

partment, and Community Wildfire Preparedness volunteers. Topics will include home risk reduction, evacuation readiness, and community wildfire planning efforts. It is hosted by the Fire

Department.

The council is scheduled to hold two meetings in May, on May 9 and on May 23 at 6 p.m. at Town Hall, 42 Valley

Crescent. Meetings are normally held on the second and fourth Thursdays of the month, with the second meeting organized as a working session. Information: 481-2953.

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Donald Wescott Fire Protection District, April 16

Equal taxation idea stalls; merger talks suspended

By Allison Robenstein

The Donald Wescott Fire Protection District (DWFPD) board dissolved the merger committee and said talks with Tri-Lakes Monument Fire Protection District (TLMFPD) have stopped. They also talked about the possibility of the City of Colorado Springs annexing the isolated territory at the south end of the district so the Colorado Springs Fire Department (CSFD) could take over fire protection services for that small area. A newly hired firefighter was sworn in during the April 16 meeting, and the chiefs gave updates on recent blizzards.

TLMFPD merger discussions halted

DWFPD board Chairman William "Bo" McAllister told the board he met for two hours with TLMFPD President Jake Shirk, along with their chiefs and Wescott chiefs. Both groups decided to read a prepared statement at their meetings, which included the following:

- DWFPD and TLMFPD agree to suspend consolidation talks.
- After several meetings, it has been decided the benefits to consolidation are limited.
- The door has been left open for future discussions.
- Wescott's merger committee has been disbanded.

Equal taxation/district consolidation discussion paused

Director Gary Rusnak has been asking for district consolidation to create equal taxation throughout Wescott for some time. Currently, the entire district, which includes a small island of land south of Old Ranch Road, has an overall mill levy of 7.00 mills. The vestigial territory is seven miles south of Station 1 and is now surrounded by

the city of Colorado Springs, which has avoided annexing it as it has acquired land to the north. Wescott's northern subdistrict, which includes Gleneagle and Pleasant View Estates, has an additional mill levy of 14.90 mills which northern sub-district voters approved in November 2017. See www.ocn.me/v17n12.htm#dwfpd, <http://wescottfire.org/about-wescott-fire/>.

During the March meeting, Rusnak presented some language toward an election initiative for district counsel Matt Court to review before the April meeting.

The topic was not included in the April agenda, however, so Rusnak asked the board to amend the agenda to add a discussion item for his ongoing consolidation suggestion. McAllister objected, telling Rusnak, "I took a poll and the board majority has no interest in this initiative." Rusnak said he doubted this constituted an official, public vote of the board, and defied the chairman saying he would still bring it up in new business.

Court again advised that the process would involve approval through the courts involving numerous statutory steps that will require more than just one ballot measure.

Treasurer Joyce Hartung said no one from the department ever goes down to that southern area. Director Larry Schwarz said since Wescott doesn't respond there often due to an automatic aid agreement with the Colorado Springs Fire Department (CSFD) and because this area doesn't receive the same services as the northern district, he suggested the chiefs ask CSFD if it would like to annex that area. Chief Vinny Burns said the small bit of land doesn't include any retail and it would be costly for CSFD to make the



Above: After volunteering with Donald Wescott for over a year, Justin Myers was sworn in as the newest paid firefighter. Myers' wife pinned on his new badge. The department has a total of 20 volunteers. *Photo by Allison Robenstein.*

necessary road and water infrastructure improvements. Rusnak was agreeable to the annexation suggestion, so the board directed Burns and Assistant Chief Scott Ridings to ask CSFD if they have any interest in annexing that southern area so that Wescott could exclude it.

Chiefs report on the blizzards

Riding's run report included the following:

- March 2019 saw 99 calls for service, up from March 2018 by 26 calls. Ridings said this was probably due to the March 13 bomb cyclone.
- Personnel costs for the blizzard were \$8,000. This cost could have been \$13,000 if it weren't for the volunteers working that day.
- Although the area lost power, the station's generator helped IT fa-

cilities stay up, allowing them to know where every vehicle and firefighter was that day. "Flawless."

- The generator didn't power everything that they expected it to, and he will research this.
- The district saved at least one life during the blizzard due to the good judgment calls of people on duty and the ability to use the Hummer, instead of the ambulance, to get him to the hospital.
- Two more lives were saved in the district since the last meeting, both cardiac issues, but both will walk out of the hospital.

Burns reported that during the April 17 "dud" blizzard, the district followed the weather warnings and was fully staffed and ready. And using 2019 approved budget money, Burns purchased a new \$49,710 chief's vehicle that will be in service in four to six weeks.

Safety Fair coming May 11

Wescott will hold its annual Safety Fair May 11 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. in conjunction with Antelope Trails Elementary School. The day will include helicopters, fire trucks, and a smoke simulator truck, and firefighters will be available to answer questions and give tours of the station.

The board went into executive session at 8:48 p.m. to receive legal advice regarding the volunteer firefighter pension act. According to Administrative Assistant Stacey Popovich, the board adjourned after the executive session with no votes taken.

The next Donald Wescott Fire Protection District Board of Directors meeting is scheduled for 7 p.m. May 21 at Station 1, 15415 Gleneagle Dr. Meetings are usually on the third Tuesday of each month. For information, call Executive Administrator Stacey Popovich at 488-8680 or see www.wescottfire.org.

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Tri-Lakes Monument Fire Protection District, April 24

Meritorious service medals awarded; strategic plan pondered

By Natalie Barszcz

At the Tri-Lakes Monument Fire Protection District Board (TLMFPD) April 24 meeting, the quorum of board members congratulated recipients of the Meritorious Service Medal and discussed the findings of the Emergency Services Consultants International (ESCI) Master Plan. TLMFPD and Donald Wescott Fire Protection District have agreed to suspend merger/consolidation talks for the immediate future.

President Jake Shirk, Treasurer John Hildebrandt, and Director Jason Buckingham were absent.

Also, Directors Buckingham, Terri Hayes, and Secretary Mike Smaldino were absent in March when the Master Plan recommendations were presented.

Commendations for service during major blizzard

Chief Chris Truty stated, "We accept a certain amount of risk as firefighters but, on March 13, staff members went above and beyond the call of duty, showing support and care for the community and each other, and the perpetuity, for how long you did it, was vastly stunning," he said. See www.ocn.me/v19n4.htm#tlmfpd.

Truty awarded the Meritorious Service Medal to the staff listed below for their dedication to duty during the bomb-cyclone blizzard:

Paramedic Alarid
Firefighter Armstrong
Lt. Ayala
Paramedic Boyce
Battalion Chief Bradley



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