

Hodge said the proposed budget for 2024

would be voted on at the Dec. 7 board meeting and a public hearing on rates would also be held. The December meeting will be held a week earlier than usual so that the budget can be submitted to the state by Dec. 15.

Highlights of operational reports
In his report on water delivery, Wright told the board about electrical problems at the R. Hull treatment plant. Motor starters failed, he said, requiring the replacement of a circuit board. The age of the circuit board made it difficult to find a replacement. Hodge asked whether the district should upgrade it or instead convey the water to the Holbein plant for treatment. There were no comments from the board, and no action was taken.

Wright also updated the board on the district’s test study of hydrous manganese oxide (HMO) technology to reduce radium in water delivered to customers. Three days of water samples treated with HMO have been sent to the state for evaluation, he said. Wright said the study is going well and he expected results from

the state in April.
On the wastewater side, Tolman told the board that cracks in the walls of one of the sequential batch reactors at the Upper Monument Creek Waste Water Treatment Plant had been repaired. Board President Wayne Vanderschuere commented on the high efficiency of the plant, and Hodge said the effluent from the plant was cleaner than Monument Creek, into which the effluent is discharged.

The next meeting is scheduled for Dec. 7 at 1:30 p.m. Generally, board meetings are held the third Thursday of the month at 1:30 p.m. and include online access; call (719) 488-3603 or access www.donalawater.org to receive up-to-date meeting information. The district office is located at 15850 Holbein Drive, Colorado Springs.

James Howald can be reached at jameshowald@ocn.me.
Jackie Burhans can be reached at jackieburhans@ocn.me.

El Paso County Regional Loop Water Authority, Nov. 16

Board expands contract with consultants

By James Howald
At its November meeting, the El Paso County Regional Loop Water Authority (EPCRLWA) board added to the range of services to be provided by specialized consulting companies. It also discussed the proposed 2024 budget.

Consultants take on larger role
The board heard an update from John Kuosman, a water practice leader with Merrick and Co. serving as the authority’s Project Planning and Workflow manager, regarding the role of consulting engineers. JVA Inc. was initially hired to test water quality and to design water treatment processes when it was assumed that the EPCRLWA would be responsible for all aspects of the project. In recent months, however, Colorado Springs Utilities (CSU) has opened the door to partnering with EPCRLWA by providing water treatment at its Edward Bailey Water Treatment Plant (EBWTP), which would lower the cost of the loop water reuse project significantly by eliminating the need for EPCRLWA to build its own treatment facility. The EBWTP currently treats water for CSU’s Southern Delivery System (SDS) and has about 35 million gallons per day of excess treatment capacity, Kuosman said.

Kuosman told the board that the next step for the loop was a conceptual treatment evaluation for water diverted from Fountain Creek through the Chilcott Ditch to the EBWTP. Most of the tasks required for that evaluation are already included in EPCRLWA’s contract with Merrick. He proposed that the EPCRLWA’s contract with JVA be expanded to cover some of the tasks required to develop this evaluation.

Kuosman outlined the six tasks required by

the evaluation:

- General project management.
- A request for technical data such as process flow diagrams, operating and maintenance manuals, and water quality treatment data from CSU.
- From JVA, an interim summary memo assessing Chilcott Ditch current raw water quality, development of water quality targets for Chilcott Ditch water, and an additional three months of water quality testing. Kuosman estimated this step would add \$58,500 to JVA’s current contract costs.
- A decision on whether it is necessary to separate water from Fountain Creek from SDS water at the EBWTP. Kuosman recommended the EPCRLWA contract with Carollo Engineers to assist with this decision, at a cost not to exceed \$10,000.
- Development of conceptual treatment alternatives at the EBWTP. Alternatives that assume separation of Chilcott Ditch water from SDS water include: pre-treatment of Chilcott Ditch water by the EPCRLWA; pre-treatment done by the EBWTP and post-treatment done by the EPCRLWA; and both pre- and post-treatment done by EPCRLWA. A fourth option involves blending raw water.
- A final report and memorandum that will be used by CSU to determine pricing for the services it will provide.

Kuosman said he thought tasks three through six could be completed in three months.

Kuosman added he was also working on the easement issues required by the project and recommended hiring Kimley-Horn to help with

easements in the northern part of the project and Western States Land Services for easements to the south.

Following Kuosman’s presentation, the board voted unanimously to amend its contract with JVA as requested and to authorize Kuosman to continue negotiations with Carollo Engineering.

Budget discussion
Board President Jessie Shaffer said he had made some minor adjustments to the proposed 2024 budget following the October board meeting. Reimbursements to participating agencies were reduced to \$100,000. Shaffer asked the board if the amount budgeted for professional fees should be increased. Kuosman recommended an increase from \$350,000 to \$500,000 and the board concurred. Shaffer estimated the project would have a fund balance of \$444,000 at the end of 2024.

A public hearing on the budget will be held at the next board meeting on Dec. 12.

The next regular meeting is scheduled for Tue., Dec. 12 at 9 a.m. Regular meetings are usually held on the third Thursday of each month at 9 a.m. at the Monument Town Hall at 645 Beacon Lite Road. Workshop meetings are held the first Thursday of each month at 9 a.m. at the Cherokee Metropolitan District offices at 6250 Palmer Park Blvd., Colorado Springs. Please see loop-water.org or call 719-488-3603 to verify meeting times and locations.

James Howald can be reached at jameshowald@ocn.me.

Northern El Paso County Coalition of Community Associations (NEPCO), Nov. 11

County Commissioners and staff visit NEPCO

By Marlene Brown
The Northern El Paso County Coalition of Community Associations (NEPCO) annual membership meeting was held Nov. 11 for general elections of board members. The purpose of NEPCO is to promote an economic, ecological, and sociological community environment in which a high quality of life can be sustained for member homeowners associations (HOAs)

There was a quorum present, and the board

was voted in by acclamation, an overwhelming affirmative vote by cheers and applause rather than by ballot. The board was affirmed for another year. The decision of who would hold each office will be decided at the next board meeting. Several board positions are available to members of member HOAs. Those who are interested can email board members at position@nepco.org.

The Treasurer’s report was given by the President Mike Aspenson, who reported that mem-

bership included 51 active HOAs representing 10,000-plus homes and 20,000-plus registered voters. Reports were given by committee chairs: retiring Bob Mooney (West Oak Ridge HOA), Transportation, and Beth Lonnquist (Red Rock Ranch HOA), Land Use.

Guest speakers
Several people from El Paso County spoke to the membership, including Holly Williams, District 1 county commissioner; Kevin Mastin, Depart-

ment of Public Works; Meggan Harrington, director of the Department of Planning and Community Development; and Brandi Williams, representing District 3.

Holly Williams said the county is one the most populated counties in the country. It has over 737,000 residents, a larger landmass than the state of Delaware, and more veterans than the total population of 53 counties in the state. The top 10 services and budget priorities that are provided by the county include: human services, public health, veteran services, clerk and recorder, assessor, elections, pretrial services, jail,

district attorney, and coroner. The strategic objectives of the county are infrastructure, including roads, stormwater, and parks; service quality with a qualified workforce dedicated to continuous improvement; and community trust, health, and safety.

The Pikes Peak Promise published Oct. 11 represents a comprehensive initiative to bring together elected officials, law enforcement, and community partners, uniting their efforts to tackle critical issues of the county. The initiative hopes to cultivate a safer, more affordable community through legislative action and commu-

nity engagement. For more information, go to www.elpasoco.com/transformational-pikes-peak-promise-initiative-unveiled-local-leaders

NEPCO normally meets at the Woodmoor Barn every other month on the second Saturday. The next regular member meeting will be on Jan. 13, 2024, from 10 a.m.-noon. For more information, go to nepco.org

Marlene Brown can be reached at marlenebrown@ocn.me.

Woodmoor Improvement Association, Nov. 15

Board approves 2024 budget and increased dues, hears residents' concerns

By Jackie Burhans

At its November meeting, the Woodmoor Improvement Association (WIA) board approved its 2024 budget and increased annual dues. The board also heard concerns from residents about public use of the land at the edge of their properties.

President Brian Bush was absent.

2023 budget and dues increase approved
Treasurer Connie Brown reported that annual dues are proposed to increase to \$291, just shy of a 3% increase compared to the 2023 rate of \$283. Vice President Peter Bille noted that the primary driver of the increase was inflation. Commons Area Director Steve Cutler noted that the cost increase of maintaining common areas was more than 3%. The board voted unanimously to approve the increase.

The board moved and seconded the motion to approve the 2024 budget. During the discussion, Forestry Director Cindy Thrush noted that she had sent an email to the board expressing that she felt the budget was out of balance between public safety, forestry, the common area, and The Barn. She noted that 50% of the funding goes to public safety while only 3% goes to forestry and 12% to common areas. She acknowledged that she was looking for more money in her area.

Bille noted that WIA had to balance its budget, and it estimates revenues from dues based on historical payment rates. Outside of that, it is challenging to estimate fees for construction and remodeling and covenant violation fines. The board is comfortable that there will be money coming in in those areas, and he encouraged Thrush to continue to bring requests to the board for consideration.

Thrush replied that her larger concern is where people place value on their amenities. She didn't know if WIA had done a survey of its residents. Architectural Control Director Ed Miller said that the highest priority is Woodmoor Public Safety (WPS), noting that initially, dues for WPS were separate and that the community overwhelmingly approved combining the dues. He said without WPS, there would be more crime. Thrush asked if the percentage of the budget allocated to WPS could be scaled back from 50% to 30%. WPS Chief Kevin Nielsen noted that the vote to combine the dues raised the total assessment and said that if WPS' budget were cut, the WPS portion of the assessment would have to be decreased.

Bille said WIA gets good feedback from residents, and he feels comfortable that public safety, fire mitigation, and common areas are the top three priorities. He again encouraged Thrush to come to the board with any funding requests. The board approved the 2024 budget, with Thrush voting no.

Resident concerns

Two residents appeared before the board, handing it a packet of information and showing a slide show of their properties to demonstrate their concern. The adjacent properties have addresses on the southeast end of Lake Woodmoor Drive and Lakeview Lane respectively, and their concern is with people parking on Lake Woodmoor Drive both in the county right of way and on their property.

Leah Grady, whose property is on Lake Woodmoor Drive, said she has been a resident for six years and that she and her husband had agreed to allow WIA to place a sign on their property. There was a pullout on their property when they purchased it, but the parking problem has become dramatically worse since 2022, she said. Grady spoke with Architectural Control Committee Administrator Bob Pearsall, who acknowledged the problem. She was under the impression that WIA was working on the problem, but no further work or communication happened. Grady noted that construction vehicles parked on both the county right of way and on her private property during the repaving of Lake Wood-

moor Drive. Other people park on the property and smoke and leave cigarette butts, she said. Nielsen had informed her it was up to her to put private property signs on her land. Woodmoor Water and Sanitation Department had to come in to repair a damaged fire hydrant and replace some water lines. She has called El Paso County Commissioner Holly Williams and the Department of Public Works multiple times without getting a solution. Grady expressed frustration with her interactions with WIA and the county over two years, saying she is only interested in solving the situation. Barbara Roeder, who owns the adjacent property, said they are asking for assistance, cooperation, and guidance.

