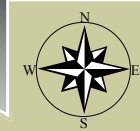


Our Community News

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



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Issue #224 — Volume 19 Number 10 — Saturday, October 5, 2019

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Read, download, and search all the OCN back issues at www.ocn.me.

Local Events

See pages 28-31 for event locations and other details of these and many other local events.

- National Take a Kid Mountain Biking Day, Sat., Oct. 5, 9 a.m.
- PLAG 46th Annual Art Fair, Sat., Oct. 5, 9 a.m.-5 p.m.
- Harvest Festival, Miners' Pumpkin Patch at WMMI, Sat.-Sun., Oct. 5-6, 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Sat., noon-4 p.m. Sun.
- Community Meeting on Potential Northern El Paso County Nature Center, Mon., Oct. 7, 6:30-8 p.m.
- Friends of Monument Preserve Trail Work Night, Tue., Oct. 8, 6-9 p.m.
- Town Hall on 2019 Bond, Tue., Oct. 8, repeats Oct. 17, 6:30-7:45 p.m.
- WMMI Speakers' Bureau: Cripple Creek's Cresson Mine: The Untold Stories, Tue., Oct. 8, 7-9 p.m.
- Community Tours of LPMS, Thu., Oct. 10, 10:30 a.m.
- Heartsaver CPR/AED/First Aid Certification Course, Sat., Oct. 12, 8 a.m.-4 p.m.
- D38 Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony, Sat., Oct. 12, 2-4 p.m.
- Palmer Lake Historical Society: Long-ago Communities of the AF Academy, Thu., Oct. 17, 7 p.m.
- Classic PETRA Revival Concert at TLCA, Fri.-Sat., Oct. 25-26, 7-9 p.m.
- Historic Downtown Monument Safe Trick or Treat, Thu., Oct. 31, 4-6 p.m.
- Black Forest Arts & Crafts Guild 55th Annual Fall Show & Sale, Thu.-Sat., Oct. 31-Nov. 3
- Downtown Monument Holiday Open House, Fri.-Sat., Nov. 1-2

Citizens for a Better Palmer Lake reviews survey, considers actions



Above: Citizens for a Better Palmer Lake had its second meeting Sept. 5 to review a survey handed out at its previous meeting and provided online. Palmer Lake Town Council Trustee Mark Schuler joined 40 to 50 town citizens. Karen Stuth, co-owner of Satiama Publishing, (shown above) presented the survey results, including the following: (1) Respondents were favorable toward the Fire and Police Departments but reported poor experiences with Police Chief Jason Vanderpool. (2) Respondents have had overall poor experiences with the town staff, mayor, and council members. (3) 96.61% of the 118 respondents said they were not in favor of using 2A ballot funds passed in 2015 to pay for anything other than the Fire Department. (4) Local government could be improved through more transparency, especially regarding money, and should focus on water quality, roads, the volunteer Fire Department, and more sources of revenue. The group had been told they couldn't speak at the last council meeting, so they decided to have several people attend the Sept. 12 meeting with the intent of presenting the survey results to the trustees and those in attendance. The group also discussed possible follow-up steps, including: (1) Consider civil and legal processes to oust the mayor and town manager. (2) Elect someone from the group as a councilmember. (3) Send several people to meet with the mayor to air differences. (4) Create a petition to hire a town clerk. *Photo by Allison Robenstein.*

Palmer Lake Town Council, Sept. 12 and 24

Citizens' committee presents concerns

By James Howald and Jackie Burhans
At the Sept. 12 meeting, the Palmer Lake Town Council heard a presentation from an organization of concerned citizens. The council also presented the results of its examination of how funds intended for the Palmer Lake Volunteer Fire Department (PLVFD) have actually been spent.

At the Sept. 24 meeting, the council heard an update on the pedestrian bridge project, decided to seek bids to move a water pipeline that was found to lie under the bridge, and heard details about the parks master plan and recent work in Glen Park.

Complaints about town leadership, website, and police presented

Karen Stuth, speaking on behalf of Citizens for a Better Palmer Lake (CBPL), detailed for the council the results of a survey taken by the group. The survey addressed satisfaction, or lack of it, with the town's administrative office, the town's website, the Town Council meetings, the Police Department, and the Fire Department. According to the printed information presented by Stuth, the goal of the survey was to assess what town needs are most important to residents.

A total of 118 surveys were collected, some at a CBPL meeting in August and others collected online using Next-

door and Facebook. (The population of Palmer Lake is 2,500 according to town staff.) The survey contained five questions, some open-ended.

The survey questions addressing the town's administration evidenced concerns with the following issues:

- Water bills.
- Requests for information about the town, the town budget, and use of funds.
- Requests for safer roads.
- Planning for sewer capacity and lack of taps.
- Job performance of the town administrator.

The survey indicated dissatisfaction with Town Council meetings, including:

- Openness to citizen comments.
- Derisive attitude on the part of council members and the mayor toward citizens and their comments.
- Lack of interest and engagement on the part of the mayor.
- How well-informed the council is about town issues.
- Domination of meetings by a small group of citizens.
- Lack of attention on the part of council members.
- Competence of the town administrator and administrative staff.

PALMER LAKE (Cont. on 2)

Monument Academy School Board, Sept. 12

Secondary school update: no YMCA, no new middle school seats

By Jackie Burhans

The Monument Academy (MA) School Board met Sept. 12 to provide an update on its planned secondary school, discuss strategy for hiring administrative positions, and introduce their new school resource officer. Board member Megghan St. Aubyn was absent.

No YMCA; no new middle school seats

Board President Mark McWilliams announced that the 5,500 square feet that had been designated for potential use by the YMCA were reallocated for art and music as well as space for special education and exceptional student services. MA will reinitiate discussions with the YMCA during the planning for phase two, which they hope to bring online by 2022.

Kurt Connelly, MA's builders' representative, said regular weekly meetings are being held between the owners, architects, and contractors. He asked for an MA representative to attend the meetings, walk the site, and make sure decisions are right for the school. Connelly introduced the project manager and project engineer who indicated there are 15 weather days built into the schedule, which they hope to complete by Aug. 4, 2020. They said that utilities are through the Walden corporation, and MA cannot occupy the building until roads and utilities are ready.

After the meeting was adjourned, the audience asked questions and made comments about:

- Adequate classroom space in sixth through 10th grade.
- Importance of an academic officer given the short time frame for eighth-grade commitments.

MA (Cont. on 4)

An important message for our readers

OCN received an unprecedented number of letters to the editor this month. There are over 7,000 words of letters on pages 18 to 24. As a result, many articles and columns have been shortened or entirely omitted from this issue. To prevent similar situations in the future, depending on the space available, OCN'S editorial board may limit the number of letters published per issue to the first 12 received. See page 31 for a statement of OCN'S policies regarding letters to the editor. Direct questions or comments to John Heiser, Publisher, at johnheiser@ocn.me or (719) 488-3455.

In this issue

Palmer Lake News 1-4
D38 School District News 1, 4-6
Monument News 6-7
Fire District News 7-12
Water & San District News 12-16
WIA News 16
Weather 17
County News 18
Letters 18-24
Columns 24-26
Snapshots 26-28
Notices and Calendar 28-31
OCN Information 31

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Our free circulation area now includes over 1,600 mailboxes in Black Forest!