

**CAD system**

Truty explained that a new Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) system is now in place at TLMFPD, and it is allowing a more finely tuned accurate and appropriate response to streamline calls from the previous 14 options to 32.

**Equipment update**

Deputy Chief Randy Trost said the new ambulance is in service and its maiden voyage was, ironically, to Colorado Springs. An Emergency Management and Trauma Service (EMTS) grant from the state for \$85,000 has been received for the new ambulance. The second new engine is expected to arrive at TLMFPD Aug. 18.

Supplemental funding of \$105,000 to purchase a BC1000 chipper and a pull vehicle for the chipper was received. An older battalion chief vehicle will be replaced with a gas truck and used to pull the chipper. This will save on funding, and a separate pull vehicle

will be purchased for the chipper in 2020-21.

**Chipper in service**

Battalion Chief/Fire Marshal Jamey Bumgarner said the chipper is in service, and the first planned event will be held at Red Rocks Ranch on July 27. The BC1000 can chip up to 12-inch-diameter limbs and will be a useful tool for homeowner's associations and large wildfire mitigation projects. The new chipper is housed at the Larkspur Fire Department, awaiting labels and stripes due to limited space in the district.

Treasurer John Hildebrandt thanked TLMFPD for purchasing a chipper to help the community with wildland mitigation. "Pretty darn good fire department ... thank you," said Hildebrandt.

The regular TLMFPD board meeting adjourned at 7:39 p.m., and the board entered an executive session pursuant to CRS 24-6-402(4)(e) to determine positions relative to matters that may be subject to negotiations with the Town of Palmer Lake. No votes or

announcements were made after the session.

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Meetings are usually held the fourth Wednesday of each month. The next meeting is scheduled for 6:30 p.m. July 24 at TLMFPD Station 1, 18650 Highway 105. For information, contact Office Administrator/HR Jennifer Martin at 719-484-9011. For upcoming agendas see <http://tlmfire.org/board>.

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*Palmer Lake Town Council, June 13 and June 27*

# Community speaks out on future of the Fire Department

*By James Howald and Jackie Burhans*

The Palmer Lake Town Council met twice in June: a monthly council meeting June 13 and a work session June 27. At both meetings, discussion about the future of the Palmer Lake Volunteer Fire Department (PLVFD) took center stage. The council also approved a number of special event permits for Fourth of July fireworks and for running events. Town Clerk Verla Bruner announced her resignation.

**"Our guys know our town"**

Nikki McDonald, who served several terms as mayor of Palmer Lake, seemed to speak for many in the audience on June 13 when she said, "Our guys know our town."

Many residents took advantage of the public comments portion of the meeting to voice their support for PLVFD and their preference that the town retain an independent fire department instead of merging it with neighboring Tri-Lakes Monument Fire Protection District.

Residents who addressed the future of the Fire Department made these points:

- The current ambulance service, provided by Donald Wescott Fire Protection District, can be slow to respond in emergencies. The resident who made this point said he had recently waited 30 minutes for an ambulance to arrive.
- Ambulance service provided from a station house to the south of Palmer Lake could be delayed by traffic problems on Highway 105.
- PLVFD is part of the small-town culture of Palmer Lake and provides many informal services that residents value, such as tours of the facilities for children and taking Santa to Palmer Lake Elementary School on the town's fire truck.
- Rather than rushing to put an initiative on the ballot in November, the council should take a year to study the issue completely.
- The larger fire equipment deployed by neighboring fire districts may not be able to navigate through the narrow, unpaved streets in the Glen.
- The mill levies required to pay for fire service in neighboring districts have increased in recent years, and merging PLVFD with one of those districts would obligate Palmer Lake residents to pay those increases.

**"Change may be needed"**

While most council members did not comment directly on the remarks made by the public, council member Paul Banta shared some of his thoughts. Banta said that although he wants to keep the Fire Department local, things cannot continue as they are: "Change may be needed .... We absolutely want to keep the Fire Department as much as you do. ... We are on the same side as you." Banta said he thought the issue should be put to the voters through a ballot initiative.

**PLVFD proposes option to keep department local**

Weston Oesterreich, PLVFD station captain, presented a plan he called "Option 5: New Beginnings for PLVFD," which he said would allow the town to retain control over its local Fire Department. The name of Oesterreich's plan refers to the four options presented at the May Town Council meeting by a consultant. Oesterreich pointed out that merging PLVFD with another fire district would result in loss of local control

over the department.

Oesterreich's plan called for improvements in three key areas:

- Additional staffing.
- Upgrading equipment, including a new fire truck and an ambulance to be housed in Palmer Lake.
- Construction of a new emergency service building that would house the Fire and Police Departments.

Oesterreich emphasized that although the proposed building would be home to both the Police and Fire Departments, those services would remain separate.

Oesterreich proposed adding a fire chief and five additional paid staff to the current staff, which currently consists of three full-time and five part-time firefighters. The new staff would include EMTs, Oesterreich said. He pointed out that PLVFD is currently part of a group that allows resources to be shared among Tri-Lakes Monument Fire Protection District (TLMFPD), Donald Westcott Fire Department (DWFD), Black Forest Fire and Rescue Protection District (BFFRPD), Larkspur Fire Protection District (LFPD) and El Paso County, including the Office of Emergency Management.



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