Public Safety Director Brad Gleason noted that the county owns and is responsible for the street and has a right of way of 40 feet on either side of Lake Woodmoor, which is larger than the typical eight feet. WIA has no control over that, he said, and is very limited in what it can tell people they can do in a public right of way, just as they are limited in what they can tell people they can do on their private property. Gleason said if they had signs indicating where the private property was, they could get license plate numbers and call the sheriff.

Grady suggested she wanted to solve the problem by placing bushes or boulders that could be moved if needed later. Bille said WIA could not plant on county property. Grady noted that many of her neighbors had landscaped up to the street and that the county had said they don't monitor or enforce rules in their rights of way. Gleason said the best thing for the homeowners to do was to talk to Pearsall and Cutler to make sure they are complying with covenants on their property, but that WIA could not tell them what to do or not do in county property.

Board reports

- Gleason noted that the United Services Automobile Association (USAA) insurance company had accepted fault for the damage to Woodmoor Public Safety's vehicle. He said that a meeting had been held with the adjuster, and parts had been ordered, but he did not know how long it would take.
- Brown reported there were 63 unpaid accounts.
- Covenants Director Per Suhr reported that there were no violations in October; there were seven issues resolved through friendly communication with two unfounded complaints.
- Miller noted that 67 projects had been submitted in October, with 57 approved in the office, nine approved by the Architectural Control Committee, and one disapproved. Year to date, the number of submitted projects is 535, which is a 5.3% decrease from the prior year. The project approval rate is 98.9%.
- Thrush reported that there had been 11 Forestry/Firewise visits in October. She anticipated that all the mitigation matching funds available would be used, and WIA is looking for additional funds for 2024.
- Cutler said that the sprinkler system at The Barn community center was shut down for the winter, and common area fire mitigation was completed by Oct. 2. Additional work was planned at The Point on Nov. 28-30, weather permitting, and the final portion of the trail at The Preserve was completed.
- Bille, on behalf of Bush, requested that trash cans be pulled in once trash has been picked up.

The WIA Board of Directors usually meets at 7 p.m. on the fourth Wednesday of each month in the Barn at 1691 Woodmoor Drive, Monument. The next meeting has been moved to Wed., Dec. 13 due to the holidays.

The WIA calendar can be found at www.woodmoor.org/wia-calendar/.

WIA board meeting minutes can be found at www.woodmoor.org/meeting-minutes/ once approved and posted.

Jackie Burhans can be reached at jackieburhans@ocn.me.

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November Weather Wrap

By Bill Kappel

November was warmer than normal, the complete opposite of last year, but I’m sure most of us weren’t complaining. We did get three periods of unsettled weather that allowed our precipitation to end up right around normal, but most days between those storms were mild.

The first week of the month was mild and dry with temperatures in the 60s to low 70s. Each day saw lots of sunshine with areas of high and mid-level clouds at times. They produced some spectacular mountain wave clouds along with colorful sunrises and sunsets.

The first of three periods of unsettled weather then moved in on the 8th, with an initial frontal passage early in the morning. Clouds continued to fill in throughout the morning, with light snow beginning just before noon. Light snow continued off and on most of the day and ended just after midnight on the 9th. This system was relatively warm by November standards and therefore the heaviest snow occurred on top of the Palmer Divide with much less snowfall accumulating down around the I-25 corridor.

Dry conditions returned from the 10th through the 18th, with temperatures generally above average each day. The warmest period occurred from the 14th through the 16th, with highs well into the 60s each afternoon.

Another quick shot of cold air and snow moved in late on the 19th. Snow and some blowing snow developed that evening and continued throughout the next day. This system was colder than the previous storm and therefore produced

more widespread snow across the area. Most of us accumulated 2-4 inches during the storm.

Once this storm moved out, sunshine and mild conditions returned, but only for a few days. Highs jumped into the mid-40s on the 21st, then southwesterly winds kicked in and pushed temperatures back into the mid- and upper 60s on the 22nd. But as usual, these mild temperatures were ahead of a much colder airmass. The first effects of this colder air moved in Thanksgiving morning and continued to fill in during the day. Flurries began to develop that evening as temperatures continued to fall, reaching the teens before midnight. Colder air continued to move, which meant the teens were as warm as we got on the 24th. Along with that, strong northerly winds helped to keep light snow, flurries, and blowing snow in place all day. As wind shifted out of the south, fog developed that day and evening, producing cold, windy, and snowy conditions.

Cold and windy conditions continued into the 25th as the last portion of this storm moved out of the region. This produced more light snow and blowing snow through the morning and afternoon and kept temperatures in the teens for the second day in a row before conditions finally settled down. Of course, the clearing skies and fresh snow also allowed temperatures to fall quickly that evening, dropping to the single digits by the morning of the 26th.

As with the previous two snowy periods, quiet and seasonal conditions quickly returned, and temperatures returned to normal levels to end the month with plenty of sunshine.

A look ahead

December usually is cold around the region, with daytime highs often staying below freezing and overnight lows that can drop well below zero. But we can experience a wide variety of weather, with westerly winds producing mild conditions. The month is generally dry, however, with several light, fluffy snowfalls. Gusty winds are a common nuisance during the month, especially west of I-25. The chance of a White Christmas is fairly good for the area, with some snow on the ground and, if we are lucky, fresh snowfall on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day.

November 2023 Weather Statistics

Average High	51.3° (+1.9°)
100-year return frequency value	max 55.5° min 38.5°
Average Low	23.7° (+2.3°)
100-year return frequency value	max 27.5° min 14.1°
Monthly Precipitation	0.61" (-0.08")
100-year return frequency value	max 3.80" min 0.16"
Monthly Snowfall	11.1" (+0.3")
Highest Temperature	72° on the 5th
Lowest Temperature	5° on the 25th
Season to Date Snow	14.5" (-7.3")
(the snow season is from Oct 1 to Sept 30)	
Season to Date Precip.	24.87" (+3.80")
(the precipitation season, Jan 1 to Dec 31)	
Heating Degree Days	874 (+6)
Cooling Degree Days	0 (0)

Bill Kappel is a meteorologist and Tri-Lakes resident. He can be reached at billkappel@ocn.me.

Letters to Our Community

Guidelines for letters are on page 23.

Disclaimer: The information and opinions expressed in Letter to Our Community are the responsibility of the letter writers and should not be interpreted as the views of OCN even if the letter writer is an OCN volunteer. The letters are arranged in alphabetical order based on the last name of the author.

It’s time for Monument to move forward

Monument is the jewel of the Front Range. We are uniquely situated geographically to capture the beauty and serenity around us. To our north are 36,000 acres of designated open space. The national forest is to our east, and the AFA is to our south. We should be grateful to live here with these protections.

It’s no secret there has been negative press coming from a few contentious individuals this past year trying to create a community of hostility and showcase Monument in the media as just another politically crazy town.

This small group of former political operatives wants to change the narrative in Monument, for reasons only they can state. They seem to prefer chaos, or simply wish to have lost power restored. Most citizens just want to focus on maintaining a sense of community.

Most people live here because of the good that is Monument, and its citizens, albeit resilient, wish to move forward, keeping our town as beautiful as it can be, and as vibrant as it can be.

Citizens are permitted due process and input

on how our government functions, especially since we are a Home Rule municipality, which controls how our community is governed. These misguided former leaders think otherwise.

Our founders created this country based upon citizen government and citizen participation. The Bill of Rights was intended for the citizens to maintain power. The government is you, not a few elitists who lost their status.

Negativity from these few is just noise. Monument is our home and it is up to us collectively to create the roadmap its residents desire for the future, starting with a new upcoming Comprehensive Plan that will offer extensive citizen input and move us toward creating a positive future.

Steve King

A question about fatal consequences

Question: If unlawful protesters close a major traffic road to a hospital, and that results in the death of an ambulance transport of a heart attack victim because of that traffic closure, does every single protester get charged with murder or at least manslaughter for their illegal activities causing a death?

I say yes.

Gordon Reichal

Thanks, Kiwanis Monument Hill Foundation

On behalf of the Palmer Ridge Outdoor Learn-

ing Lab, we would like to say thank you to the Kiwanis Monument Hill Foundation for their generous donations consisting of a \$1,000 grant, gray breeze rock for path accessibility, and border stakes for transects to begin research. These donations are important to supporting the innovative learning space for students, allowing us to further expand our knowledge. We are very grateful for the donations made by the Kiwanis Monument Hill Foundation. We, along with our fellow students, are very appreciative of your support!

Lucy Zamborelli and Taylor Peterson, PRHS students

Thank you, Tri-Lakes Women’s Club

On behalf of the Palmer Ridge High School (PRHS) Outdoor Learning Lab, we would like to thank the Tri-Lakes Women’s Club for their recent donations, which included a \$1,000 grant for composted soil, and Colorado native plants. Their generous contributions allow the PRHS Outdoor Learning Lab to continue building a space for students to learn through hands-on application. We enjoy going outside to the Lab to apply concepts learned in the classroom. Again, we are very grateful for the donations made by the Tri-Lakes Women’s Club. We, along with our fellow students, are very appreciative of your support!

Lucy Zamborelli and Taylor Peterson, PRHS students

Between the Covers at Covered Treasures Bookstore

Great gift ideas

By the staff at Covered Treasures

“Christmas is doing a little extra something for someone”—Charles M. Schultz

Here are some books that would make wonderful winter reading for yourself or someone else!

Magic on the Mountainside

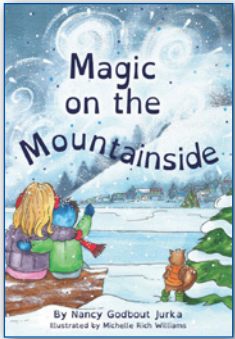
By Nancy Godbout Jurka (Satiama Publishing) \$20

Every holiday season in the town of Palmer Lake, Colo., townspeople and children look forward eagerly to the annual magic on their mountainside—the lighting of the Palmer Lake Star. Two children wait, but when nothing happens they take matters into their own hands and it turns into quite the adventure. This book celebrates the natural beauty of Colorado while telling the history of our Palmer Lake star.

Brave the Wild River: The Untold Story of Two Women Who Mapped the Botany of the Grand Canyon

By Melissa Sevigny (Norton) \$30

In summer 1938, botanists Elzada Clover and



Lois Jotter set off to run the Colorado River, accompanied by an ambitious and entrepreneurial expedition leader, a zoologist, and two amateur boatmen. Through the vibrant letters and diaries of the two women, science journalist Melissa L. Sevigny traces their daring 43-day journey down the river, during which they meticulously cataloged the thorny plants that thrived in the Grand Canyon’s secret nooks and crannies. Brave the Wild River is a spellbinding adventure of two women who risked their lives to make an unprecedented botanical survey of a defining landscape in the American West, at a time when human influences had begun to change it forever.

