

made in 20 years, but replacement parts were found in a supplier's inventory. They used the last of that inventory, so no more such parts are available, Hodge said.

Hodge said the LRE well field study recommended that DWSD drill two new wells, one into the Denver aquifer and one into the Arapahoe aquifer. Hodge estimated the new wells would cost about \$4 million to bring into production and some of the wells might be candidates for re-drilling.

Joel Barber of LRE explained what the study showed about water quality. The water is basic rather than acidic, he said, and was aggressive in terms of its capacity to erode metal well components, especially at points where dissimilar metals are joined. Levels of aqueous iron 10 times higher than expected also contributed to corrosion and bacteria growth, reducing the output of the wells. Both issues raise the risk of well failures, Barber said.

Barber pointed out DWSD's wells are 15 to 20 years old and said new wells would use all stainless-steel components beneath the water table, thereby increasing their reliability. Hodge estimated using stainless steel components could increase well life to 40 to 50 years.

Barber ended by pointing out DWSD used to have 13 wells but four have now been abandoned.

Director Wayne Vanderschuere said: "Aging infrastructure is starting to catch up with us," adding that even with more use of renewable and reused water, reliable wells are essential for meeting customer demands. Hodge agreed wells would always be part of a robust drought-proof water service strategy. The immediate need, according to Hodge, is to identify the best locations to drill or re-drill new wells.

Board approves proposal to design new wells

The board moved on to consider a proposal from LRE to design two new wells and get the needed permits, with DWSD contracting with a second company to drill the wells. LRE would charge \$192,000 to design, oversee the construction, and commission the new

wells.

Barber said if the proposal were approved, LRE would identify the best locations for the wells based on infrastructure, land availability, and impact to residents, estimating that the assessment would take a month. LRE would then get bids from drilling companies based on those specifications, with the goal of preparing the board for a vote in December to drill one or two wells.

Brett Gracely, a water resources manager with LRE, explained that re-drilling a well requires a new bore and is similar in cost to an entirely new well. Re-drilling does allow the same well permit to be re-used, he said, which saves time. "A re-drill is like a new car with the same license plates," he explained.

The board voted unanimously in favor of a motion to authorize LRE to proceed with its proposal.

Radium level update

Hodge told the board testing at the Holbein Water Treatment Plant (HWTP) showed an increase in radium and the treatment plant had been taken out of production completely on Oct. 1. According to the DWSD website, all water is now being served by the R. Hull plant, which does not have high radium levels.

Hodge reviewed the radium mitigation strategies being considered: use of pressure vessels, use of hydrous manganese oxide (HMO), replacing filter media in treatment plants, and use of green sand. Hodge said replacing filter media would cost \$170,000, and green sand would cost \$190,000. Six pressure vessels would cost \$1 million plus installation and engineering costs. Hodge said the cost of disposing of the radium once it is removed from the water supply is an issue to consider when choosing between radium reduction strategies.

The consensus of the board was to continue to work with both GMS Inc. and Corona Environmental Consulting on a wide range of potential approaches to reducing the radium in DWSD's water service.

2022 budget takes shape

Hodge compared the 2022 proposed budget to the current budget, and noted these changes:

- Water and sewer revenue would be 3% higher.
- Increased testing for radium would raise chemical and testing costs by 66%.
- The Residual Management line item would increase by 112% due to radioactive materials licensing being recategorized in the proposed budget.
- The Tools and Equipment line item would see a 304% increase due to equipment purchases needed to upgrade plants.
- Engineering costs would rise by 33% due to upkeep, repair, and re-drilling of wells.
- The Capital Projects line item includes costs for drilling two new wells, for the Northern Monument Creek Interceptor (NMCI) project, and for the HWTP upgrade.

Vanderschuere pointed out the proposed budget would dip into reserves, and that was not sustainable.

Contract with Forest Lakes to end

Hodge told the board that six years ago, DWSD agreed to provide operational support to Forest Lakes. Due to difficulties hiring staff, DWSD no longer had the capacity to continue this support, Hodge said, and he asked the board to approve sending Forest Lake a notice that the agreement would end in 60 days. Vanderschuere said DWSD customers were the priority and Forest Lake had been warned about the change.

The board voted unanimously to end the agreement.

