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See page 29

Local Events

- Readers should assume that event information published in this issue is subject to change and information should be confirmed a day or two before the event by calling the information number or checking the organization's website.
- See pages 28-31 for event locations and other details of these and many other local events.
- Palmer Lake Outdoor Classic youth hockey day, Fri., Jan. 6, 6 pm face-off, Sat., Jan. 7, 9 am, on Palmer Lake.
 - Palmer Lake Board of Trustees meeting, Thu., Jan. 12, 5 pm
 - Northern El Paso County Coalition of Community Associations (NEPCO) meeting, Sat., Jan 14, 10 am-12 pm
 - Monument Board of Trustees meeting, Mon., Jan. 16, 6:30 pm
 - Palmer Lake Historical Society, potluck dinner, Thu., Jan. 19, 6:00- 8:00 pm
 - Palmer Lake Board of Trustees meeting, Thu., Jan. 26, 5 pm
 - Friends of Fox Run Park, Thu., Jan. 26, Zoom meeting, 7 pm
 - Woodmoor Improvement Association annual meeting, Mon., Jan. 30, 7 pm
 - Our Community News mailing day, Thu., Feb. 2, approx. 9 am-2 pm. Information on page 29.

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Circulation
Print Run: 22,900
Mail Delivery: 22,222
Stacks: 678

Monument tree lighting, Dec. 3



Above: The Monument holiday tree lighting event was held Dec. 3 at the Limbach Park. Hundreds of onlookers enjoyed music and conviviality in the afternoon, and just as the sun set, the park was lit up with holiday lights. Many people were wearing Santa hats, but Santa himself was also in the crowd to greet kids and join the fun. Caption by Janet Sellers. Photo by Michael Weinfeld. See page 24 for additional photos and information on the festive event.

Monument Board of Trustees/Town Council, December 2022

Special investigator claims Home Rule Charter void in report alleging illegal electioneering by Monument staff

By Chris Jeub

In November, following the election that passed the Home Rule Charter and replaced the sitting Board of Trustees with mostly new councilmembers, Monument's town manager was granted the cancellation of December's board meetings for his staff to enjoy the holidays. However, allegations of election campaign fraud brought the interim board back together three times in December. The investigation concluded that due to illegal electioneering, gerrymandering, and more, the Home Rule Charter—passed with 70 percent of the vote in November—was void. The report also made immediate recommendations: to publicly censure several acting and incoming councilmembers, hold some of them in contempt, terminate the town manager, and file an ethics complaint against the now-resigned town attorney.

Douglas County Attorney Grant Van Der Jagt was appointed independent special investigator. Those being investigated argued against the cost, the redundancy, and the legality of the outgoing members who called the special meetings together. The investigation concluded by finding the town's new Home Rule Charter illegal and void, but the findings were kept from being discussed publicly due to interruptions from supporters of the charter and the indecision of the board on whether to move to executive session.

Here is the background of the election, reports of the three special meetings during the month, and details of the report delivered digitally to the board and the public on Dec. 28.

MONUMENT (Cont. on 2)

Monument Academy School Board, Dec. 1 and 8

Board launches fundraising campaign; CFO resigns

By Jackie Burhans

At a Dec. 1 special meeting, the Monument Academy (MA) board launched its annual fundraising campaign. At its regular meeting on Dec. 8, the board accepted the resignation of its chief financial officer (CFO), introduced its interim chief operating officer (COO), and reviewed the amended budget and its financial challenges.

Fundraising campaign launches

At a special meeting on Dec. 1 called Give Hope, board President Ryan Graham began by saying MA's greatest asset since its founding was its community which had shown great generosity, noting that MA was now asking for more. He briefly went over the history of opening the East Campus during the pandemic and enduring two difficult years with significant staff turnover for various reasons.

MA (Cont. on 6)

MONUMENT (Cont. from 1)**Background**

The election in November brought two significant changes in Monument's governing body: a new board and a new form of governance. Formerly called "trustees," the transfer of governance is slotted to take place at the first meeting of 2023 on Tuesday, Jan. 3, where new "council members" will lead the town. Former Trustee

Mitch LaKind will advance to become the new mayor, and four new members will be seated: Steve King, Sana Abbott, Redmond Ramos, and Kenneth Kimple. Ramos had been serving as an appointed trustee. King, Abbott, and Ramos will serve four-year terms; Kimple will serve a two-year term. Trustee James Romanello will remain as a member, and former Mayor Pro Tem Kelly Elliott's second term expired. Trustees Darcy Schoe-

ning and Ron Stephens did not receive enough votes to remain on the board but finished the month of December 2022 as trustees of the town. In summary:

- Old "Board of Trustees": Mayor Don Wilson, Mayor Pro Tem Elliott, and Trustees Ramos, LaKind, Stephens, Romanello, and Schoening. Wilson resigned after winning a congressional seat.
- New "Council Members": Mayor LaKind and Council Members Ramos, Romanello, King, Abbott, and Kimple. A new council member will be nominated to fill LaKind's seat, and one of the council members will be appointed mayor pro tem.

The special meetings were called to initiate an investigation into the Town of Monument for allegedly violating Colorado campaign finance laws. Elliott accused the town of contributing \$2,500 on May 6 for yard signs and door hangers (see photos on page 3) and substantiated the claim

with documentation and receipts. She also accused the Monument Citizens for Home Rule, led by incoming council member King, of failing to account for all their expenditures, citing only \$5 reported from March through October. Elliott submitted this complaint to the town clerk:

"I want to file a complaint against Monument Citizens for Home Rule with Steve King as their Facebook Administrator. There is no accounting for their funds used for signs and door hangers. They reported \$5.00 March 2022—October 2022. If they refuse to accurately report their finances, then the signs need to be removed as they do not comply with state and town rules."

Special meeting on Dec. 13

Elliott called the special meeting on Dec. 13 to propose Resolution No. 94-2022: "A Resolution to Launch the Investigation on Fair Campaign Practices Act to Investigate in Kind Donation From the Town of Monument to the Monument for Home Rule Issue Committee for Signs and Door Hangers. The Investigation, Paid for by the Town of Monument, Requires that the Town Staff and Any Others to be Investigated Fully Cooperate with the Investigative Attorney During Interviews, Provisions of Document, Access to Emails and Phone Records, and Timely Responses to Phone Calls and Email Questions as Requested by the Attorney. The Investigator Will Provide Weekly Updates to the Town Council on the Approximate Dates: December 19 and December 27 with the Goal to Have the Investigation Completed by December 30, 2022." Though the new town attorney, Kathryn Sellars with Hoffmann, Parker, Wilson & Carberry P.C., was not present to advise the councilmembers, the resolution passed 4-2 with amended wording.

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Above: Photos sign and door hanger included in Kelly Elliott's campaign finance complaint against Steve King. Courtesy the Town of Monument.

Elliott, Stephens, Romanello and Schoening voted for the investigation. Elliott emphasized how the town's receipt for \$2,500 of door hangers that specifically asked for a "yes" vote on Home Rule was illegal and needed investigation. She claimed she did not want to "drag this out" into the next administration, calling to conclude the investigation by the end of December. Stephens said, "Our oath calls us to uphold the law" and claimed the evidence justifies a thorough investigation. Schoening claimed a "breach of trust" and that if the "shoe were on the other foot" the other side would demand an explanation. "We owe it to

the taxpayer to find out [the truth]," she said. Ramos and LaKind voted against the investigation. Both mentioned several times of their uneasiness of making this decision without town legal counsel present. "Without legal representation, I do not feel good about this at all," LaKind said. Ramos argued that an internal investigation should be made first. "Anyone can investigate this, but \$20,000 to gain back \$2,500 is unacceptable," he said. Ramos proposed a postponement of the resolution, but the proposal failed. A second resolution, Resolution No. 95-2022, called to hire an investigative attorney: "A Resolution

to Hire Special Attorney Scott Gesler for the Investigation of the Town of Monument Related to Fair Campaign Practices Act (FCPA) by a Legal Signatory's Signature on Mr. Gesler's Letter of Engagement." Attorney Gesler was not present for the meeting. LaKind expressed several problems with the board's recommendation. "How did you [the other four councilmembers] come to the conclusion of this one candidate who is guilty of an ethics violation for the exact same thing you want to investigate, as being selected by the four of you, in some form of 'walking quorum' which is illegal?" Most of the others

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agreed, with Romanello calling for a postponement of the attorney appointment until questions could be answered. The postponement passed 5-1 with Schoening the only dissenter.