Being Henry: The Fonz ... and Beyond

By Henry Winkler (Celadon Books) \$30

Henry Winkler, launched into prominence as “The Fonz” in the beloved Happy Days, has transcended the role that made him who he is. Henry shares in this achingly vulnerable memoir the disheartening truth of his childhood, the difficulties of a life with severe dyslexia, the pressures of a role that takes on a life of its own, and the path forward once your wildest dream seems behind you. Since the glorious era of Happy Days fame, Henry has endeared himself to a new generation with roles in which he’s been revealed as an actor with immense depth and pathos, a departure

from the period of his life when he was typecast as The Fonz and could barely find work.

Absolution

By Alice McDermott (Farrar, Straus & Giroux) \$28

American women—American wives—have been mostly minor characters in the literature of the Vietnam War, but in Absolution they take center stage. This book focuses on two women and the discovery of how their own lives as women on the periphery—of politics, of history, of war, of their husbands’ convictions—have been shaped and burdened by the same sort of unintended consequences that followed America’s tragic interference in Southeast Asia.

Little Red Sleigh

By Erin Guendelsberger (Sourcebooks Wonderful) \$18

The Little Red Sleigh has one big dream: to one day become Santa’s big red sleigh! But all her life, she’s been told she’s too small, she’s too young, she can’t fly, and she certainly can’t meet Santa. Well, this Christmas, with the help of some friends, she’s determined to do the impossible. Full of winter joy and holiday magic, this charming Christmas story will remind readers of all ages that no dream is out of reach if you believe.

Murtagh: The World of Aragon (Inheritance Cycle)
By Christopher Paolini (Alfred A. Knopf Books for Young Readers) \$30
The world is no longer safe for the Dragon Rider Murtagh and his dragon, Thorn. An evil king has been toppled, and they are left to face the consequences of the reluctant role they played in his reign of terror. Now they are hated and alone, ex-

iled to the outskirts of society.
So begins an epic journey into lands both familiar and untraveled, where Murtagh and Thorn must use every weapon in their arsenal, from brains to brawn, to find and outwit a mysterious witch. In this gripping novel starring one of the most popular characters from Christopher Paolini's blockbuster Inheritance Cycle, a Dragon Rider must discover what he stands for in a world

that has abandoned him. Murtagh is the perfect book to enter the World of Eragon for the first time or to joyfully return.

Merry Christmas! And until next year, happy reading.

The staff at Covered Treasures can be reached at books@ocn.me.

December Library Events

Special program and schedule changes

By Harriet Halbig
This December, the Monument Library is offering a special program for teens, adults, and seniors. As an affordable gift or a personal treat, come to the library and make a peppermint mocha-scented candle in your own mug or one provided by the library. The program will be offered from 11 to 12:30 on Friday, Dec. 8. Registration is required online at ppld.org (look under pro-

grams by location) or by calling 719-488-2370.
Toddler Time, Storytime, and Stay and Play are suspended for December.
The Tween Dungeons and Dragons Club for ages 9 to 12 will meet on Friday, Jan. 5 from 4 to 5:30. No experience is required, and new members are always welcome. Registration is required online at ppld.org (look under programs by location) or by calling 719-488-2370.

Come to the library for a peaceful escape from the holiday bustle. Enjoy some time by our wall of windows with a favorite book or magazine.
Please note that all library facilities will be closed on Dec. 24 and 25 and Jan. 1.
Happy holidays from the library!
Harriet Halbig can be reached at harriethalbig@ocn.me.

High Altitude Nature and Gardening (HANG)

Getting holiday cactuses to bloom

By Janet Sellers
Holiday cactuses can live up to 50 years. They originally came from the Brazilian rainforests. I found some surprises about this non-toxic plant that's safe for dogs and cats. Christmas cactus, Thanksgiving cactus, and Easter cactus are common names for this succulent plant.
The University of Georgia reports on its botanical extension website that the original Christmas cactus was developed by French botanist Charles Lemaire and named after French horticulture collector Frédéric Schlumberger. Schlumbergera is now the correct botanical name, but they are frequently called Zygocactus.
These plants stay in bloom for three to six weeks, each blossom lasting about a week. They have adapted to be pollinated by hummingbirds in the Brazilian rainforest. The 20-30 flower "tepals" fuse to form a floral tube for the hummingbirds to pollinate. The Christmas cactus flowers have pink pollen and later, a fleshy fruit.
I enjoy my Christmas cactus plants but was disappointed when they didn't form buds this year. Alas, I think my plants will probably bloom for Valentine's Day given the advice I found. About a couple of months before the desired bloom time, a very consistent 50 to 60-degree indoor temperature, 12 to 14 hours of darkness every 24 hours, is needed. As short-day plants they need cool temperatures (but not cold) to

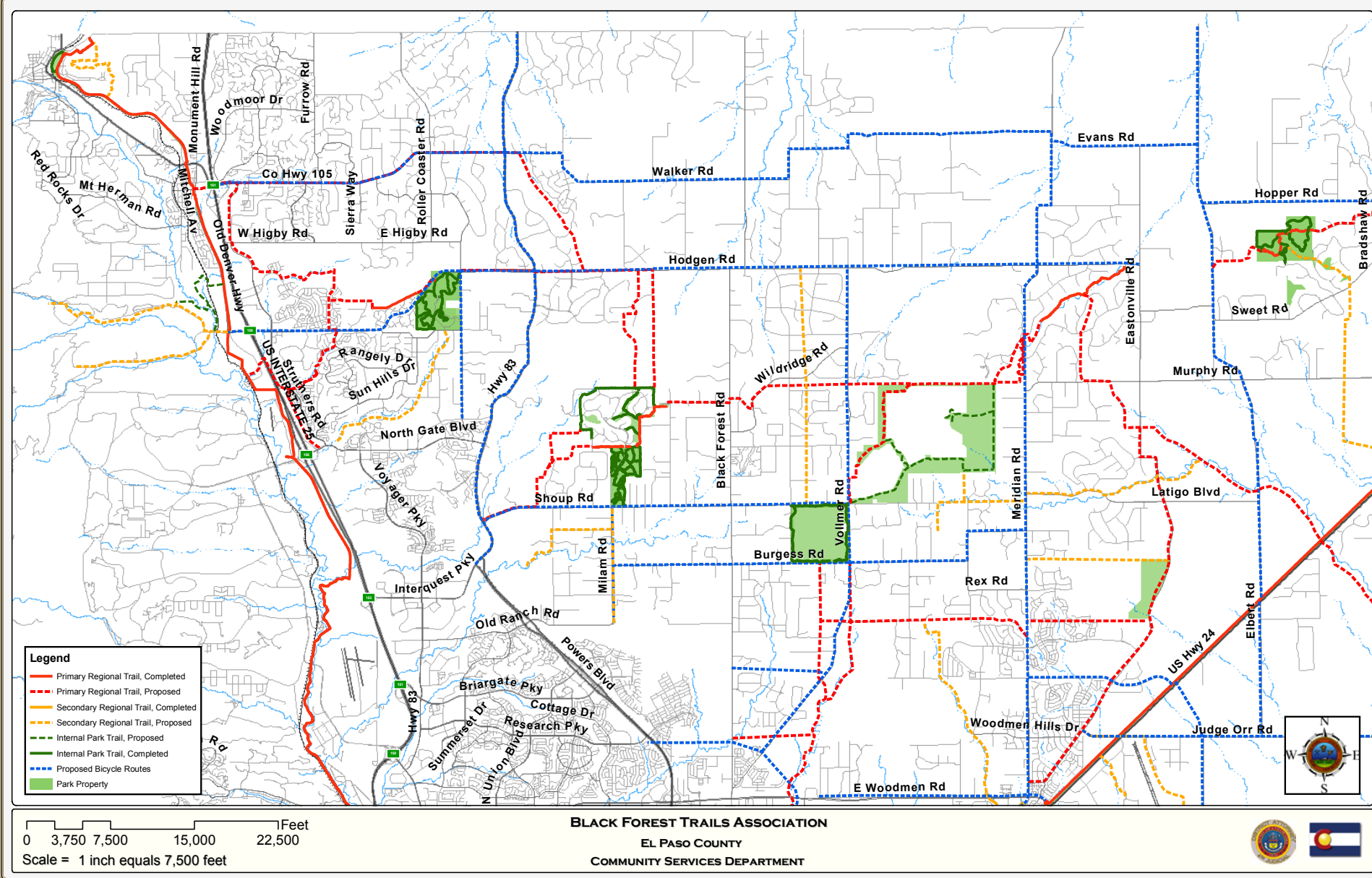
trigger flowering.
The plants are so sensitive that even a street light or a night light will affect them. We can simply cover them every night and then take the covering off the next morning, and do this for six weeks (and get them to bloom again in the year with this trick months after their first blooming). Increased darkness compensates for temperatures above 65 degrees. After buds appear it could take 6-8 weeks to actually bloom (especially for the second time) with no fertilization during flowering.
Christmas cactuses will drop flower buds with sudden changes in temperature, overwatering and low humidity, but go limp if they're over-watered. Water every two weeks when soil is dry an inch down. They like being rootbound, needing repotting every couple of years. Prune them to a nice shape and keep the green stem segments to root and make new plants.
Janet Sellers is an avid "lazy gardener" letting Mother Nature lead the way for natural growing wisdom. Reach her at JanetSellers@OCN.me.



Above: These "cactuses" are succulents identified by differences in greenery. Thanksgiving cactuses have pointy edges and Easter cactuses have rounded edges. Christmas cactuses can have both—it is a combination of the others, blooming in December in the Northern Hemisphere's long nights and short days. This is a photo of a "Thanksgiving" cactus bought near Christmastime last year. Their blooms are triggered by long, cool nights, and they can bloom any time of year with proper conditions. *Photo by Janet Sellers.*

On the Trail (in memory of Tim Watkins)

Black Forest Trails Association



Above: Several parks in the El Paso County Parks and Trails system are connected through efforts of the Black Forest Trails Association. *Map provided by Cheryl Pixley.* This trails map can be downloaded at www.ocn.me/pdf/v23n12bftamap0815.pdf.

By Marlene Brown
The Black Forest Trails Association (BFTA), a local nonprofit organization, originally became a business entity to create a connection with local residents and the El Paso County Parks

staff. BFTA was created in 1995. It worked with the community and board members who had a real interest in the non-motorized multi-use recreational trail system in the Black Forest area, neighborhoods, and the El Paso County Regional

Trails System.
So many things have changed in the last 30 years. BFTA had helped implement trails and roads in Black Forest and then the fire came. Ten years ago, many trees and structures burned.

