

Rusnak reiterated his intention to pursue equal taxation of the district's two sections by raising taxes in the district's smaller section that straddles Voyager Parkway south of Old Ranch Road from 7 mills to 21 mills to match the northern sub-district's current mill levy. He also endorsed combining the district and sub-district to simplify matters. Burns and Ridings emphasized that the lower portion of Wescott's service area was not included in the mill levy increase since the distance from Wescott's fire stations to the area precludes quick response times. Wescott has a mutual aid agree-

ment with Colorado Springs in that the city provides medical and fire response and Wescott supports the city's fire services with tender operations. Ridings stressed the need to thoroughly assess the benefits and drawbacks of making taxation and district changes.

Note: For the district's boundaries, see <http://wescottfire.org/about-wescott-fire/>.

Social gathering with Tri-Lakes Monument district discussed

Director Larry Schwarz characterized the social gathering with the Tri-Lakes Monument Fire Protection District Board

of Directors as an important opportunity to get to know one another, share concerns and challenges, and discuss operations to better ensure safety of citizens, firefighters, and property. Chair Bo McAllister emphasized that the fire districts are essentially exploring their options while keeping in mind what is best for each district and its respective taxpayers—there are no commitments.

Community activities noted

Burns acknowledged Lt. Bryan Ackerman's efforts in organizing Wescott's participation in the firefighter chili cook-off at the Pikes Peak Hill Climb scheduled for Friday, June 22. The cook-off raises money for the Muscular Dystrophy Association.

The Gleneagle North homeowners association acknowledged Wescott with a donation for helping with its annual mitigation project. Wescott's chip-

per, along with firefighter training and assistance, is regularly used for neighborhood mitigation efforts.

Burns reminded the public that El Paso County is operating under Stage II fire restrictions. Restrictions prohibit campfires, the sale or use of fireworks, outdoor smoking except within an enclosed vehicle or building, public prescribed burning/burn permits, outdoor cooking and/or fires on private property and barbecue grilling in county parks. Propane/gas grills on private property are allowed.

Station activities reported

Ridings provided the call statistics for May. The district's two stations responded to a total of 70 calls, one of which was a building fire, and there was zero fire loss. One resident was doing unauthorized outside burning during a Stage II fire ban. He added that staff is evaluating response plans, engine and ambulance needs, and types of calls. They have also established

wildland quadrants and corresponding personnel and equipment needs.

The regular board meeting adjourned at 8:10 p.m. The board went into executive session pursuant to CRS 24-6-402(4)(b) to receive advice of legal counsel regarding the potential impacts of the Gallagher Amendment to the district's revenue stream and possible actions the board may take to address the impacts. Popovich confirmed with OCN that no vote was taken after the executive session.

The next DWFPD Board of Directors meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, July 17 at 7 p.m. and will be held at Station 1, 15415 Gleneagle Drive. Please call (719) 488-8680, a non-emergency number, for more information, or visit www.wescottfire.org. Wescott is also on Facebook and Twitter.

Jennifer Kaylor may be reached at jenniferkaylor@ocn.me.

Tri-Lakes Monument Fire Protection District, June 27

Palmer Lake asks district to explore serving town; Wescott and TLMFPD will investigate options

By Allison Robenstein

At its June 27 meeting, the Tri-Lakes Monument Fire Protection District (TLMFPD) board heard a presentation from the Town of Palmer Lake about its volunteer fire department, discussed a possible consolidation with Wescott, heard an audit presentation, and approved the purchase of a used ambulance.

President Jake Shirk and Secretary Michael Smaldino were absent.

Palmer Lake asks TLMFPD for help

Palmer Lake Mayor John Cressman and Trustee Mitchell Davis formally requested assistance from TLMFPD to take over fire and emergency medical services from the Palmer Lake Volunteer Fire Department (PLVFD). The men are concerned about the future of the PLVFD, saying the department is under-funded, their building is decrepit, and equipment is deteriorating.

"It's not a good situation. I think you could help us," Cressman said, if the voters of Palmer Lake agree to whatever plan is drafted. "We would need to sell this to our constituents; they are so proud of our firefighters, but none of it has to do with public safety. I want great service. We need to be objective about our deficiencies."

TLMFPD Chief Chris Truty said he wanted board approval before moving forward with investigating a transition plan that would be presented to TLMFPD and to the Town of Palmer Lake.

Vice President Roger Lance said this change could increase standards of service for Palmer Lake residents. Treasurer John Hildebrandt said, "We're here to be neighborly." He wants to create a win-win situation for both communities.

Everyone agreed the Palmer Lake staff is very capable. Battalion Chief Mike Keough

echoed these sentiments, saying the PLVFD staff is very professional and does a great job considering the situation.

Davis said the PLVFD building isn't up to fire code, and if it had to be closed there could be a crisis for the Palmer Lake community. It has been a concern since at least 2015 when then Fire Chief Margo Humes brought it to the attention of her board while asking for a consolidation with TLMFPD. Palmer Lake voters approved a 10-mill levy increase in 2015 to support the PLVFD. See www.ocn.me/v15n8.htm#pltc.

In 2015, PLVFD signed a mutual response agreement with Tri-Lakes for firefighting. PLVFD staff manually call for aid on medical calls if needed for advanced life support. See www.ocn.me/v15n2.htm#pltc0122. However, they rely on Wescott's AMR ambulance for their emergency medical services (EMS) calls, which are 95 percent of total calls for service, Davis said. The long travel distance adds vital minutes to response times. TLMFPD Administrator Jen Martin, longtime Palmer Lake resident and wife of a firefighter, said she worries that these inefficiencies will lead to a serious mistake.

Davis asked if this board would consider an intergovernmental agreement in the short-term to cover any crisis that

might occur, with a vote of the citizens at a later date for a permanent solution. It would take a \$10 million ballot initiative to bring PLVFD up to the standards of TLMFPD, he said. Davis said he would like to see a ballot initiative this November, but the mayor felt the town would resist such a quick change. "It's going to be controversial. We will have lots of public comment and clarification."

The board unanimously approved Truty creating an exploratory transition plan to provide EMS and fire protection services to PLVFD's service area. It will be presented sometime in the fall, leading to a possible ballot measure in Palmer Lake later. Everyone wants a transparent process, so discussions will become a monthly TLMFPD agenda item.

Note: For more information, see related Palmer Lake Town Council article on page 1.

Possible TLMFPD-Wescott consolidation

Donald Wescott Fire Protection District (DWFPD) held a publicly posted social meeting with TLMFPD on June 13, where they discussed a possible consolidation between the two agencies. The districts will create a bilateral working group composed of members of both boards, administration, and staff to explore the feasibility of a merger,



Above: Five new firefighters were sworn in June 27 at Tri-Lakes Monument Fire Protection District. Pictured left to right are firefighters Tyler Brickell, Dak Damour, Robert Horne, Eliza Normen, and Christian Schmidt. Photo by Allison Robenstein.



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