Public comments came from supporters of the Home Rule Charter. Laura Kronick, the one who signed the \$5 expenditure report on behalf of Citizens for Home Rule, claimed it was an honest mistake and that a hearing officer had already dismissed it. Matthew Brunk pleaded with the council to search their hearts to do the right thing. Patty Shank attacked the council as “horrible, horrible, horrible people who have let this town down.” Jen-

nifer Wagner claimed, “Most of the town would prefer you would walk out right now,” and Chad Smith followed, “It’s an enormous blessing to have you all off the board [next month].”

Incoming councilmember King, who won with the most number of votes in November but who is now being accused of electioneering, read from prepared notes that accused the councilmembers of ethics violations themselves. He claimed there was already an investigation with the secretary of state, a claim that turned out to be unsubstantiated (King later claimed to have heard this through a conversation with the town clerk). He also claimed that the trustees should have all left their posts immediately following the election. “If you had any ethics, you would have left on November 8 when your terms expired ... instead of burning the town on your way out.” According to Deputy Town Clerk Tina Erickson, trustee terms expired in November but new councilmembers will not be sworn in until January.

The special meeting adjourned without responses from the board.

Special meeting on Dec. 16

The second meeting was called with an appointed parliamentarian, Gregory Carlson, to help keep the meeting to conform to Rules of Parliamentarian Law. The meeting passed Resolution No. 95-2022: “Resolution to Hire Special Attorney Grant Van Der Jagt for the Investigation of Concerns the Council has Identified Related to the November 2022 Election and 2A and to Fully Execute Mr. Grant Van Der Jagt’s Letter of Engagement.” The resolution passed 4-1 with incoming mayor-elect LaKind dissenting. Councilmember Ramos was not present.

Van Der Jagt declared to the board, “My al-

legiance is to seek the truth, not to any particular character.” He explained some background to friendships he has with many of the characters involved, including being Facebook friends with LaKind and personally investigating some online rumors about Schoening. “I don’t have any financial connection with the town of Monument,” he emphasized, “and I have no conflict of interest with any of you.”

LaKind presented an email he received that accused Van Der Jagt of representing Schoening in the past. “If you were to take this position, some of our citizens will report you to the bar,” LaKind said. Van Der Jagt read the email aloud and gave the context that Schoening was never his client, but that he did personal research to dispel an online rumor that Schoening was a convicted felon. “If she were my client, I would not be allowed to comment. I did this research myself.” Romanello asked, “Just to be sure, Darcy [Schoening] did not hire you and was not your client, correct?” Van Der Jagt affirmed this was correct. Romanello pressed further, “Why would you be qualified?” Van Der Jagt said that he had never had an ethics violation against him and that if he ever came across conflicting information, “I would have the legal duty to report it.”

Town Manager Mike Foreman asked the board for permission to hire an attorney to represent the town, with which both LaKind and Elliott agreed. LaKind motioned to hire a town attorney and Stephens seconded. Though Van Der Jagt cautioned that dealing with an attorney rather than the staff directly would slow down the investigation, the motion passed 4-1 with Schoening dissenting. Van Der Jagt followed, “My position is ‘truth over politics.’ I am political, it is my civic duty, but truth is my principle.”

Romanello, who lost to LaKind in his run for mayor of Monument, said, “None of this looks or smells good. I support Mayor LaKind 1,000%. I don’t have any sour grapes in this at all. But when I look at the emails and the Home Rule Commission were told something was okay, it is very concerning. If the interim town attorney was involved, there is a conflict of interest. Question for Foreman: Did you take part?”

Foreman responded, “The town has paid for educational materials before. In this case, the town did not knowingly pay for materials that told the town how to vote.” LaKind added, “And when it was discovered the town was made whole.” Schoening countered, “We shouldn’t use the term, ‘the town was made whole.’” LaKind returned, “I meant the town was paid back, and I can use the term that I want, whether you like it or not.”

Several public comments were made. Matthew Blunt expressed that he believed everything was done right. Ken Kimple accused the board of arrogance and declared, “A new day begins Jan. 3.” Laurie LaGraw noted that the board member names had been removed from the town website, and Elliott asked Foreman why they were (no answer was given). Joe Needler had an exchange at the podium with Van Der Jagt about the cost of his legal services. Van Der Jagt said, “You might be pleasantly surprised at my findings, and the results could be educational for the new board. This is money spent trying to make Monument run better.” Others commented on how the investigation was a witch hunt

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Before adjourning, Elliott noted her concern that "Monument is under a magnified glass." She reiterated her complaint of the \$5 declaration not making sense. "That, to me, is a slap in the face."

Special meeting on Dec. 28

A special meeting was called Dec. 28 to hear the results of the investigation. All councilmembers were present except for Ramos. Parliamentarian Carlson was present to help keep the meeting respectful, and LaKind hired a personal attorney to counsel him during the meeting. About 40 members of the public attended, and several Monument police officers were present. As Mayor Pro Tem Elliott read from prepared notes on proper procedures, members of the public shouted comments in an attempt to disrupt the process. Threats to remove people came from Elliott and Schoening, but no one was removed.

LaKind made a point of order claiming private documents were leaked to the press and to some members of the public, and that Schoening reportedly turned over the private session documents to the press. Carlson, the parliamentarian, took the podium to advise the board that under Robert's Rules of Order, the next procedural step would be to vote on whether to go into executive session. Van Der Jagt explained his legal obligation was to present his findings in executive session, but members of the public continued to shout down the option. LaKind then motioned to review the report in public, and Schoening motioned to waive attorney-client privilege, both passing unanimously. LaKind then objected to being presented the report minutes before the start of the meeting, so Elliott called for a 15-minute recess to look over the report. The report contained 16 pages of the findings and roughly 120 pages of evidence.

Van Der Jagt started to present the summary of his findings but was interrupted several times by audience members. Van Der Jagt asked the board to reconsider executive session to hear the findings of the report without interruptions from the audience, but the board refused. Van Der Jagt began his first reading but was quickly interrupted by Town Manager Mike Foreman, who was mentioned in on the first page of the report, claiming any mention of town staff needed disclosure. LaKind asked his lawyer, William Reed, to object citing open meeting laws: Any time a particular employee is discussed in executive session, they are to be notified. Foreman said he was not notified or given an opportunity to get an attorney. Romanello then asked Reed how to proceed, and Reed explained that town personnel must get their right of notification.

Due to the consistent heckling and the indecision of whether to proceed in executive session or not, Romanello motioned to adjourn and LaKind seconded. The motion failed 3-2. LaKind then announced "goodbye" and walked out. Elliott asked if there was a way to continue with the report without revealing any staff member, and Van Der Jagt said no. A second motion to adjourn was made, this time passing 4-0. Details of the report were never heard nor discussed at the meeting.

What was in the report

The report rules the charter void, concluding that the Town Council may not reform the charter after it passed "in its flawed form," and that the charter must "start over." The report also made four immediate recommendations:

- Publicly censure Steve King, Kathryn Sellars, Sana Abbott, Mike Foreman, Redmond Ramos, Mitch LaKind, and Town Tech Drew Anderson.
- Hold in contempt of Town Council the following: Foreman, King, Abbott, Ramos, and LaKind.
- Terminate the town manager and town attorney, Foreman and Sellars.
- File an ethics complaint against Sellars. Since the meeting Dec. 28 adjourned early, no action was put forward.

The report begins by emphasizing the apolitical nature of the investigation. "It is not a political piece," it states, instead "a Constitutional audit of the [Home Rule] Charter, the election and the internal workings of the Town of Monument related thereto." The report takes aim at how the town handled the election process for ballot issue 2A, particu-

larly on illegal electioneering, but the report cited several problems. One footnote called the town "a hostile work environment" that included accusations of sexual harassment spoken from the dias by then-councilmember LaKind, an accusation that was dismissed by the town manager. Violations of open meeting laws, failure to record public meetings, and failure to respect proper procedure were included.