Many of the marked trails disappeared. People moved away and new people moved in. Renewing the spirit of Black Forest and some of the goals has been the path of the new 2023 board. Jack Yonce, newly elected president of BFTA, has experience with creating databases and as a member of the county Park Advisory Board. He has worked with the membership of BFTA creating trails that connect the community. There are many ways to assist with hands-on trail stewardship by creating, building, and maintaining trails.

This year and beyond is a special time for BFTA leaders. Finding new energy and projects after a difficult decade since the fire in 2013, there is a need to rejuvenate the Grassroots Neighborhood efforts to establish local trails and work with the newest county Parks Master Plan of 2022 and the county overall Master Plan from 2021. See the map for trail systems and proposed trails in your area. There are many opportunities to connect neighborhoods. See www.blackforesttrails.org for more information. The trails map is posted at www.ocn.me/pdf/v23n12bftamap0815.pdf, Marlene Brown can be reached at marlenebrown@ocn.me.

Art Matters

Tiny worlds: miniatures, zines and their secrets in history



By Janet Sellers

“Art is for everybody. To think that they—thepublic—donotappreciate art because they don’t understand it, and to continue to make art that they don’t understand and therefore become alienated from, may mean that theartististheonewhodoesn’tunderstand or appreciate art and is thriving in this “self-proclaimed knowledge of art” that is actually ... (nonsense).”—Keith Haring, Journals

Miniature paintings have a long history as art form and expression, given as gifts and kept as heirlooms. Originating from various cultures around the world, miniature creations are often characterized by their small size, intricate details, and vibrant colors. They have a rich history in various cultures, such as European, Native American, Far East, Near East, African and in many ethnic traditions. We can find these small treasures in many unexpected places around the country or the globe, so even the hunt for them is a hobby to enjoy.

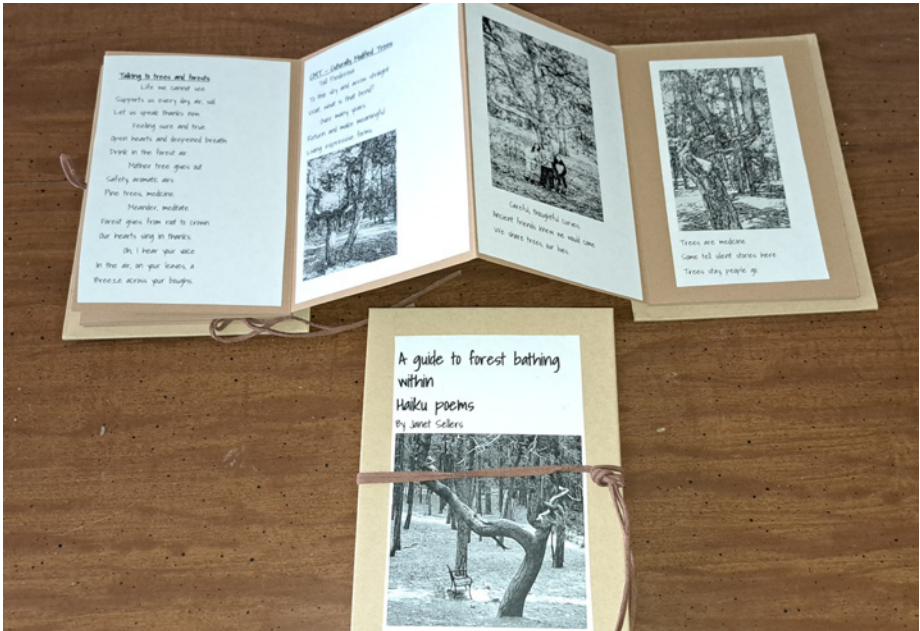
The effort and attention put into these small masterpieces is significant, so don’t let their diminutive size trick you; they are worth quite a lot and are greatly appreciated worldwide. The images can be artists’ paintings or digitally made

adding the human touch of artists. Miniature artist books in an art-form called “Zines” are collected by many, starting with Thomas Paine’s Common Sense and Ralph Waldo Emerson’s The Dial. The Museum of Modern Art in New York has a vast collection of Zines in their archives.

In times past, miniature paintings often held secret messages or memories that could be kept near the person discreetly, often in pocket watches or locket. Such were the secret forbidden love eye portraits of the 1700s and French Revolution eye portraits that signified allegiance to the party.

Today, miniatures can reflect cultural roots, family events and traditions, or ancestral stories. Small artworks that represent places visited can be a beautiful, compact way to preserve memories or celebrate and honor a family’s heritage. They become reminders of significant moments in life, for pets and cherished places, and they become family heirlooms.

Miniature paintings can symbolize specific themes or sentiments that hold significance. A painting of a tree might represent growth and stability, a bird could symbolize freedom, or a favorite person or celebrity could stir fond memories. A cherished quote could



Above: “Zines,” short for magazines or fanzines (fan magazines), represent many genres of self-published, small (frequently less than 100) circulation of niche topics or art. Often tangible traces of marginalized cultural communities, Zines have cultural and academic value. An outsider literature genre since the 1700s and popularized by science-fiction fans as “zines” in 1940, the term entered the Oxford English Dictionary in 1949. Shown here is a Zine of images and poetry about culturally modified trees in the Tri-Lakes region by Janet Sellers. *Photo courtesy of Janet Sellers.*

become calligraphy. All tiny treasures can fit into spaces where larger artworks might not.

Remember that the value of a keepsake lies in the personal connection it holds. Whether one chooses people, places, abstract works or creates an eclectic mix,

these small works can serve as meaningful reminders of the moments and values that matter most in the gift, and about the giver’s thoughtfulness as well.

Janet Sellers is an artist, writer and speaker. Contact her at JanetSellers@ocn.me.

An important message for our readers

OCN needs your help!

Our Community News is an all-volunteer organization. For the past 22 years, our volunteers have provided unbiased reporting on important local issues, including real estate development, fire departments, school districts, and water availability. We have provided a very favorable platform for advertising local businesses. We have published letters to the editor to allow you to express your opinions on events affecting the Tri-Lakes area.

Now we find that we have more

tasks than we have volunteers. Some vital jobs where we could use your help:

- Reporters. Reporting on local meetings, what they talked about and what they decided.
- Photographers. Capture photos and write captions for local events.
- Ad sales assistants. We need volunteers who love OCN to contact local businesses and encourage them to advertise in OCN.
- Mailing assistants. Counting and lifting tubs of papers to take the

monthly mailing to the post offices and stacks of papers to local businesses, loading and unloading mailing tubs from a truck at two locations, preparing postoffice paperwork, tub labels, subscription labels, etc.

- Drivers. Driving a rental truck to various post offices once a month. The time and skills involved vary greatly from job to job. OCN will provide whatever equipment and training you need. Please join us today! Meet a group

of interesting and committed people. Learn new skills—use your enthusiasm and creativity to benefit our community and celebrate unfiltered information.

Please call Publisher John Heiser at (719) 488-3455, or email johnheiser@ocn.me to see how you can contribute. Contact John today! He is waiting to hear from you. Together we can ensure that OCN continues to provide a vital service to our wonderful Tri-Lakes community.

Snapshots of Our Community

John Adams at TLCA, Oct. 28



Above: On Oct. 28, John Adams brought his John Denver Tribute concert to the Tri-Lakes Center for the Arts (TLCA) stage. Adams, performing solo this day, is a perennial favorite at the TLCA, having performed there over a dozen times throughout the years. Starting the concert with Rocky Mountain High, Adams proceeded through Denver’s well-known and lesser-known songs. The song list included Ain’t It Good to be Back Home Again, Sunshine on My Shoulders, Grandma’s Feather Bed, Rhyme and Reason, and Fly Away. As Adams switched between playing 6 and 12 string guitars during the evening, the audience contributed vocal support to many of the songs, creating an engaging and entertaining atmosphere for all. Information on upcoming events at the TLCA is at www.trilakesarts.org. *Photo by David Futey.*

AARP donates to PPLD



Above: Black Forest AARP Chapter 1100 awarded a grant of \$905.85 to the Pikes Peak Library District (PPLD) on Oct. 31. The district will use the money to provide six active-motion stools with 12-inch-high seats and three ADA-compliant desks for wheelchair access. The adaptive furniture for children will be used by the three largest libraries in the district. From left are Lance James, chief development officer for the Pikes Peak Library District, and Candace Lehmann, president of AARP Chapter 1100. *Photo by Stan Beckner.*

Black Forest Arts & Crafts Fall Show



Above: The 59th Annual Black Forest Arts & Crafts Guild (BFACG) held its Fall Show at the Black Forest Community Center on Nov. 1-5. The BFACG is the longest, continuously running Craft Guild West of the Mississippi River. The Spring and Fall Craft Shows raise money for its scholarship fund. The BFACG annually awards a graduating senior attending high school within the Black Forest area. For more information, go to www.bfacg.org/scholarships. *Photo by Marlene Brown.*

Kiwanis Club Harvest of Love



Above: As part of The Harvest of Love, Monument Hill Kiwanis Club picked up 11,535 pounds of food at schools in District 38 and delivered it to Tri-Lakes Cares (TLC) on Nov. 1 and 3. TLC filled holiday food bags with turkeys or hams, stuffed animals, and loaves of bread baked by the Girl Scouts. They started delivering them last month and are continuing this month. Harvest of Love is a program conducted and coordinated by Kiwanis Service Leadership student clubs, school student councils, and other school organizations at individual schools. In photo, Kiwanian Jim Murphy sorts canned goods being delivered to volunteers who store it for distribution. *Photo by Bob Harrigan.*

Bearbotics teams win, Nov. 11



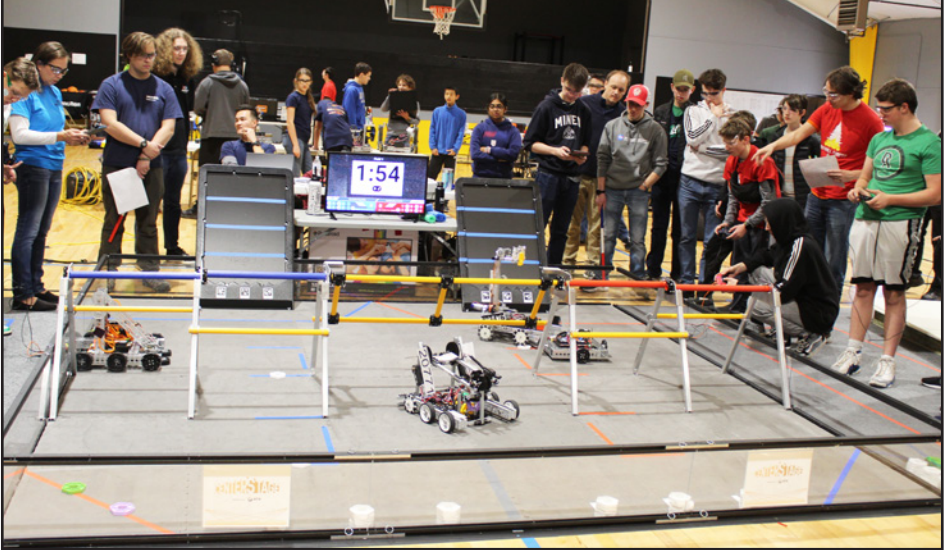
Above: School District D38's Bearbotics team, Hampterlotols, (in photo) won the Champion Award at the FIRST (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology) Lego League Challenge on Nov. 11 in Fountain. The robotics team of Lewis-Palmer Middle School (LPMS) students earned a Golden Ticket to the state championship in Denver on Dec. 9.

