

Our Community News

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



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<https://covid19.colorado.gov/>

Donald Wescott Fire Protection District, Jan. 19

Chief Burns to retire after over 40 years



Above: DWFPD Chief Burns. Photo courtesy DWFPD.

By Allison Robenstein

The Donald Wescott Fire Protection District (DWFPD) board met Jan. 19 and heard the public resignation of Chief Vinny Burns. The board discussed but didn't vote on an issue with Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) grant funding that could cost more to fix than the district is paying. A large donation of \$5,000 is being spent on personal protective armor.

After over 40 years, retirement is in sight

Burns started his monthly report with the usual reporting but ended by saying, "I have given notice of intent to retire." Noting health issues, he said he was thankful the leadership "saw something in a shaggy, long-haired, bearded kid and gave him a chance to be on the fire department." Burns joined before the district was called Donald Wescott and

DWFPD (Cont. on 2)

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Ice Fishing on Monument Lake



Above: Members of the International Association of Fire Fighters, Local 4319 Monument, enjoyed family fun ice fishing at Monument Lake on Jan. 23. Despite the cold and breezy weather, about 50 firefighters with their families set their fishing rods over neatly drilled holes and waited patiently for a few fish to bite. Alas, the fish were elusive for most, but nevertheless the participants were treated to a delicious lunch catered by Smokey the Pig Wood Pit BBQ. Photo by Natalie Barszcz.

Monument Board of Trustees, Jan. 19

Financial investigation finds no wrongdoing; bond-related water projects move forward

By Allison Robenstein

During the Jan. 19 regular meeting of the Monument Board of Trustees, Mayor Don Wilson said the investigation into the town's finances has been closed with no indication of a crime being committed. The board approved three water project-related resolutions and the updated hazard mitigation plan, reappointed a planning commissioner, and discussed but made no decisions on the newest purchasing policy.

Trustee Jamy Unruh was noted absent.

Town finances cleared of any wrongdoing

Wilson told the board he received notification from a Department of Justice assistant U.S. attorney that the Town of Monument's finance investigation had been closed with no indication of any crime being committed. Wilson said it was his opinion that the investigation had been started maliciously by someone with a distaste for town staff.

Then Town Treasurer Pamela Smith was put onto administrative leave when the town acknowledged the ongoing investigation. She was later dismissed from town employment. See Vol. 19 No. 4 - April 6, 2019 (ocn.me).

Water projects approved being paid for with bond money

Public Works Director Tom Tharnish asked the board to approve work on the town's newest well, No.10, which has been completed and sits at the headwaters of Monument Lake (See photo on

page 27). To bring the well online, the next phase of the installation process is to route the raw water into treatment plant 4/5. Tonight's request for \$46,300 will allow Forsgren Associates to tie the well into the treatment plant by installing the pump drive and piping connection. Tharnish expects the well to be online this summer.

During the Sept. 21 BOT meeting, the board approved \$22 million for the sale of certificates of participation in the form of rentals to leased town property. This money is to be used solely to complete water-related projects. See Vol. 20 No. 10 - October 3, 2020 (ocn.me).

Tharnish also requested \$68,100 to expand treatment plant 4/5 to make room for the additional equipment and personnel. Forsgren Associates will design and engineer the addition.

Both resolutions passed 5-1. Trustee Laurie Clark voted against both with no reason given. But later in the meeting, she asked about the bidding process of town projects in general, noting that when other businesses want to be competitive and make an appeal for a project, "they feel they are being discriminated against because these same companies are always chosen."

Town Attorney Andrew Richie disputed her statement, saying, "I am unaware of any responsive bidders that have followed the RFP process and are the lowest bidder that are not being selected."

MONUMENT (Cont. on 7)

Monument Board of Trustees
Special Meeting, Jan. 11

Town passes pandemic-related resolution

By Allison Robenstein

During a workshop and special meeting held Jan. 11, the Monument Board of Trustees approved a pandemic-related resolution. Initially, the resolution was intended to make Monument a sanctuary city, giving businesses the ability to use their best judgment regarding COVID-19. Instead, the board asserted its right to condemn the executive orders of Gov. Jared Polis.

Polis created the first executive order on March 26 and others followed. Critical businesses are exempt from many of the orders. The state's list of critical businesses includes:

- Healthcare operations.
- Infrastructure, such as utilities, oil and gas production, public water and wastewater.
- Manufacturing, such as food processing, medical equipment.
- Retail, such as grocery stores and gas stations.
- Services, such as trash and recycling, laundromats, and auto supply.
- News media.
- Financial institutions.
- Providers of basic necessities such as homeless shelters and food banks.
- Construction and defense.
- Services that maintain safety, in-

RESOLUTION (Cont. on 10)