On misappropriation of funds, the report found Sellars culpable, intentional, or grossly negligent, claiming that the timing "was substantial enough to impact the election." It also took issue with the attempt of Sellars (and Foreman by failing to account properly) to "cure" the problem by paying it back later. "Ultimately, the efforts of the 2A Charter, Town Attorney, and others to cure the misappropriation of funds do not satisfy either the FCPA (Fair Campaign Practices Act) or SOS (Secretary of State) rules for curing a reporting or spending transgression."

On conflicts of interest, the investigation found, "Those in favor of 2A who participated in the transgressions reportedly all stand to gain power as a result of their failure to collaborate on fair election redistricting." The first example: Sellars entered into too many roles for the town than just its legal counsel, particularly when she advised the Home

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Rule Commission. The investigation found the Seller's mistakes and poor advisements were "caused by her blinding self-interest, rather than her mistake or omission." The second example: Foreman "alone" guided the writing of Section 7.2 on the qualifications of the town manager—while acting as the town manager. With the new charter, the town manager may be fired with at least five votes from the council, "almost impossible to terminate."

On using the town seal, the investigation cited campaign finance laws prohibiting the use of a town seal as an endorsement of a ballot issue. The investigation goes so far as to claim the failure to follow the law—whether by error or intention—"renders the document void as a materially fraudulent misrepresentation to the public."

The investigation goes into a complicated

timeline in April and May of 2022 when \$2,512.50 of town money was spent for alleged electioneering, about the same time the town put the question on the ballot. It concluded, "The timing of Foreman and Abbott's actions ... point to a clear scheme to deceive the [Board of Trustees] and the voters." After the election materials started to appear on doorsteps around town in October, Schoening formally complained to Foreman and Interim Town Lawyer Joe Rivera, who both claimed, "The town seal is neither copyrighted nor protected." Later that month, just before the election, Elliott filed her formal election campaign finance complaint. By then election campaigning was nearly over, and the investigation claims, "the facts were purposefully hidden from the Town Council."

Also implicated in the report was Laura Kronick, the one who wrote the check for \$2,500 (99.8 percent of the total) back to the town to "cure" the "mistake." The investigation challenges the innocence of the action by signifying its result. "This illegal contribution undoubtedly had a direct impact on the outcome of the Home Rule Charter ballot question in the November 8th, 2022 election." The investigation concludes the timeline with, "The actions of Mike Foreman, Sana Abbott, Brandy Turner, and the HRCC as a whole are a clear misappropriation of funds, and they covered up their actions throughout March-November of 2022."

The investigation asks, "Does the Home Rule Charter violate Gerrymandering laws?" and uses six Colorado case law criteria to determine whether it did. If any one of the criteria substantially failed, it would fail constitutionally. The investigation shows the HRC failed in all six, citing the abuse and lack of transparency already revealed. On whether the redistricting was fair, Colorado law considers 5% or less "fair"; the charter moved 16% of Monument voters from their existing districts. The investigation called this a "whopping" disparity. When the investigator questioned Sellers why this disparity was not corrected, she resigned.

The investigation accuses several acting members of "cyberbullying" the investigator and witnesses to the investigation. Screenshots were provided of social media posts from Ramos, King, Abbott, and online blogger Ryan LeVier that the

report said included "false claims and threats." The investigation claims this led to hesitation from others to participate in the investigation.

The investigation returned to the issue of workplace harassment, something that appears to be out of the scope of the investigation but one that the report claims "an additional area of concern ... that should be addressed." Harassment was apparently reported several times in past years. One interview claims that a sexually offensive statement from then-Trustee LaKind was ignored by Foreman. "The Town Manager did nothing to stop the sexual harassment of a Councilwoman [sic] and allowed the hostile work environment to continue, suggesting the councilwoman report it to police instead."

The full report is 16 pages long and can be accessed at shorturl.at/imv13. The entire Google folder of screenshots, emails, and letters documenting the claims made in the report may be accessed at shorturl.at/nowxZ.

The Monument Council usually meets at 6:30 p.m. on the first and third Mondays of each month at Monument Town Hall, 645 Beacon Lite Road. The next two regular meetings are scheduled for Tuesday, Jan. 3 and Jan. 17 (both dates following observed holidays). Call 719-884-8014 or see www.townofmonument.org for information. To see upcoming agendas and complete board packets or to download audio recordings of past meetings, see <http://monumenttownco.minutesondemand.com> and click on Town Council.

Chris Jeub can be reached at chrisjeub@ocn.me.

MA (Cont. from 1)

Graham provided an overview of school funding, which comes from the Public-School Finance Act of 1994. The state calculates the total per-pupil funding by setting a base number and adding money for factors such as cost of living, personnel costs, district size, and at-risk student count and then subtracts a "budget stabilization" factor to address statewide budget balancing challenges. 40% of the district funds come from a local share, made up of property taxes and specific ownership taxes (e.g., car registration fees) and the remaining 60% is backfilled by the state from other revenue sources. The current per-pupil revenue is around \$8,500 per student, he said, which is allocated to Lewis-Palmer District 38, MA's authorizer, and disbursed to MA based on its per-pupil count. MA uses this money to pay all its expenses, including the bond debt service for both campuses.

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Before building the East Campus, Graham explained, MA was in a financially stable position. MA had projected it would have a total of 1,418 students for both campuses; the current count is 1,111. The projected extra 300 students would have represented nearly \$2.6 million annually in additional funding. MA, he continued, has a \$28.4 million balloon payment due in May 2026 and had intended to refinance based on increased enrollment numbers. The board's short-term objective is to use the annual contributions to give the school another year to flourish and refinance its bonds after August 2024.

The board members spoke about why they chose MA, citing things such as the curriculum, character program, uniform policy, parental involvement, class size, and mission. Others spoke of coming from other schools, districts, or states that had had negative experiences or concerns. Principal David Kennington said that MA aims to provide personalized, individualized education to every student through a classical education. The challenge, he said, is to build on MA's 26-year history of excellence, which would be a steep climb financially.

Jake Dicus, manager of development and Mission Engagement, presented details of the Lynx Fund annual fundraising campaign. The goal for 2023 is to raise \$500,000. While that might seem daunting, he said, with 1,100 kids from 739 households, the math comes to \$675 per household. This can be paid on a one-time or monthly basis. If a family could not afford that, they could donate a lower amount, he said. He also noted an opportunity to become a "Lynx Legacy" donor by contributing \$1,996 to honor the year in which MA was founded. MA will post a plaque on each campus naming Lynx Legacy donors unless they wished to remain anonymous. Dicus said another way to raise the \$675 would be to leverage an employer match program or to challenge family members, friends,

or businesses to contribute. Donations are tax-deductible. The funds, he said, would be used for staff compensation, school safety, curriculum, athletics, and operations. The benefits would be financial stability, teacher retention, competitive staff pay, an updated curriculum, and the ability to refinance the bonds in 2024. Dicus noted that the website now has a DONATE button at the top of the main page in the right-hand corner.

Graham challenged the board to donate at the Lynx Legacy level, wrote a check for \$1,996, and passed around a basket to collect checks from other board members.

CFO resignation

At the Dec. 8 meeting, the board started by adding "to discuss personnel matters and legal questions regarding the CFO and acting COO" to its executive session citation.

Early in the meeting, CFO Marc Brocklehurst was recognized for going above and beyond every month, including covering for former COO Merlin Holmes, who resigned. The board thanked Brocklehurst for serving the MA community.

Later, after returning from a lengthy executive session with multiple topics, the board announced they had received Brocklehurst's letter of resignation effective Jan. 6, 2023. Graham said Brocklehurst had been stalwart in navigating MA's financial challenges and expressed the board's gratitude and wishes for success in the private sector. The board moved and unanimously approved a motion to accept the resignation and to have its hiring subcommittee commence talks with the newly named interim COO to determine the best steps forward.

Introduction of interim COO

At MA's Dec. 1 special meeting, Graham noted that the board had hired an interim COO, Kim McClelland, as an independent contractor for MA for the remainder of the school year. McClelland is a native of Colorado and got a bachelor's degree in Social Science at the University of North-

ern Colorado with an emphasis on elementary education. She got her master's in education and leadership

from Jones International University and has worked as a teacher and principal. She has 25 years of experience,



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at school to her email ebelisle-board@monumentacademy.net.