Empty Bowls benefits TLC



Above: The Empty Bowls event earned nearly \$9,000 for Tri-Lakes Cares (TLC). From left, on Nov. 11, Monument Hill Kiwanis Club President Scott Ross presented a check for \$8,580.59 from net proceeds of ticket sales to Haley Chapin, TLC executive director, Christine Bucher, TLC special events coordinator, and Dave Bailey, Kiwanis project manager for Empty Bowls. *Photo by Warren Gerig.*

Gobble Squabble, Nov. 18



Above and below: The third annual Monumental Impact for Technology, Engineering and Entrepreneurship (MITEE), the business arm to Bearbotics, was held at Grace Best Elementary School on Nov. 18. The Gobble Squabble competition included First Technology Challenge (FTC), First Robotics Challenge (FRC), advanced categories, and instruction on how to use Artificial Intelligence (AI) to create art. Jeanette Breton, who founded the Bearbotics program in D38 and organized the volunteers for this event, said 11 teams with five to eight participants each competed in various categories including "Battle bots" in "cage-fighting," and the FRC competition in which robots picked up and moved hexagonal pieces ("pixels") in timed events. This competition included local high school and middle school students, students and adults from Denver and other schools in Colorado, including a senior from Colorado School of Mines in Golden. Winners will advance to regional competition and possibly to national competition. *Photos by Steve Pate.*



Above: The LPMS Sour Patch Robots won first place in the Robot Design category, also earning a Golden Ticket to the state championship.



Above: The Oversized Elmos team made up of Bear Creek Elementary School (BCES) students came in second place in robot performance.



Left: The Gladiators from BCES won second place in robot design. The teams were coached by Vicki Nalley and Noreen Griffin. Emma Beery, Keira Griffin, Keith Flesher, Susie Beery, and Rob Lambrecht were mentors. *Photos by Ben Griffin.*



Tri-Lakes Women's Club Holiday Joy fundraiser, Nov. 17-18



Above: The Tri-Lakes Women’s Club held its annual Holiday Joy home tour on Nov. 17-18. Participants bought tickets for the fundraiser and enjoyed five homes to visit, with a key home designer at each property. It was a fun way to raise funds for local nonprofits and showcase the holiday

décor. Much of the décor is available through the designers’ studios or local shops. Co-chairs of the annual event were Jill Markworth and Gail Wittman, with many members volunteering at the homes and behind the scenes to make the event a delightful start for the holiday season. It is the main

fundraiser of the year for the club, which raised over \$24,000 in 2022 for their grants to local nonprofits in the Tri-Lakes area. **Right:** One venue even had Santa riding to the home. *Photos by Janet Sellers.*



Chamber Non-Profit Night, Nov. 21



Above: The Tri-Lakes Chamber of Commerce hosted the Business After Hours/Non-Profit Night at the Tri-Lakes YMCA on Nov. 21. Local nonprofit organizations set up displays to inform guests of their missions and how volunteers might contribute. Exhibitors included Tri-Lakes Kiwanis, Bearbotics, Palmer Lake Historical Society, Tri-Lakes Cares, the Gleneagle Sertoma Club, Silver Key, and others. If you are interested in contributing to these or other local organizations as a volunteer, they would be happy to hear from you. You may contact the Tri-Lakes Chamber website for a list of exhibitors at the event: <https://www.trilakeschamber.com/contact.html>. *Photo by Steve Pate.*

Flags retired, Nov. 11

On Veteran’s Day, Nov. 11, U. S. Flags were properly “retired” by Scout Troop 17 at Jackson Creek Senior Living (JCSL). The ceremony for worn flags was requested by Laura Hale, Sales director for JCSL who worked with Mike Saber, Scout leader, to organize the event. The ceremony involves properly handling flags and preparing them for burning. Prior to the ceremony, Scouts built a fire pit on the south lawn of JCSL and will cover the area for future ceremonies. Scott Mitchell took over Scoutmaster duties from Frank DeLalla this year and said that Scouts also placed flags on veteran’s gravestones at the Monument cemetery earlier the morning of Nov. 11 and will remove them Nov. 12. Mike Saber, led a preliminary ceremony inside JCSL and explained to the residents and others in attendance how the process works. He began by quoting a speech by President Harry S Truman and was followed by Scouts Charlie Bucheit and Colin Saber and Cub Scout Luke Stoctenberg. Several residents at JCSL are veterans. Many flags were collected from sites in the Tri-Lakes area, including the Monument Police Department, Fire Station No. 1, and the Palmer Lake library. If you have a worn flag and wish to have it properly retired, you may drop it off at these and other area locations. Representatives of the Monument Police and Fire Departments were present.



Local authors sign books, Nov. 25



Above and below: Local authors Diane Sawatzki (above) and Lisa Hatfield (below) were at Covered Treasures Bookstore in Monument on Nov. 25 to sign copies of their latest publications. Hatfield just released her second novel, *To Melt a Snowdrift*, which addresses preparation for surviving when stranded in blizzard conditions along with family stresses in such a situation. She also wrote *To Starve an Ember* that deals with wildfire mitigation and preparation. Sawatzki signed her latest book in the *Once Upon Another Time* trilogy, *The Land of Now*. Her previous novels are *Once Upon Another Time* and *Manyhorses Traveling*. The three novels involve time travel that goes back as far as 1863. All these books are available at Covered Treasures. *Photos by Steve Pate.*



Left: Scouts introduced the US flag retirement process to residents of JCSL. They are pictured with one of the flags to be retired. **Above:** Scouts from Troop 17 conduct proper US flag retirement ceremony. *Photos by Steve Pate.*

Scouts placed flags for veterans on Veterans Day, Nov. 11



Above: Scouts from local Troop 17 placed flags on veterans' headstones at the Monument cemetery on Veterans Day, Nov 11. According to Scout leader Mike Saber, the flags were placed early on Veterans Day and were removed the next day, Nov. 12. Photo by Steve Pate.

Our Community Notices

By Janet Sellers

Although we strive for accuracy in these listings, dates or times are often changed after publication. Please double-check the time and place of any event you wish to attend by calling the information number for that event. Please notify us if your event listing needs to be updated.

Tri Lakes Cares Giving Tree needs you

The annual Giving Tree program has a record number of clients in need of gifts for their loved ones this year and still have unfulfilled requests. Because of this, we are placing a Christmas tree in the front entrance of our building so that all volunteers, staff, and general community members can have the opportunity to make someone's Christmas a little brighter this year. If you would like to participate in the Giving Tree Program by making a donation, please stop by TLC, grab an "ornament form" and return with your donated, unwrapped gift by Wed., Dec. 8, and gift cards are heartily welcomed. 235 Jefferson St., Monument.

Nominate a hero who serves our community

Each year the American Red Cross of Colorado and Wyoming honors local community members for their extraordinary acts of courage, kindness, dedication and service to the community. These heroes are then recognized at our annual American Red Cross Rocky Mountain Heroes Soiree on March 16, 2024. Nominations close Mon., Dec. 11. To nominate someone or for information visit RedCross.org/Colorado.

Voyager Parkway Near Spectrum Loop will close

Voyager Parkway near Spectrum Loop will close for an entire year as part of the ongoing Powers Boulevard Extension Project. The project to build an overpass for the future extension of Powers Boulevard started Monday, Nov. 20. The closure is expected to last into fall 2024. The goal is to get the bridge in place to alleviate traffic impacts once the Sunset Amphitheatre that opens in the Summer of 2024.

MVEA outage notifications

Please add your phone number to your MVEA account to streamline outage reporting and restoration notifications. To report an outage please call or text "OUT" to (800) 388-9881. Visit MVEA's

Outage Center before the storm. There is information about preparing for outages, electrical safety, outage reporting, a link to the outage map, and more.

Get Help in Larkspur

Larkspur Church has a Food Bank and Care Center that offer a good variety of non-perishable food items, as well as clothing for men, women, and children, some household items available too. We're here to help. If you are in need, or know someone who is, please reach out to Jeff at gethelp@larkspur.church. If you would like to donate contact Jeff by the same email to arrange a pick up.

The Sunflower is for people with non-visible disabilities

Watch for green and yellow sunflower lanyards, bracelets, and ribbons, discreet ways to make the invisible visible. Wearing the Sunflower discreetly indicates to people around the wearer including staff, colleagues and health professionals that they need additional support, help or a little more time. However big or small, your help moves us closer to a society where people recognize that an offer of help, understanding and kindness can make a huge difference to the daily experiences that a Sunflower wearer has. For more information: www.flydenver.com/accessibility, www.hdsunflower.com/us/, and www.disabled-world.com/disability/types/invisible/.

Tri-Lakes Cares needs your support

Tri-Lakes Cares is the only food pantry and human services organization serving northern El Paso County through emergency relief and self-sufficiency programs. The community-based, volunteer-supported center is a critical resource for our neighbors in need. The best way to help support Tri-Lakes Cares is to donate. Visit https://tri-lakescares.org/donate to learn how to donate money, medical items, personal supplies, or food. Please check the web for current needs in our food pantry at https://tri-lakescares.org/donate/current-needs. Donation drop-off hours are Mon.-Thu., 9 am-4 pm. For more information about Tri-Lakes Cares or how you can help, contact Tri-Lakes Cares at 719-481-4864 or info@tri-lakescares.org.

Silver Key at Tri-Lakes Senior Center

Silver Key at Tri-Lakes Senior Center, formerly known as the Tri-Lakes Silver

Alliance Senior Center, has been providing exciting programs and activities to area seniors who have a zest for fun and learning. As the older adult population is growing, our services are in high demand. 719-884-2300 66 Jefferson St, Monument.

Community volunteers

Many students need volunteer hours for scouting, civics classes, or other clubs volunteering hours. Friends of Fox Run Park will have some openings for student volunteers (and grown-ups, too) most of the year. Friends of Fox Run Park has openings for volunteers for various tasks. Besides tasks, the group offers information and skills demonstrations for each 2-3 hour session, and celebrates volunteers at the park with the annual community holiday cheer/ ornament party in December. The Tri Lakes Cares on-site garden in Monument needs volunteers in Fall, Spring and Summer. Gardening tasks include preparing garden beds, weeding, sowing seeds, and developing the compost. Bring gardening gloves, some tools will be provided on the workdays. Contact Janet Sellers at JanetSellers@ocn.me or Marlene Brown at MarleneBrown@ocn.me for more information.