The next meeting is scheduled for Nov. 18 at 1:30 p.m. Generally, board meetings are held the third Thursday of the month and include online access due to coronavirus restrictions; 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. See www.donalawater.org for more information about the district. James Howald can be reached at jameshowald@ocn.me.

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

El Paso County Planning Commission, Oct. 7

Two minor subdivisions approved; information session on Highway 83 Access Control Plan

By Helen Walklett

The El Paso County Planning Commission (BOCC) met once during October and recommended for approval two minor subdivision requests in Black Forest. The commissioners also received a presentation on the draft Highway 83 Access Control Plan that will come to the BOCC for approval later this year.

Rapson minor subdivision

The commissioners heard an application by Andrea and William Rapson for approval of a minor subdivision request to create two single-family residential lots on their 19.6-acre property. The property is zoned RR-5 (residential rural) and is located southeast of the intersection of Hardy Road and Black Squirrel Road, about one mile north of Hodgen Road.

Lot 1 would be about 14 acres and would contain the current residence, barn, and related structures. Lot 2 would be just over 5 acres in size. Access would be via Hardy Road.

The application was approved unanimously as a consent item, meaning there was no discussion. It was then heard at the El Paso Board of County Commissioners meeting on Oct. 12. See the BOCC article below.

Bridle Bit Ranch

The commissioners voted unanimously to recommend for approval a request by Nicole Telle for a vacation and replat of one single-family residential lot into two lots. The 10.12-acre property is zoned RR-5 (rural residential) and is on the west side of Bridle Bit Road in the Bridle Bit Ranch subdivision, about one mile east of the Shoup Road and Highway 83 intersection. Both proposed lots would be just over 5 acres in size.

The application was then heard at the BOCC meeting on Oct. 26. See the BOCC article below.

Highway 83 Access Control Plan

Jennifer Irvine, county engineer, presented the draft Highway 83 Access Control Plan to the commissioners at the end of their meeting. The presentation was for informational purposes only as this is not a matter on which the Planning Commission votes.

Irvine explained that the project is a collaboration between the county, the City of Colorado Springs, and the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) that has resulted in an access control plan for the approximate 10-mile section of the highway between Powers Boulevard and County Line Road. She told the commissioners that such a plan is long-range and

aims to improve mobility and enhance safety.

She said improved access options to the highway might include reducing the number of access points along it by accessing local properties through secondary roads or new or improved access roads, consolidating the number of locations where vehicles could enter or exit the highway, limiting turning movements to locations with dedicated left turn lanes, and realigning intersections to create a more familiar layout. Speed limits are not addressed in an access study.

The plan does not identify specific projects or establish a timeline for when changes would occur.

The plan will help the county, the city, and CDOT make access decisions during development and redevelopment and will streamline the access permitting process. Irvine said it would also provide predictability for developers because they would know how access would look before they started planning.

The Highways Advisory Committee reviewed the plan at its Sept. 15 meeting and unanimously recommended its approval to the BOCC. Irvine said the plan would go to the BOCC for approval in the next month or so and was effectively an intergovernmental agreement between the three jurisdictional entities.

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

El Paso Board of County Commissioners, Sept. 28, Oct. 5, 12, 19, 21, and 26

Initial 2022 budget hearings held

By Helen Walklett

During October, the El Paso Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) heard proposals for the 2022 county budget. The commissioners also made decisions relating to various developments.

Preliminary balanced budget

The county Financial Services Department presented the preliminary balanced budget at the Oct. 5 meeting. The approximate \$512 million budget for 2022 includes the second tranche of the \$69 million American Rescue Plan Act funds. It allocates \$11 million for road improvements, about \$3.6 million to hire new employees, and \$7.4 million for pay increases for county employees in the face of the rising cost of

living. It also provides additional support for El Paso County Public Health to help the community recover from the pandemic.

"Out of the 10 largest counties in the state, El Paso County citizens enjoy the lowest county property tax burden and the lowest cost per citizen for delivering high impact services," said Nikki Simmons, county controller. "This budget prioritizes the highest needs of service to our citizens while maintaining our fiscally conservative organizational culture."

As part of the budget-setting process, county departments and offices presented their critical needs to the commissioners at the Oct. 19 and 21 meetings. A further budget hearing is scheduled for Nov. 16

when the BOCC will give its final direction on budget allocations. About \$159 million of the budget is

Val Ross-Coy
Broker Associate

(719) 237-8787
val.ershields.com
vcoy@ershields.com