- The board unanimously approved revisions and additions to the Employee Handbook regarding extended and administrative leave.
- Middle School Principal Colin Vinchattle introduced Jeff Henry as the initial coordinator of the Watch D.O.G.S. program for MA's East Campus. The program,

which stands for Dads of Great Students, encourages the involvement of fathers in the school to provide a positive male role model. Henry said that the idea is to get fathers involved every couple of weeks or once a month. He said there will be a kickoff event on Jan. 10, and he is working with two other volunteers to initiate awareness, share experiences, and get input

- from teachers, parents, and staff.
- The board voted unanimously to update the preschool policy on inclement weather to bring it in line with the K-5 policy.
 - Athletic Director Mike Svendsen discussed his goal of building an athletic store to sell athletic wear to build morale and spirit and retain kids while building the high school sports programs.

He obtained approval from both marketing and administration and plans to partner with the Parent Teacher Organization to share funds. He said he believed the athletic wear follows the uniform policy at the middle school and the dress code at the high school. Buczkowski said the board would need to approve any proposed changes to the middle school policy at its Janu-

ary meeting, and the matter was tabled.

The MA School Board meets at 6 p.m. on the second Thursday of each month. The next regular board meeting will be on Thursday, Jan. 12, at 6 p.m. on the East Campus. See more information at see <https://bit.ly/ma-boe>.

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

Lewis-Palmer D38 Board of Education, Dec. 12

Results of calendar survey discussed; mid-year compensation action approved

By Harriet Halbig

The Lewis-Palmer D38 Board of Education had lengthy discussions on budget matters, the district calendar, and bus purchases at its Dec. 12 meeting.

District calendar survey

Following the defeat of the proposed mill levy override in November, the district sought to find ways to compensate teachers other than through salary increases. One of these ways is to offer them more time to balance their work and family lives.

A survey was distributed to teachers, families, and students in early December. There were 2,261 respondents to the survey, of which 1,443 were parents/guardians, 332 were staff, 181 were staff who were also parent/guardians, and 288 were students. The survey remained live for a week following the board meeting.

Assistant Superintendent Amber Whetstine detailed the results for the board.

She said that there was non-support for the idea of changing the calendar to a more extended year. There was also little concern about aligning the district calendar with those of adjoining districts.

There was general approval of the current calendar, but many would prefer to have full-day staff development programs rather than delayed starts.

A recommended change was closing district offices when classes are not in session to save on utilities.

There was a great deal of support to consider four-day weeks—52.6% of parents and 79% of students were in favor, preferring to have Friday be the day off.

Board President Chris Taylor asked if there is an impact on achievement with four-day weeks. Whetstine responded that achievement has not been shown to be impacted, but growth is, especially among special education students who would

have less frequent contact with their teachers.

Superintendent KC Somers commented that, were the district to adopt the four-day week, we would still be required to provide the state-mandated number of student contact hours. This could be done by lengthening the school year (begin in earlier August and end in later May) or lengthening each day by a few minutes.

Whetstine said that 120 (of 176) districts in the state are now on four-day weeks. The closest of these are in Cañon City and Pueblo. According to Somers, many are in rural areas.

Taylor asked whether Somers was convinced that this change would help with recruitment and retention of staff. Somers said that respondents were not directly asked whether they would stay or leave based on this decision, but it seems to be a solution favored by many.

Taylor said he is not satisfied that the district is considering only this one solution in depth. He asked to be supplied with alternate options at the January work session.

After further discussion, Somers was instructed to further research the option of four-day weeks in addition to other ideas.

Board Treasurer Ron Schwarz said that changing to a four-day week would not overcome the disparity in

compensation between D38 and neighboring districts and that utility savings during times when the schools would be closed would be small.

Financial planning—mid-year compensation discussion

Chief Business Officer Brett Ridgeway reviewed the budget as it stood at the end of November, saying district spending is below that forecast in the budget, largely due to unfilled positions and such other aspects as a mild fall. He determined that about \$1 million in funds from the general fund could be applied to a mid-year compensation action.

Ridgeway said that the use of recruiting and retention bonuses at the beginning of the school year were

successful, especially in hard to fill positions. He also said

there have been good investment opportunities through

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District 7: Monument, Woodmoor and a portion of the surrounding areas (incumbent Jim Riggins)

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- To be nominated by the nominating committee, please contact the MVEA Board Nomination Information Line at (719) 494-2528. If seeking election by nomination through the nominating committee, a candidate questionnaire must be received by MVEA to be submitted to the committee by 5:30 p.m., Thursday, March 16, 2023.
- To be nominated by petition, you must have the petition signed by 15 MVEA members. Petitions and procedures will be made available by contacting the MVEA Board Nomination Information Line at (719) 494-2528. The petition, along with a completed candidate questionnaire, must be received by MVEA by 5:30 p.m., Thursday, April 6, 2023.

A candidate questionnaire must be completed for either nomination by the committee or nomination by petition. If you have questions, please contact the MVEA Board Nomination Information Line.

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government pools and a similar school investment organization now offering 3% returns.

Ridgeway said the proposal was presented to the Staff Collaboration Committee the previous week. Decisions to be made included who were eligible for the bonus and the basis for deciding the amount. Members of the committee requested that Medicare and PERA (public employee retirement association) fees should be included.

The decision was made to invest 1.75% of total base pay to those with a regular working relationship with the district, which would total 796 people. There also would be a flat rate of \$500 to each individual.

There was a discussion about whether to include administrative staff, who would not have benefited from the mill levy override. It was decided that administrative employees who work in the schools (principals and assistant principals) and those who directly interacted with the schools, such as assessments and special education, should be included. As a result, only seven people would be excluded.

Those who received recruitment or retention bonuses would be exempted from the percentage but would receive the flat sum.

Taylor commented that this should help with retention and recruitment but regrets that it was a one-time action.

The board approved the action.

Bus purchase discussion

At its November meeting, the board was requested to purchase four new school buses with excess funds in the transportation fund. It was ultimately decided to purchase two buses with ESSER (elementary and secondary school emergency response) funds and postpone a decision on two more until the December meeting.

Executive Director of Operations Chris Coulter reported that 47% of the district’s route buses currently have over 200,000 miles on them and the cost of fuel and maintenance is

high as a result of their age. The average age of the fleet is 9.4 years with an average mileage of 134,000. Warranties on buses run for five years and the fuel efficiency of new buses is twice that of the older buses.

Taylor asked whether Coulter had considered leasing buses rather than buying them. Coulter responded that they have gone with the lowest bid.

Somers commented that they did not wish to incur a large debt when the funds to pay for the buses are available in the transportation fund.

Taylor clarified that there is currently \$648,000 available in the transportation fund and that the two buses would cost \$270,000.

Director Matthew Clawson commented that there is a predicted recession or depression on the horizon and the district currently has a backlog of \$50 million in deferred maintenance and other projects. He expressed concern that an emergency such as a boiler replacement should be prioritized over new buses. He wished to delay the decision until D38 has done all it can for the teachers.

Schwarz said that the buses would be paid out of capital funds, not operating funds.

Clawson suggested deferring the decision until next fall.

Following further discussion, it was decided to develop a list of district priorities. Schwarz said that once the list has been developed, let’s begin. Taylor requested an inventory of district facilities and their condition.

Coulter commented that the district is seeing great benefit from the Schreiber electric project to reduce utility costs and resulted in a \$5 million bite out of the \$50 million in deferred maintenance.

As no motion was put forward, the subject was tabled.

Mill levy certification

Ridgeway explained how property taxes are structured and how the district determines its proposed mill levy taking into consideration its

bond responsibilities and the 1999 mill levy override which provides \$4 million annually. He said that this year the county does not assess residential buildings, but on the grounds of new commercial development, the district will assess 40.5 mills.

The proposal was passed.

When discussing the consent agenda, board Secretary Tiffiney Upchurch suggested that the board’s meeting dates and agendas should be made available to the public more readily than just on the web-

site. Communications Director Mark Belcher said he could include them in his newsletter and on social media.

The Lewis-Palmer D38 Board of Education usually meets on the third Monday of the month at its learning center, 146 Jefferson St. in Monument. Due to a conflict with Martin Luther King Jr. Day, the January meeting will be held at 6 p.m. on Jan. 23.

Harriet Halbig may be reached at harriethalbig@ocn.me.