Volunteers needed for student tech makerspace

Monumental Impact (MI) organizers are building a community of mentors and volunteers to enable and support high school students interested in technology, engineering and entrepreneurship. MI manages a makerspace in Monument in partnership with D38 school district. MI offers internships to high school students for industry experiences and hosts D38's competitive robotics team, Bearbotics, in the makerspace and organizes various events to share projects and to compete. Contact Jeanette Breton at Jeanette@MonumentalImpact.org or volunteer@monumentalimpact.org for more information.

Can you volunteer today?

- **Links to local organizations** with an immediate need for volunteers are listed on the county's website, www.elpasocountyhealth.org/volunteering-and-donations, for groups like Care and Share, Crossfire Ministries, blood donations, Early Connections (volunteer from home opportunity), foster an

animal, Medical Reserve Corps of El Paso County, Salvation Army, Silver Key, and United Way (ongoing opportunities).

- **The Colorado State University Extension office** in El Paso County has several opportunities for individuals interested in volunteering. https://elpaso.extension.colostate.edu/volunteer-opportunities/
- **El Paso County volunteer-based and nonprofit organizations** are committed to building healthy, caring communities and rely on the hard work of individuals like you. Reach out today and find out how you can play a part by becoming a volunteer in El Paso County. Get involved in El Paso County volunteering non-profits and organizations! https://www.american-towns.com/el-paso-county-co/volunteer-organizations/.
- **The El Paso County Sheriff's Office** Volunteer Program is composed of a collective citizens group with a true and common desire to partner with the El Paso County Sheriff's Office by volunteering their services while learning more about the internal workings of the law enforcement community. https://www.epcsheriffsoffice.com/volunteer-program-0.
- **The El Paso County Volunteer Program** is a wonderful opportunity for citizens to learn about the various functions of county government as well as give back to the community. The County's numerous boards and commissions need your experience, talents and time. https://bocc.elpasoco.com/volunteer.
- **Children's Literacy Center** provides free one-on-one literacy tutoring to Tri-Lakes children in grades 1-6 who are reading below grade level! Tutoring is at the Tri-Lakes Senior Center on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 5:30-6:30 pm, and our Summer Session will run through Aug. 14. For more information, to become a volunteer tutor or to enroll your child, visit www.childrensliteracycenter.org or email Christine Jeffson at Christine@childrensliteracycenter.org.

Our Community Calendar

By Janet Sellers

Although we strive for accuracy in these listings, dates or times are often changed after publication. Please double-check the time and place of any event you wish to attend by calling the info number for that event. Please contact calendar@ocn.me with changes and additions.

GOVERNMENTAL BODIES

- Forest Lakes Metropolitan District, Pinon Pines Metropolitan District 1, 2 & 3 board meeting, Wed., Dec. 4. 4 pm. Typically meets quarterly on the first Mon. Meetings are held via teleconference. For virtual joining instructions and updates see www.forestlakesmetrodistrict.com.
- Monument Town Council meeting, Mon., Dec. 4, 18 6:30 pm, Town Hall Board Room, 645 Beacon Lite Rd., Monument. Normally meets first and third Mon. Info: 719-884-801, www.townof-monument.org/260/Board-of-Trustees for remote attendance links.
- Black Forest Fire/Rescue Protection District board meeting, in person or via Zoom, Wed., Dec. 6, 7 pm, Station 1, 11445 Teachout Road, Colorado Springs. Find updates and Zoom meeting joining instructions at www.bffire.org or contact Administrative Officer Rachel Dunn at 719-495-4300. Meetings are usually held on the third Wednesday.
- El Paso Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) regular meeting, usually every Tue., 9 am. View agendas and meetings at www.agendasuite.org/iip/elpaso. Meetings are held at Centennial Hall, 200 S. Cascade Ave., Suite 150, Colo. Springs. Info: 719-520-643. The only Dec. BOCC land use meeting is scheduled for Dec. 14 at 1 pm Centennial Hall.
- Palmer Lake Board of Adjustments, Tue., Dec. 5, 5 pm, 28 Valley Crescent St., Palmer Lake. Normally meets first Tues., as needed.
- Monument Fire District board meeting, in person or via Zoom, Wed., Dec. 6, 6:30 pm., Station 1, 18650 Highway 105, Monument. Meetings are usually held on the fourth Wednesday. Find updates and Zoom meeting joining instructions at <http://www.monumentfire.org>, or contact Director of Administration Jennifer Martin, at 719-484-0911.
- El Paso County Planning Commission meeting, Thu., Dec. 7 & 21, 9 am Regional Development Center, 2880 International Circle, Colo. Springs. Meetings are live-streamed on the El Paso County News & Information Channel at <https://www.elpasoco.com/news-information-channel>. Normally meets first & third Thu. (as required). Info: 719-520-6300, <https://planning-development.elpasoco.com/2023-meetings/>
- Donala Water & Sanitation District board meeting, Thu., Dec. 7, 1:30 pm, 15850 Holbein Dr. In 2023, meets third Thu., Check the website for the access code for the electronic meeting. Info: 719-488-3603, www.donalawater.org.
- Woodmoor Water & Sanitation District board meeting, Mon., Dec. 18, 1 pm, 1845 Woodmoor Dr., Monument. Normally meets second Mon. Info: 719-488-2525, www.woodmoorwater.com.
- Lewis-Palmer School District 38 board meeting, Mon., Dec. 11, 6-10 pm. 146 N Jefferson St, Monument. The Board of Education meeting will be live-streamed on the district's YouTube channel: www.youtube.com/user/LPSDCcommunity, agenda, and supporting documents at <https://go.boarddocs.com/co/lewispalmer/Board.nsf/vpublic>. Contact Vicki Wood. Phone: 719.481.9546 Email: vwood@lewispalmer.org Website: <https://www.lewispalmer.org>
- El Paso County Regional Loop Water Authority meeting, Tue., Dec. 12, 9 am Monument Town Hall Boardroom, 645 Beacon Lite Rd. Normally meets third Thu. Info: 719-488-3603. www.loop-water.org.
- Tri-Lakes Wastewater Facility Joint Use Committee meeting, Tue., Dec. 12, 10 am 16510 Mitchell Ave. Meets second Tue. Info: See <https://tlwastewater.com/index.html> Bill Burks, 719-481-4053.
- Triview Metropolitan District board meeting, Thu., Dec. 13, 5:30 pm, 16055 Old Forest Point, Suite 302, Monument. Normally meets third Thu. Info: 719-488-6868, www.triviewmetro.com.
- Woodmoor Improvement Association Board Meeting, Wed., Dec. 13, 7 pm, Woodmoor Barn, 1691 Woodmoor Dr. The WIA Board usually meets fourth Wed. Info: 719-488-2693, www.woodmoor.org.
- Palmer Lake Sanitation District board meeting, Wed., Dec. 13, 9 am, call-in only: 650-479-3208, Access Code 76439078, 120 Middle Glenway. Meets second Wed. Info: 719-481-2732. www.plsd.org.
- Monument Planning Commission meeting, Wed., Dec. 13, 6 pm Town Hall Board Room, 645 Beacon Lite Rd., Monument. Usually meets the second Wed. To see the options for remote public participation in each meeting, visit www.townofmonument.org/263/Planning-Commission-Board-of-Adjustment. Info: 719-884-8028. www.townofmonument.org.
- Monument Academy School Board, Thu., Dec. 14, 6:30 pm, East Campus gym, 4303 Pinehurst Circle. Usually meets the second Thu. Info: 719-431-8001, www.monumentacademy.net/school-board.
- Palmer Lake Board of Trustees meeting, Thu., Dec. 14, 5 pm, Palmer Lake Town Hall, 28 Val-

ley Crescent. Only one meeting in Dec. Usually meets second and fourth Thu. Info: 719-481-2953. www.townofpalmerlake.com.

- Monument Sanitation District board meeting, Wed., Dec. 20, 9 am, 130 Second St. Zoom meeting. Find joining instructions on the website. Meets third Wed. Info: 719-481-4886, www.colorado.gov/msd.
- Palmer Lake Town Planning Commission meeting, Wed., Dec. 20, 6 pm, Palmer Lake Town Hall, 28 Valley Crescent. Meets third Wed. Info: 719-481-2953, www.townofpalmerlake.com.
- Academy Water and Sanitation District board meeting, Wed., Dec. 20, 6 pm. Usually meets third Wed. Public can join the Skype meeting: <https://join.skype.com/PACujKTn7Nrh>. Check the website for a link: <https://academywsd.colorado.gov/notices-and-alerts>. Meets third Wed. Info: 719-481-0711, <https://academywsd.colorado.gov>.
- Donald Wescott Fire Protection District meeting, Meetings are scheduled to be held every month through May 2024 in person at Station 1, 18650 Highway 105, Monument and via Zoom at 4 p.m. on the fourth Wednesday of the month. No meeting in December. A special meeting via Zoom will be scheduled to certify the district mill levy in early January. The next regular meeting is scheduled for Wed., Jan. 24, 4 pm. For Zoom meeting instructions, agendas, minutes, and updates, visit <http://www.monumentfire.org> or contact Director of Administration Jennifer Martin at 719-484-9011.
- Lewis-Palmer School District 38 Parent and Community Advisory Committee (formerly DAAC), Tue., Jan. 9, 6-10 pm, Lewis-Palmer High School, 1300 Higby Road, Meets six times a year. Usually meets monthly on second Tue. Contact info: tmckee@lewispalmer.org.