Palmer Lake Board of Trustees, Dec. 8 and 15

New leadership takes the helm

By James Howald and Jackie Burhans
December saw a newly elected mayor and three newly elected trustees seated in Palmer Lake. Following an election in November that legalized the sale of adult use cannabis, the board addressed some of the details of how to proceed with those sales. The board adopted a budget for 2023, certified the town’s mill levy, and voted to continue to use Green & Associates LLC as the town’s auditor. Spokespeople for Tri-Lakes Cares told the board about its services, with a focus on how they serve the residents of Palmer Lake. The board also considered a program to use banners to publicize the town’s artists.

The Dec. 15 board meeting ended in an executive session.

Previous mayor and trustees celebrated

Outgoing Mayor Bill Bass called the Dec. 8 meeting to order. In his last comments as mayor, Bass thanked outgoing Trustees Nichole Currier and Darin Dawson for their service to the town, saying: “I have a lot of appreciation and thanks that I want to share with all of you, first to the outgoing board for all their hard work this past two years. At times it was really demanding. You all met the challenge, and we accomplished a lot of good work for this town. ... This board has set the bar pretty high.” Bass added that the outgoing board had worked hard, attending a total of 35 workshops, retreats, and special meetings in addition to 50 regularly scheduled board meetings.

Bass thanked Town Administrator Dawn Collins, Town Attorney Matt Krob, and the town staff for their efforts: “Y’all are just an outstanding bunch.” Bass said he hoped the town would benefit from the increased revenue resulting from changes during his administration. He also thanked the residents and commended them for their involvement. He ended by congratulating Mayor-elect Glant Havenar and newly elected trustees Shana Ball, Kevin Dreher, and Dennis Stern.

Following Bass’s remarks, Collins presented a certificate of appreciation to Bass. Bass then presented certificates to Currier and Dawson. In his last act as mayor, Bass recessed the meeting for 45 minutes of socializing, including a toast to the town.

Mayor and three trustees sworn in

Following the toast, Collins administered the oath of office to Havenar. Havenar reconvened the meeting, and Collins and Havenar swore in Ball, Dreher, and Stern, who were then seated for the remainder of the Dec. 8 meeting along with Trustees

Jessica Farr, Samantha Padgett, and Karen Stuth.

Later in the meeting, Stern was elected unanimously to serve as mayor pro tem.

Adult use cannabis regulations established

At the Dec. 8 meeting, the outgoing mayor and board considered an emergency ordinance, which would take effect upon passage, to establish the rules and regulations that would govern the sale of adult use cannabis in the town. Bass and Havenar commented that they wanted the leadership team that had worked on the issue for months to have a chance to vote on the terms on which cannabis would be sold, as stated by Ordinance 17-2022.

Havenar pointed out that the town’s two cannabis businesses could not proceed with their licensing requirements until the town had an ordinance in place.

The ordinance amends Title 5 of the Palmer Lake Town Code by adding Chapter 5.21, which adds detailed regulations for the retail sale of cannabis. The regulations include:

- The Board of Trustees, acting as the Local Licensing Authority, can require businesses to provide necessary information, and can approve or deny licenses required to sell cannabis. Licenses are valid for one year, and can be suspended, revoked, or not renewed in the case of violations. Licenses are non-transferable.
- Any applicant must submit a range of information including name, address, fingerprints and legal status and history of the owner.
- Applicants must provide a physical plan of the business, with a deed or lease, and an area map covering a radius of a quarter mile around the proposed business site.
- An operation plan including security, description of products, and exterior signage.
- A limit of two retail stores within town boundaries.
- Inspections to verify compliance with all town codes.

Following a motion to approve Ordinance 17-2022, the ordinance was passed, with Bass, Dawson, Farr, Havenar, Padgett, and Stuth voting in favor. Currier voted no.

Meeting in its role as the Local Licensing Authority at the Dec. 15 meeting, the board approved a change of ownership for Alpine Essentials, the cannabis business owned by the Woodward family that added Tyler Woodward and Melissa Woodward as owners. The board also



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Above: The newly elected and continuing leadership of Palmer Lake posed together for a photograph. From left are Trustees Karen Stuth, Sam Padgett, Shana Ball, and Kevin Dreher, followed by Mayor Glant Havenar and Trustees Jessica Farr and Dennis Stern. Stuth, Padgett, and Farr are continuing their terms as trustees, while Ball, Dreher, and Stern were elected in the November election. Havenar, a former trustee, was elected mayor at the same time. *Photo by James Howald. Caption by Jackie Burhans.*

approved requests for changes to the premises of Alpine Essentials and Palmer Lake Wellness, the business owned by Dino Salvatore. Both businesses requested to add additional security cameras.

2023 budget and mill levy approved

At the Dec. 8 meeting, the newly seated board voted to approve Resolution 57-2022, which adopts the proposed budget and sets the town's mill levy.

The proposed 2023 budget increases wages and staffing at the departmental level in two phases: an increase in January and a possible second increase in July, if estimates of increased revenue are correct. The Water Fund is adjusted to balance the expenditure of American Recovery Plan Act funds in 2023, with those funds going to improve treatment facilities and the distribution system.

A mill levy of 21.238 mills was specified in the resolution, and the Town Administrator was authorized to communicate that to the El Paso Board of County Commissioners.

The resolution passed with Ball, Dreher, Havenar, Stuth, Havenar, and Stern voting in favor and Farr and Padgett voting against.

During public comments, resident Roger Mosely told the board his analysis of the budget led him to believe the Water Fund has been overspent for two years, and water rates will need to increase by \$30 per month.

The board also passed Resolution 58-2022, which confirms Green & Associates LLC as the town's auditor. Ball, Dreher, Farr, Havenar, Stern and Stuth voted in favor; Padgett voted no.

Tri-Lakes Cares presentation

Haley Chapin, executive director of Tri-Lakes Cares (TLC), and Stephanie Force, director of development at TLC, gave the board an overview of the organization's strategy and services. Chapin explained that TLC is primarily known as a food pantry but also provides emergency relief and self-sufficiency services. A family of four with an income of \$68,500 would be eligible for services from TLC, she said. Chapin said TLC case managers were trained to address issues resulting from generational and situational poverty.

Chapin said TLC provides limited medical assistance to those without insurance or with insurance that is too expensive to use for less than catastrophic illnesses.

Chapin explained that TLC has many more volunteers than staff and asked anyone interesting in donating time to contact the organization.

Chapin ended with some statistics specific to Palmer Lake. She said

that in 2022, TLC had aided 191 residents of Palmer Lake, and had provided \$45,000 in housing funding to residents and medical assistance to 145 residents.

Details about TLC's services and volunteer opportunities can be found on its website: <https://tri-lakescares.org/>. Its office is at 235 N. Jefferson St. in Monument.

Featured artist banner program

Gina Brenneman and Amy Hutson, speaking on behalf of the Palmer Lake

Arts Council (PLAC), asked the board to consider supporting the placement of banners that would highlight Palmer Lake's resident artists. A local artist would be highlighted for six months on banners that would include a sample of their work. The program would include a pop-up location to display the artist's work. The banners would be mounted on light posts, Brenneman and Hutson said.

Brenneman said Stuth asked the PLAC to put together a plan in con-

cert with the Palmer Lake Economic Development Group.

The board voted unanimously to approve a permit to allow the banners.

Executive session

The Dec. 15 meeting ended in an executive session to consider negotiating positions concerning a Fire Department Intergovernmental Agreement, the lease on the Elephant Rock property, a property offer, a possible annexation, and a water service request.

No action was taken following the executive session.

The next board meetings are scheduled for Jan. 12 and 26. See the town's website at www.townofpalmerlake.com to confirm times and dates of board meetings and workshops. Meetings are typically held on the second and fourth Thursdays of the month at the Town Hall. Information: 719-481-2953.

James Howald can be reached at jameshowald@ocn.me.

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



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Forest Lakes Metropolitan District & Pinon Pines Metropolitan Districts 1, 2 and 3, Dec. 5

Rate increases for residents; 2023 budgets and mill levies adopted

By Natalie Barszcz

The Pinon Pines Metropolitan District (PPMD) 1 board met via teleconference on Dec. 5 to adopt and approve the 2023 budget and set the mill levy. The PPMD 1 meeting was followed by the Forest Lakes Metropolitan District (FLMD) and Pinon Pines Metropolitan Districts 2 and 3 meeting where the board approved residential rate increases for water, wastewater, and landscaping services. The boards adopted the 2023 budgets and the mill levies for each district and received multiple updates on regional water delivery and wastewater projects, and the status of the district wells.

PPMD 1 board members are: President Mike Hitchcock, Vice President Mike Slavick, Secretary Chris Paulene, and Director AJ Slavick. One vacancy exists on this all-resident board.

FLMD and PPMD 2 and 3 board members are: President George Lenz, executive vice president of finance for Classic Homes; Secretary James Boulton, vice president/project manager of Classic Homes; Assistant Secretary Joe Loidolt, president of Classic Homes, and Treasurer Douglas Stimple, CEO of Classic Homes.

Ann Nichols is the manager for all four districts.

Note: FLMD, located west of I-25 at the end of Baptist Road, is a Title 32 service district established in 1985. FLMD is the half-acre operating district responsible for the public infrastructure and utility and general government services for the residents of PPMD 1 and 2 and the commercial property in PPMD 3 (Falcon Commerce Center). FLMD collects the residential property taxes from PPMD 1 and 2 and receives a public improvement fee from sales taxes collected in PPMD 3. PPMD 1 and 2 are in unincorporated El Paso County, but the commercial section, PPMD 3, is within Monument town limits.

Residential rates increase

District counsel Russell Dykstra of Spencer Fane LLP said the proposed residential rate increases for water, wastewater and landscape services had been published as required by statute. No public comments were received before or during the public hearing held for the proposed residential rate increases.

Nichols said the district was proposing a 7% rate increase for water and wastewater services, a \$1 increase to the landscape maintenance service fee (from \$14 to \$15 per month), and a \$1 fee for construction water cost (although rarely sold). A simple cost of service study was conducted, and a 7% cost increase will need to continue annually, said Nichols.

The FLMD board unanimously approved the rate increases.

Note: A contract with Triview Metropolitan District (TMD) to provide operator services for the district was approved on Dec. 6, 2021. The contract went into effect on Jan. 1, 2023, and includes non-residential landscaping services and district maintenance. See www.ocn.me/v22n1.htm#flmd and [#tvmtd](http://www.ocn.me/v22n1.htm#tvmtd).

Northern Monument Creek Interceptor project update
Nichols said that TMD and FLMD are

participating in the design phase of the Northern Monument Creek Interceptor (NMCI) project, and Colorado Springs Utilities (CSU) is in the process of choosing a design engineer. Donala Water and Sanitation District decided not to participate in the design phase, but it has agreed to participate in a cost share study of the jointly owned Upper Monument Creek Wastewater Treatment Facility (UMCWTF). The study will be conducted by Carollo Engineers and will provide a detailed analysis of the future costs of keeping the UMCWTF operational in compliance with all the regulatory requirements, said Nichols.

The study will take into account the cost of upgrades, retrofitting the plant to meet the new regulations, and the potential need for cooling towers. Upon completion of the study, the three districts are expected to make a good economic assessment before deciding whether to participate in the NMCI project and allow CSU to process wastewater or continue operating the UMCWTF. The study will be made public and is expected to be completed by April. A cost estimate for the NMCI project design is expected at the end of 2023, said Nichols. See TMD article on page 12.

Pikes Peak Regional Water

Authority reuse study update

Nichols said the Pikes Peak Regional Water Authority Reuse study had been completed. A couple of options had been identified to treat and deliver water back to the region after it is sent down Monument Creek or potentially to the JDS Phillips plant using the NMCI. CSU identified three alternatives at the preliminary stage to return potable water to all the regional water districts. Nichols recommended the district participate in a future CSU project that could potentially recapture return water flows to the district, once costs are determined, said Nichols.

Well updates

Nichols said the A1 well had been completed, and it had been augmented during the summer when the Dillon well was out of service for five months due to a pump and motor failure and the discovery of holes in the screens that cost about \$270,000 in repairs. The Denver well is drilled and expected to be completed in May for a total cost just under \$1 million, said Nichols.

Tom Blunk of CP Real Estate Capital, representing Forest Lakes LLC and Forest Lakes Residential Development, said a spare pump came in handy to get the Dillon well back up and running. Blunk recommended a spare pump be ordered due to the current lead times on well equipment taking up to a year. The district has come a long way in two years, and it is a great system with a lot of capital in place, but mother nature does affect the reservoir levels, he said.

Nichols said the dam monitor showed the Bristlecone Reservoir actually rose 3 inches at the end of November.

Public hearing proposed 2023 PPMD 1 budget

Hitchcock opened the public hearing for the Pinon Pines Metropolitan District 2023 budget. Hearing no public

comment, the public hearing was closed.

The board unanimously approved the resolution adopting the 2023 budget and appropriating funds for PPMD 1.

Nichols said the mill levies remain the same for 2023 in PPMD 1 at 11.133 mills for the operation and management of the district and 31.500 mills for the debt service for a total of 42.633 mills. The preliminary assessed property values are subject to change until the final assessment is received from the El Paso County Assessor's Office. The state Legislature's two-year temporary Residential Assessment Rate reduction to 6.95% had brought the assessed value down minutely, said Nichols.

The board unanimously approved the setting of the mill levies subject to the final property assessed values.

Nichols said the cost of the 2022 audit had increased from \$5,650 to \$6,000.

The board unanimously approved the letter of engagement with Hoelting & Co. for the PPMD 1 2022 audit.

The PPMD 1 board also unanimously approved:

- The administration of PPMD 1.
- The district opt-out of the workers compensation program.
- 2023 transparency notice of PPMD 1.

Election resolution for 2023

Nichols said the next Board of Directors election would be held on May 2, 2023, for three director positions on all four of the district boards.

Dykstra said the election will be canceled if there are no additional nominees by the end of March. The designated election official will be Melissa Oakes of Spencer Fane LLP.

Hitchcock said there had been no rush of volunteers for director positions on the PPMD 1 board, and he asked about term limits for the board directors.

Dykstra confirmed that term limits were removed when the districts were formed, and any incumbent directors can serve indefinitely.

The board unanimously approved the 2023 election.

Note: The board positions held by Directors Chris Paulene and A J Slavick, and a vacant position will be four-year terms after the 2023 election. The positions held by Stimple, Lenz, and Loidolt will be on the May 2023 ballot for four-year terms and Stephen Schlosser will be on the ballot for a two-year term. Self-nomination forms can be obtained from Stephanie Net Johnson, Paralegal, Spencer Fane LLP, 1700 Lincoln St., Suite 3800, Denver, CO 80203. 303-839-3912 snet@spencerfane.com. Forms should be returned to Johnson and will be accepted until 5 p.m. on Feb. 24, 2023.

Board vacancy filled

Dykstra requested the board confirm the two-year term of Schlosser to fill the fifth director position on the FLMD, and PPMD 2 and 3 boards that had previously been vacant.

Boulton said the board wanted to fill the vacancy and Schlosser was the new project manager for the Forest Lakes Development and other projects in the area.

The board unanimously accepted the new board member.

PPMD 1 financial review for September

Nichols said there was nothing of note in the September financials.

The board unanimously accepted the financial statement as presented.

Nichols said the financial review for October was not available for the meeting.

The PPMD 1 board adjourned at 4:17 p.m.

Amended 2022 budget— PLMD 2 and 3

Nichols said an amendment to the 2022 budget was needed because about \$4.5 million was needed for both PPMD 2 and 3. The increases to each district were needed for public infrastructure in both districts. The changes in the exact amounts were expected to be made to the budget at the end of 2022.

The board approved the resolutions adopting the amended 2022 budget and appropriating funds additional funds for PPMD 2 and 3.

2023 budget—FLMD, and PPMD 2 and 3

Nichols said the following:

- In 2022, the district budgeted about \$5.5 million for infrastructure, and that has increased to about \$6.1 million for 2023. The increase is in anticipation of finishing the Denver well in early 2023 and a capital expenditure on the detention ponds after the big rains during the summer showed some deficiencies.
- PPMD 2 has little activity and the operation and management and debt service fund remain the same.
- The general operating expenses for PPMD 2 will be levied at 11.133 mills and for the purpose of meeting all capital and debt retirement expenses, 44.531 mills will be levied for a total of 55.664 mills.
- The main change in PPMD 3 is an increase to the purchase services fees needed for the capital outlays in FLMD that went from \$350,000 in 2022 to \$650,000 in 2023.