WEEKLY & MONTHLY EVENTS

- AARP Black Forest #1100, second Wed., noon. In-person Black Forest Lutheran Church, 12455 Black Forest Rd. All ages welcome. Info: www.aarpchapter1100blackforest.weekly.com.
- AARP Local Senior Social, fourth Wed. In-person Black Forest Lutheran Church, 12455 Black Forest Rd. Info: www.aarpchapter1100blackforest.weekly.com.
- A.A. Big Book Study, every Thu., 7 pm, Family of Christ Lutheran Church, 675 W. Baptist Rd. Call 425-436-6200, access code 575176#.
- Alcoholics Anonymous, every Tue. & Thu., 7:30 p.m. Black Forest Lutheran Church, 12455 Black Forest Road, Colorado Springs, Colorado 80908. AA is a fellowship of people who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. Join us with your questions. Info: bflc@bflchurch.org,
- Al-Anon for family and friends of alcoholics, every Tue. & Thu., 7:30 p.m. Black Forest Lutheran Church, 12455 Black Forest Road, Colorado Springs, Colorado 80908. Al-Anon members are people, just like you, who are worried about someone with a drinking problem. Join us with your questions. Info: bflc@bflchurch.org
- Al-Anon Zoom Meeting, Just for Today Online, every Mon., 9-10 am Zoom Meeting ID: 889 4142 7446, Password 349309.
- Al-anon Meeting: Monument, every Thu., 7-8 pm, Ascent Church (formerly the Tri-Lakes Chapel), 1750 Deer Creek Rd., Monument. Info: MonumentSerenity@gmail.com.
- Al-Anon meeting: Letting Go, every Thu., 9-10:15 am at Ascent Church, 1750 Deer Creek Rd., Monument. For additional information go to www.al-anon-co.org.
- Amateur ham radio WØTLM (Tri-Lakes Monument ham radio Association), third Mon. All amateur ham radio operators or those interested in becoming one are welcome. Info: www.WØTLM.com.
- Benet Hill Monastery, Let us pray with you, walk in the forest, come up and visit prayer sites, every Sun. worship is 10:15 am, 3190 Benet Lane, 80921. See ad on page 3.
- Benet Hill Monastery, Half Day Prayer Group, first Sat., 9 am-12 pm. All vaccinated guests are welcome. Contact Sister Therese at (719) 355-1638 or (719) 355-1650 or stherese@benethillmonastery.org. See ad on page 3.
- Benet Hill Monastery, Centering Prayer Group, every Tue., 10-11 am. All vaccinated guests are welcome. Contact Sister Therese at (719) 355-1638 or (719) 355-1650 or stherese@benethillmonastery.org. See ad on page 3.
- Black Forest Community Church, Centering Prayer Group, first Sat., 8:30-10 am The Old Log Church. Centering prayer opens and closes the meetings with discussion and fellowship in between; open to all. Contact Rev. Roger Butts, at 719-433-3135, for information.
- Children's Literacy Center, every Mon. & Wed., 5:30-6:30 pm. Provides free one-on-one literacy tutoring to Tri-Lakes children in grades 1-6 who are reading below grade level. Tutoring is at Grace Best Education Center, 66 Jefferson St. Monument. For more information, to become a volunteer tutor, or to enroll your child, visit www.childrensliteracycenter.org or contact Rachel Morin, Tri-Lakes Senior Center Coordinator, CLC 610-246-1047 (cell).

- Colorado Springs Philharmonic Guild Listening Club, third Wed. Free virtual event. Maestro Wilson will conduct monthly hour-long programs. RSVP at www.cspsguild.org.
- Essentrics Fitness Program at Senior Center, every Tue., 9 am & Thu., 10 am, Grace Best Education Center, 66 Jefferson St, Monument, CO 80132. Registration & info: Sue Walker, 719-330-0241, www.trilakesseniors.org.
- Fellowship of Christ Church, every Sun., 9 am. Monument Academy East Campus, 4303 Pinehurst Circle 80908. See ad on page 6.
- Friends of Fox Run Park, Zoom meeting, fourth Thu., 7 pm, email friendsoffoxrunpark@gmail.com, they will email you the link the day of the meeting. Join the growing group to learn about volunteering and supporting the park for forest safety, trails, trees, education, special events, and more. Info: friendsoffoxrunpark@gmail.com.
- Friends of Monument Preserve (FOMP) Trail Repair monthly Work Days, second Tue. Apr.-Oct. 5 pm. Meet at Mt Herman Trailhead at the corner of Mt Herman Rd and Nursery Rd, bring gloves. FOMP needs volunteers to help repair the trails in the National Forest Open Space surrounding the Monument Fire Center. The Forest Service recently completed the second phase of Fire Mitigation work and many of the social trails have been damaged. The Forest Service relies on FOMP to maintain these trails. Tools will be provided.
- Fuel Church Griefshare, every Thu., 5:30-7:30 pm, 643 State Highway 105, Palmer Lake. Email info@fuel.org. 643 Hwy 105, Palmer Lake.
- Fuel Church Sunday Service, every Sun. Service times, 11:00 am Live service streaming at www.fuelchurch.org at 11:40 am on www.fuelchurch.org. Mountain Community Mennonite Church, 643 Hwy 105, Palmer Lake. Nursery and kids' service. Non-denominational, spirit-filled. Need prayer? Email us at info@fuel.org. See ad on page 5.
- German Conversation Group, every Mon., 1:30 pm, Monument Library, 1706 Woodmoor Drive. Public welcome with Intermediate to Advanced German speaking skills.
- Gleneagle Sertoma, first and third Wed., 11:45 am to 1 pm at Beasts and Brews, 7 Spectrum Loop, Colorado Springs. The longest continuously serving civic service organization in northern El Paso County features a program speaker addressing local topics of interest. Info: Duane Gritzmaker, dwgritz@gmail.com or 719-649-9220.
- Gleneagle Women's Club, membership luncheon, third Fri., Sep.-June, various venues, 12 activity groups, i.e., hiking, bridge, etc. Guests welcome. For information contact Susan Owen, 719-886-7110.
- GriefShare Support Group, last Tue., 10:30 am-noon. NEW LOCATION: Tri-Lakes Senior Center, 66 Jefferson St. in the Grace Best Elementary School building. The Tri-Lakes Silver Alliance has partnered with Colorado Palliative and Hospice Care to host a 13-session grief support group in Monument. RSVP, info: Sue Walker, 719-330-0241.
- La Leche League breastfeeding support group, second Thu., 12:30 pm. Partners and helpers welcome (and babies and kids, too) so we can meet our breastfeeding goals together. Home-stead Direct Primary Care Clinic, 15455 Gleneagle Drive, Colorado Springs, CO 80921. For more information, contact RachelKLangley@gmail.com.
- Lions Club Bingo, every Sat. (except the first Sat.), 8:30 am-1 pm and first Mon., 5:30-10 pm Tri-Lakes Lions Club's portion of the proceeds benefit those in need in the Tri-Lakes community. Updated info and location: Jim Naylor, 719-481-8741 or www.trilakeslionsclub.org.
- Monument Dementia Caregiver Support Group, second Sat., 9:45-11:15 am. Meets in-person, First National Bank Monument (581 Highway 105, Monument, CO 80132). Meets monthly, 2nd Sat. Contact: Registration is required, call 800-272-3900 or email khare@alz.org to register.
- Monument Hill Kiwanis Club meeting, every Sat., 8 am. www.MHKiwanis.org, Monument-HillKiwanis@gmail.com for details, guests are welcome. Service leadership clubs, Key clubs, Builders Club, and K-kids at D38 schools. Memberships are open to the public. Info: RF Smith, 719-210-4987, www.MHKiwanis.org.
- Monument Life Recovery Group, every Mon., 6:30-7:30 pm, The Ascent Church, 1750 Deer Creek Rd. This faith-based support group is for those seeking freedom from all hurts, habits, and hang-ups. Daycare for children under age 11. Info: 303-946-2659, www.liferecoverygroups.com/meetings/life-recovery-group-3/.
- Neighborhood Net Ham Radio, every Sat., 10 am Amateur ham radio operators practice for emergencies on weekly repeater nets so neighbors can help neighbors. Sign up at www.mereowx.org/neighborhood-net or contactus@mereowx.org.
- Northern El Paso County Coalition of Community Associations (NEPCO) meeting, Sat., Jan. 13, 10 am-12 pm., Woodmoor Barn, 1691 Woodmoor Dr. HOA legal topics. Members of local HOAs are welcome. Usually meets bi-monthly (Jan., Mar., May, July, Sep., Nov.) on the second Sat. of the month. www.nepco.org.
- Palmer Divide Quiltmakers, first Thu., 6:30-8:30 pm at Monument Chamber of Commerce

- building, 166 2nd St, Monument, CO.
- Palmer Lake Art Group, second Sat. A variety of art programs are offered after the social gathering and business meetings. Guests welcome. 300 Hwy 105, NE corner of I-25 and 105. 9:30 am. Info: 719-460-4179, www.palmerlakeartgroup.com.
 - Palmer Lake Historical Society, third Thu., 7 pm; (doors open at 6:30 pm), Palmer Lake Town Hall, 28 Valley Crescent St. Usually meets third Thu. Contact: Kokesdm@yahoo.com, <https://palmerdividehistory.org>.
 - Pikes Peak Genealogical Society meeting, Wed., Dec. 13, 7 pm, guest speaker Judy G. Russell is a genealogist with a law degree. She writes, teaches, and lectures on a wide variety of genealogical topics. Meets monthly, second Wed. Members can log in and get the monthly meeting Zoom link. Guests are welcome to attend, please request an invitation from the PPGS president at www.PPGS.org.
 - Ridgeview Baptist Church, every Sun., 10:30 am, temporarily meeting at 9130 Explorer Dr., Colorado Springs, 80920. Info: 719-357-6515 or www.ridgeviewcolorado.org. See ad on page 6.
 - Senior Bingo, third Wed. Silver Alliance Senior Center, Space is limited to 16. participants. RSVP & info: Sue Walker, 719-464-6873, or email sue@monumentalfitness.
 - Senior Book Club, second Fri., 11 am-noon, Silver Alliance Senior Center, all are welcome. Coffee & snacks. RSVP & info: Sue, 719-330-0241.
 - Tri-Lakes Parkinson's Disease Support Group, third Sat., 10 am-noon, Monument Community Presbyterian Church, 238 Third St., Monument. Info: Syble Krafft, 719-488-2669; Barry (group president), 719-351-9485. If you need any help, please call Syble or Barry.
 - Tri-Lakes United Methodist Church, every Sun., Contemporary 9 am; Traditional 10:30 am. A live stream is available at www.tlumc.org/live. Watch live or replay: www.facebook.com/tlumc, www.youtube.com/tlumc.org. Info: 719-488-1365, www.tlumc.org. 20256 Hunting Downs Way, Monument. See ad on page 2.
 - Tri-Lakes Church of Christ Wednesday night fellowship classes, every Wed., 6-7:30 pm, 20450 Beacon Lite Road, Monument (corner of Beacon Lite & County Line Roads). Info: 719-488-9613, gregsmith@trilakeschurch.org, www.trilakechurch.org.
 - Tri-Lakes Cruisers, first Wed., 7 pm. A nonprofit car club. Tri-Lakes Chamber of Commerce community room, with numerous activities and events each month. Club membership applications are now being accepted and are available on the website: <https://tl-cruisers.weebly.com>.
 - Tri-Lakes Chamber of Commerce Networking breakfast, first and third Thu., in person or via Zoom 166 2nd Street Monument 7:30-9 am free registration at www.TriLakeschamber.com.
 - Tri-Lakes Women's Club (TLWC) monthly meeting. Fri., Dec. 15, 11:30 a.m. Program: Holiday performance by the Knotty Pines singers, Eisenhower Golf Club, USAFA. Usually meets the third Fri. To become a member, or learn about the club, visit our website at www.tlwc.net Contact Info: Tri-Lakes Women's Club membership@tlwc.net.
 - Women's A. A. Step Study, every Mon., 6:30 pm, meeting remotely, check for details. Family of Christ Lutheran Church, 675 Baptist Rd. Park in the west lot. Info: 866-641-9190. Al-Anon Zoom Meeting, Just for Today Online, every Mon., 9:00 - 10:00 am Zoom Meeting ID: 889 4142 7446, Password 349309
 - Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 7829, third Wed., 7 pm, Tri-Lakes Chamber of Commerce community room, 166 2nd St., Monument. New members welcome. Info: Post Commander and POC Bruce Beyerly, Bruce.Beyerly@gmail.com.
 - VFW Auxiliary to Post 7829, third Wed., 7 pm, The Country Club at Woodmoor, 18945 Pebble Beach Way, Monument. Guests are welcome to join; contact carlsonmkc@aol.com for instructions on how to connect. If you are a relative of a veteran who served on foreign soil during war or other military action, you may be eligible. Info: Kathy Carlson, 719-488-1902, carlsonmkc@aol.com.