Dykstra opened the public hearing for the proposed 2023 budgets for FLMD, PPMD 2 and 3 and, hearing no comments, closed the hearing and the board unanimously approved the following:

- The 2023 budgets appropriating funds for FLMD, and PPMD 2 and 3.
- The certification of the mill levies is subject to updates when the final assessed values are received for FLMD, PPMD 2 and 3.
- An engagement letter with Hoelting & Co. to perform the 2022 audits for FLMD and PPMD 2, and prepare the audit exemption request for PPMD 3.
- The 20th amendment to the Professional Services Agreement between FLMD and Nichols.
- An Election Resolution for 2023.
- The 2023 annual administrative resolution.
- The transparency notices.

Workers' compensation opt-out
Dykstra recommended the workers' compensation opting-out forms for

the board be approved, subject to confirmation from the Special District Association (SDA) pool that opting-out is not more expensive than keeping it in place. Opting out is only for districts with significant general liability coverage, and the PPMDs

only have basic liability coverage, in comparison to FLMD.
The board unanimously approved opting out subject to SDA confirmation.
The FLMD and PPMD 2 and 3 meetings adjourned at 4:45 p.m.

Meetings are usually held quarterly on the first Monday of the month at 4 p.m. at 2138 Flying Horse Club Drive, Colorado Springs, or virtually via teleconference. Meeting notices are posted at least 24 hours in advance at

<https://forestlakesmetrodistrict.com>. For general questions, contact Nichols at 719-327-5810, anicolsduffy@aol.com.
Natalie Barszcz can be reached at nataliebarszcz@ocn.me.

Donala Water and Sanitation District, Dec. 12
Rate increases approved for 2023

By James Howald and Jackie Burhans
At its December meeting, the Donala Water and Sanitation District (DWSD) board increased some rates, leaving the majority unchanged. The board also set mill levies as they are required to do annually. A resolution calling for a district election and appointing a Designated Election Official was approved. Finally, the board adopted a budget and appropriated the necessary funds.
Rates to increase 4.6% in total
District Manager Jeff Hodge told the board that the district's costs have increased, citing an increase of 18.5% in the cost of electricity as an example. Christina Hawker, the DWSD Accounts Payable specialist, said overall rates increased 4.6%.

- Resolution 2022-5 enumerated which rates will increase in 2023 and which will remain unchanged, including:
- Residential water and sewer tap fees will remain unchanged at \$8,500.
 - Commercial water tap fees for ¾-inch and 1-inch taps will increase to \$9,350.
 - Commercial sewer tap fees will remain unchanged at \$9,350 for the first 20 fixture units, as defined by the American Water Works Association.
 - The Water Investment Fee,

which covers renewable water costs for new development, will remain unchanged at \$4,000 per residence.

- The Water Service Rate will increase to \$30.66 per month.
- The Water Usage Rate for all six tiers of consumption will increase 0.5%.
- The Sewer Service Rate will increase to \$40.54 per month through June 30, 2023. In July the billing methodology will change to a consumption-based charge.

The board voted unanimously to pass the resolution.
A complete list of rates and fees can be found on the district's website here: <https://www.donalawater.org>. Click the "District Information" menu item to see rates and fees.

Two mill levies set
Each year, the DWSD board must set two mill levies, one for the bulk of the DWSD service area (Area A) and one for the Chapparral Hills neighborhood (Area B). Resolution 2022-9 set a mill levy of 21.296 mills for Area A. Resolution 2022-10 set a mill levy of 10.648 mills for Area B. Chapparral Hills requires its own mill levy because it receives only water service from DWSD. The board voted unanimously in favor of both resolutions and authorized letters to the El Paso County Assessor's Office and the Di-

vision of Local Government notifying them of the mill levies.
Election set for May 2
The terms of Directors William George, Kevin Deardorff and Kenneth Judd will expire on May 2, 2023, and Resolution 2022-5 sets an election to fill those three seats. The directors elected will serve four-year terms.
The DWSD office building at 15850 Holbein Drive, Colorado Springs, will serve as the polling place, and voters may cast their votes between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m. on May 2.
The resolution also names Hawker as the Designated Election Official. Candidates must file a Self-Nomination and Acceptance form to run for one of the three seats. The forms are available at the DWSD office building on Holbein Drive.
If there are three or fewer candidates for the open seats, the election will be cancelled, and the candidates will be seated.
The board voted unanimously in favor of Resolution 2022-5.

2023 budget adopted and funds appropriated
Resolution 2022-6 adopts the 2023 budget presented at the Oct. 13 board meeting and reviewed at a Nov. 17 workshop, and Resolution 2022-7 appropriates the required funds. The board voted unanimously in favor of both resolutions.
The discussion of the 2023 budget at the Oct. 13 board meeting can be found in the November issue of OCN here: <https://ocn.me/v22n11.htm#dwsd>.

The next meeting is scheduled for Jan. 15 at 1:30 p.m. Generally, board meetings are held the third Thursday of the month at 1:30 p.m. and include online access; 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.
*James Howald can be reached at jameshowald@ocn.me.
Jackie Burhans can be reached at jackieburhans@ocn.me.*

Triview Metropolitan District, Dec. 13
2023 budget approved; NDS timeline

By Natalie Barszcz
At the Triview Metropolitan District (TMD) meeting on Dec. 13, the board held a public hearing, approved the 2023 budget and set the mill levy; approved a staff pay raise; and revealed the final details of the Northern Delivery System (NDS) pipeline project. The board also heard about the potential for future water and wastewater rates and tap fee increases.
Director James Otis joined the meeting in person for the executive session.
2023 budget hearing
President Mark Melville separately opened the public hearings for the district's 2023 budget, and for the sub-districts A (future Conexus development) and B (future development southeast Higby Road). Hearing no comments, Melville closed each hearing individually.
District Manager James McGrady said the future sub-districts A and B have a zero-balance budget for 2023.
McGrady said the district 2023 budget indicates that the amount of money necessary to balance the budget for the General Operating Fund is \$343,772, and the amount necessary for the Debt Service Fund, for debt services expenses, is about \$2.6 mil-

lion. The assessed valuation of property is about \$125 million.
Mill levy 2023
McGrady recommended the board approve a drop in the Debt Service Fund mill levy by .25 mills from previous years, and an increase in the General Operations Fund mill levy from 2.5 mills to 2.75 mills. He said raising the operations mill levy slightly will allow the district to pay the debt service and still bank about \$70,000 to \$80,000 for future use. The district could have been assessing 35 mills and banking the excess to pay off the loans in 10 years, but the debt issued in 2015 can't be pre-paid. In the past, the board had voted to lower the mill levy and give the residents a break on 10 mills. Giving relief to homeowners is important rather than retaining a huge sum in the bank, he said.
The board certified the mill levy at 32.250 mills less a temporary mill levy reduction of 11.000 mills, for a total debt service mill levy of 21.250 mills for 2023.
Staff salary increase
McGrady said that he does not recommend chasing inflation but advocates giving reasonable raises to those that have earned it. He recommended the board approve a 6.5%



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pay raise for the employees. Inflation is about 10% but the district does not want to lose employees over a few hundred dollars. The district has not lost any staff at the utility plant and only a few recently in the Parks and Recreation Department, he said.

Water and wastewater rates

McGrady said he had built the budget around a 10% water and wastewater rate increase, and the concept was a conservative increase. He also said a similar approach would be taken for tap fees, and estimated about 60 homes, five per month, would incur increased tap fees, plus the potential addition of an apartment complex for 2023. The board did not implement any rate increases at the board meeting.

McGrady said overall the 2023 budget is solid, and it will get the district from point A to point B and way down the road on the NDS project.

The 2023 budget can be viewed at www.triview.com.

The board approved Resolution 2022-14 adopting the 2023 budget, appropriating funds, and setting the district’s mill levies, 4-0.

The board approved multiple resolutions to include Resolution 2022-17, adopting the annual administrative resolution. For more information, see www.triviewmetro.com.

Board election

Resolution 2022-18, calling an election on May 2, 2023 to elect members to the TMD Board of Directors, was approved, 4-0.