SPECIAL EVENTS

- VOLUNTEER TODAY! Our Community News mailing days, Thu., Nov. 30 & Jan. 4, approx. 9 am-12 pm. We are all volunteers at OCN and need YOUR help, even for an hour or two, getting the papers ready to mail. Contact AllenAlchian@ocn.me or (719) 488-3455.
- Kiwanis 17th Annual North Pole at Tri Lakes arts and crafts fair. Sat., Dec. 2, 9 am-4 pm.
- Covered Treasures Bookstore, December Book Signings: Sat., Dec. 2, 11-2 pm, for the Small Town Christmas event: Margi Evans signs Stallion and His Peculiar Boy and Susan Permut signs The Christmas Camel; 1-3 pm, Deborah Teske signs Bear Who Wanted to Find Tomorrow. Sat., Dec. 9, 1-4. Jason Dennen signs 8 Days Until Sunrise and Frankie Morelli signs his cookbook, The Mobb Diet. Sun., Dec. 10, 1-3 pm, Nancy Godbout Jurka signs Magic on the Mountainside. Sat., Dec. 16, noon-3 pm. Christina Holbrook signs All the Flowers of the Mountain, Mike Torreano signs Fireflies at Dusk and Sarah Dressler signs Christmas Cove. 105 Second Street, Monument.
- S'more Holiday Fun at Fox Run Park, FREE!

- Sat., Dec. 9, 1-3 pm. Join the fun: hot cocoa, Fire-side s'mores, ornament crafts. Bring your pooch for the costume pooch parade. At the warming hut and gazebo beside the ponds at Fox Run Regional Park. Details: FriendsOfFoxRunPark@gmail.com. See ad on page 5.
- YMCA 5K race series: Jingle jog, Sat., Dec. 9. See ad on page 6.
 - 2023 Yule Log Community Potluck – make the souvenir logs is Wed., Dec. 13, 6-9 pm, bring a dish to share. Meet your neighbors and share in the holiday spirit. Men whittle the logs and women tie the bow. FREE and open to the public; 42 Valley Crescent St., Palmer Lake.
 - St. Peter Catholic Church presents Oh Come, Emmanuel, Fri., Dec. 15, 7 pm. Free concert for the community 55 North Jefferson Street Monument. Also accepting donations to benefit Tri Lakes Cares. See ad on page 2.
 - The Tri Lakes Music Association presents My Christmas Prayer, Fri.-Sat., Dec. 15-16, 7 pm; Sun., Dec. 17, 2 pm, Palmer Ridge high school auditorium, 19255 Frontage Rd., Monument. See ad on page 2.
 - 2023 Yule Log Festival, Sun., Dec. 17, noon – 3 pm. Meet your neighbors and share in the holiday spirit. FREE and open to the public. Come see the Celebration in its 90th year. The finder of the log gets the first cup of wassil; 42 Valley Crescent St., Palmer Lake.
 - A Time to Dance: Believe, dance performance, Mon., Dec. 18, 6 pm. See ad on page 4.
 - Winter Break Steam Camp, Tue., Dec. 19, and Thu., Dec. 21, at the Western Museum of Mining and Industry. Full day and half day sessions available. Grades 3-5. Call 719-488-0880 or email education@wmmi.org. Info: www.wmmi.org.
 - Make It Work Clinic for PCs, FREE. Donations appreciated. We are gauging interest in helping community members with their PCs, please email us if interested. enable@monumentalimpact.org. 55 Adams St in Downtown Monument. Monumental Impact info/ register: <https://monumentalimpact.org>.
 - Affordable Flooring Connection: Sales and installation. See ad on page 2.
 - Cornerstone Cleaners, special offers through Dec. 31. 1030 W. Baptist Road, near King Soopers. See ad on page 4.
 - Downtown Monument Shop Local special events: Small Town Christmas: Sat. Dec. 2, 10 am-4 pm; North Pole Craft Show: Sat., Dec. 2, 9 am-4 pm; Tree Lighting: Sat., Dec. 2, 5 pm; Sunday with Santa: Sun., Dec. 10, 11 am-4 pm. See ad on page 2.
 - Eagle Wine & Spirits, special offers through Dec. 31. Baptist Road next to King Soopers. See ad on page 3.
 - Gleneagle Candle Co., Special offers through Dec. 31. 13796 Gleneagle Drive 80921. See ad on page 4.
 - The Love Shop: Restyle your furs, Wed.-Thu., Jan. 10-11; 251 Front St. See ad on page 10.
 - Monument Cleaners, special offers through Dec. 31. 15932 Jackson Creek Pkwy., in Monument Marketplace. See ad on page 5.
 - Monumental Med Spa, Special offers through Dec. 31. 88 Hwy 105. See ads on page 7.
 - Mountain View Pella windows, BOGO offer. See ad on page 24.
 - Noel Relief Centers, New patient specials. 950 Baptist Rd #130, Monument. See ad on page 7.
 - Peak View Windows, Stucco, Siding, Doors and More. Special offers through Dec. 31. See ad on page 24.
 - The Living Room Plants, special offers through Dec. 31. 12229 Voyager Pkwy, Suite 100. See ad on page 5.

Content

Articles in Our Community News focus on the deliberations of Tri-Lakes area governmental bodies such as the Monument Board of Trustees, Palmer Lake Town Council, and many of the local water, sanitation, fire, and school district boards.

Unlike papers that try to figure out what the “story” is and then get quotes on each side to presumably lead the reader to conclude what the “truth” is, OCN's role is to report in detail on public meetings of local governmental entities. We report what was talked about and what was decided. By reading OCN, you can find out what you might have learned if you had attended those public meetings. In this context, “truth” is that the articles accurately represent what transpired at the meetings.

The content of ads, inserts, and letters to the editor in OCN is solely the responsibility of the advertisers and authors who place those ads, inserts, and letters. The appearance of an ad, insert, or letter in OCN does not imply endorsement of the ad, insert, or letter's content or purpose. While OCN does not knowingly run false ads, inserts, or letters, we do not research the accuracy of that content. Readers are encouraged to do their own research prior to committing to use the products or services offered or accept the conclusions of letters to the editor. Readers with concerns about the content of an ad, insert, or letter should take up those concerns with the advertiser or author.

Contact John Heiser, Publisher, at johnheiser@ocn.me or (719) 488-3455 with any questions.

- Tri-Lakes Collision and Auto Service Center, special offers through Dec. 31. 2101 Wolf Court, Monument. www.trilakescollision.com. See ad on page 5.
- Trinity Lutheran Church Christmas Eve worship times: Sun., Dec. 24, 3 pm, 5 pm. See ad on page 7.
- YMCA Youth basketball, register today. See ad on page 6.
- Palmer Lake Outdoor Classic Youth hockey camp, foundation game event, Sat. Jan. 6, 9-11 am. Adult Tourney Sun., Jan. 7, 3:30-7 pm, more. Fireworks, fire pits, food trucks. Event at the lake on the ice at Palmer Lake, CO. Sign up: PalmerLakeoutdoorclassic@gmail.com. Info: PalmerLakeOutdoorclassic.com and <https://www.locallevelvents.com/events/details/30916>.
- FIRST Tech Challenge (FTC) Qualifier, Sat., Jan 13, 7 am-5 pm. Bear Creek Elementary School. Help D38's 1st robotics qualifier be a success in our region! These events are ALL volunteer with opportunities for both adults and students (middle school through high school) to contribute. Training is provided if needed for a volunteer role. Email us at volunteer@bearbotics.org. More information: <https://monumentalimpact.org/events/ftc-pikes-peak-qualifier-2024/>.

Our community calendar carries listings on a space-available basis for Tri-Lakes events that are sponsored by local governmental entities and not-for-profit organizations. We include events that are open to the gen-

Letters to Our Community

Our Community News welcomes letters to the editor on topics of general interest to readers in the Tri-Lakes area. We do not knowingly print letters that are substantially the same as letters that have been submitted to other publications. To ensure that OCN contains a variety of viewpoints, each letter writer is limited to a maximum of one (1) letter per issue and six (6) letters within a twelve (12) month period. To submit a letter, please:

- Email your letter, preferably as an attached Microsoft Word document, to editor@ocn.me or mail a copy to Our Community News, P.O. Box 1742, Monument, CO 80132-1742.
- Identify your submission as a letter to the editor and confirm that it has not been submitted to any other publication.
- Include a suggested headline or title that summarizes the topic you are addressing.
- Limit your letter to no more than 300 words including your suggested headline and closing.
- Include your full name, home address, phone numbers, and email address, if you have one. Only your name will be published.
- Submit your letter so we receive it no later than midnight, Friday, two weeks prior to the publication date.

If you have not received an acknowledgement two days after your email submission or one week after you mailed your letter, please contact John Heiser, Publisher, at (719) 488-3455 or editor@ocn.me. At OCN's sole discretion, we may ask you for clarification of your statements. Include references, such as website links, in your letter for any facts and figures you cite. OCN does not guarantee every letter will appear in print or on-line and does not guarantee a publication date. The number of letters printed on a particular topic or in a particular issue may be limited. Letters containing personal attacks or endorsements for or complaints about individually-named commercial products or services will not be published.

Look for our next issue
Saturday, Jan. 6

Ad space reservations due: Fri., Dec. 15
Finished ad artwork due: Fri., Dec. 22
Letters to the editor due: Fri., Dec. 22
Calendar items due: Fri., Dec. 29

Visit our website to read, download, and search all the back issues at WWW.OCN.ME



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Event information: calendar@ocn.me

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Above: Reprinted from our Jan. 2023 issue - From a reader: The Moon, the Stars, and Mars. "I took this photo on Dec. 8. It shows the Palmer Lake Star, the full moon with Mars, and a passing train. You have to love Palmer Lake!" Photo by John Emmons.

Support Our Community. Advertise in OCN!

Our Community News (OCN), with a **mailed** circulation of over **22,700**, is a unique all-volunteer monthly newspaper mailed **FREE** to every resident and business in the Tri-Lakes area. OCN is a primary source for Tri-Lakes area news that gives advertising preference to Tri-Lakes area businesses. OCN’s contract-free low ad rates and monthly publication schedule help stretch your ad budget while supporting an important Tri-Lakes-focused effort to present factual, comprehensive news to all Tri-Lakes area residents and business owners.

For advertising information, contact **John Heiser** (719) 488-3455, ads@ocn.me, or visit www.ocn.me.



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