NDS construction contract

McGrady recommended the board approve the pre-ordering of materials for the NDS pipeline project, because some items are out for six months up to a year. Pipe is now more readily available and reduced from 12 weeks to four weeks wait time, but fittings are 12 weeks, and some items 16 weeks until delivery, he said.

The district’s attorney, George Rowley, said he had reviewed the Kiewit Infrastructure contract and forwarded his comments back. His main comment was to ensure the district, as a governmental entity, will not pay sales tax on the materials.

Treasurer/Secretary James Barnhart asked if Kiewit will purchase materials incrementally in accordance with availability to avoid project delays.

Rowley said some provisions about possible delays would require further review.

McGrady said it may be prudent to add that Kiewit may begin ordering materials as of Jan. 1, 2023.

Director Marco Fiorito said the board and district have a responsibility to the residents to avoid unnecessary delays with the NDS project.

The board approved the proposal from Kiewit for pre-construction services and construction services for the NDS, and directed McGrady to sign the contract, with additional language permitting the pre-purchase of materials and stipulating the avoidance of project delays, 4-0.

NDS timeline

McGrady said the following:

- The 1041 permit to commence the project is expected by February, and the convey, treat, and delivery contract is expected to be approved by Colorado Springs City Council in March 2023. See www.ocn.me/v22n12.htm#tvmd.
- Construction is expected to begin in April, with two crews likely working on the pipeline at each end, ensuring that paving can be completed by winter.
- The crews will begin with the exterior of the pump station at the C plant in the north and another crew will work from the south.
- The plan is to have the pipeline installed and the roads overlaid by November 2023.
- The interior of the pump station will be completed over winter 2023-24.
- The NDS is expected to be operational by summer 2024.
- The total cost for the NDS project is about \$20 million; about \$17 million is budgeted for 2023.

Park access during construction

McGrady said he had met with Kari Parsons, El Paso County planner, to discuss the 1041 request, and the only comment received so far came from county Parks and Recreation, with a concern about access to Fox Run Regional Park during the construction phase. A detour plan has been devised, keeping the trailhead on Roller Coaster Road open to local traffic from South Baptist Road. Roller Coaster Road will be closed in certain segments during construction, but local and full access to the park will continue.



Above: At the Baptist Road/Leather Chaps Drive intersection, the Jackson Creek Development receives colorful lights in December for the recently added landscape feature. Photo by Natalie Barszcz.

Public works, parks and open space update

Superintendent Matt Rayno gave a “big kudos” shout out to the district snow removal team and the equipment provided to get the job done. And he said:

- The wind storm downed about eight posts in the district, and temporary signage was put in place to avoid traffic problems.
- Winter watering and the pruning of trees and shrubs had taken place.
- The Agate Creek Park irrigation is back in place after the installation of the NDS “C” section of pipeline, and the park will be seeded in spring.
- Trash pick-up occurs daily.
- The bulk of the work will be snow removal and trail rebuilding.

McGrady said the restoration of Agate Creek Park will involve reworking the irrigation, new top soil, and re-seeding for a budgeted cost of \$150,000. It is a horrible looking park after the pipeline installation, he said, but it has the nicest view, and it needs restoring. He also said a gazebo and a portable restroom enclosure are planned for the Little Train Park in Promontory Pointe.

Vice President Anthony Sexton asked about the location of the restroom enclosure.

Rayno said the district staff will install a gazebo and a concrete pad close to the existing playground, and the drinking fountain for the portable restrooms. The restrooms will be enclosed by a 6-foot cedar fence and a padlocked gate. The restrooms will be serviced weekly and locked during winter, he said.

Melville said the public works team is doing a “great job,” everything looks good, and it is a joy to drive in the district. It is good to recognize all the public works trucks now have district signage, he said.

Public comments

This reporter commented on the display of lights at the Baptist Road and Leather Chaps Drive intersection.

Sexton agreed they enhanced the development and said many residents had requested the upgraded landscaping, the lights have added value to every resident, and the appeal draws in new residents. That, in comparison to the cost, is pennies on the dollar, he said.

Melville said when you drive around and see the quality of the roads, the district parks and open spaces, it is head and shoulders above other neighborhoods and it all equates to an increase in the homeowner’s investment, he said.

Executive session

The board moved into an executive session at 7:11 p.m., under Colorado Revised Statutes 24-6-402(4)(a), (b), (e), to receive legal advice regarding acquisitions and negotiations associated with water delivery infrastructure and conservation easements.

Meetings are usually held on the third Thursday of every month at the district office located at 16055 Old Forest Point, Suite 302. The next regular board meeting is scheduled for Jan. 19 at 5:30 p.m. For meeting agendas, minutes, and updates, visit <https://triviewmetro.com>.

Natalie Barszcz
can be reached at
nataliebarszcz@ocn.me.

Woodmoor Water and Sanitation District, Dec. 21

Board approves rate increases for 2023

By James Howald

At its December meeting, the Woodmoor Water and Sanitation District (WWSD) board held two public hearings: the first on increases to water and sewer rates for 2023 and the second on the proposed budget for 2023. Both hearings were followed by votes finalizing the rates, approving the budget, and appropriating the required funds. The board renewed its contract with the Chilcott Ditch Co.

Rate increases approved

At its previous meeting in November, the board heard a presentation on rates from Harold Smith of Raftelis Financial Consultants (RFC). Following that presentation, the board published “not to exceed” increases on its website.

On Dec. 21, the board held a public hearing on proposed rate in-

creases led by Andrew Rheem of RFC. He presented a new set of proposed increases incorporating the board comments at the November meeting. Rheem proposed:

- A 15% increase in water tap fees.
- A 15% increase in sewer tap fees.
- Either a 4% or a 6% increase in water and sewer base charges.
- Either a 4% or a 6% increase in water and sewer rates.
- A \$1 per month decrease in the Renewable Water Infrastructure Fee (RWIF) that funds surface water development, especially surface water from Woodmoor Ranch.

Rheem said 4% increases would increase a typical residential monthly bill by \$2.29 and 6% increases would mean an increase of \$3.94.

District Manager Jessie Shaf-

fer told the board he recommended a 4% across the board increase in rates, including all base charges and all volume-based rates. He recommended no change to the RWIF and no change to supplemental water service fees. He also recommended a 15% increase to water, sewer, and non-potable tap fees.

Board President Brian Bush commented that he saw two approaches to tap fees: that they are the cost of buying into the existing infrastructure or that they are a method to cover the costs of any new infrastructure required by new customers. He also said he felt raising tap fees was preferable to raising rates.

There were no comments from the public and the hearing was closed.

Following the hearing, the board

voted unanimously in favor of Resolution 22-07, which documented the increases Shaffer recommended.

At the time of publication, WWSD had not updated its website with the rates approved for 2023.

2023 budget approved; funds appropriated

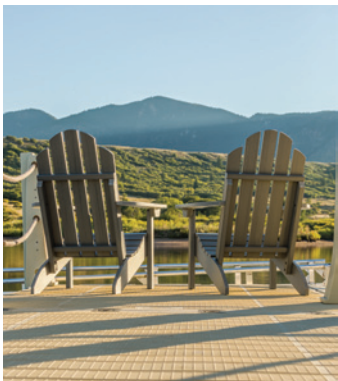
A public hearing on the 2023 budget that was opened during the previous board meeting was continued at the December meeting. There were no comments from the public and few changes to the budget as previously presented.

The board voted unanimously in favor of Resolution 22-08, which adopted the 2023 budget and appropriated the necessary funds.



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WWSD (Cont. from 14)

Contract with Chilcott Ditch Co. renewed

Shaffer presented an updated contract between WWSD and the Chilcott Ditch Co. to the board. He said the new contract did not increase the management fees that WWSD charges the ditch company, but it did increase the hourly pay rate for the ditch riders who maintain the waterway to \$36.75 per hour.

The board voted unanimously to approve the updated contract.

Highlights of operational reports

- Operations Superintendent Dan LaFontaine reported that about 600 of the district's water meters have been replaced with more advanced meters that improve accuracy and in-

- terface with WWSD's billing software.
- The utility relocations required by expansion of Highway 105 were to go out to bid in December.
- Shaffer reported that Monument Junction East and West are moving forward rapidly, with a steel sleeve for water and sewer lines installed under Jackson Creek Parkway, sewer lines in place, and water lines partially installed.
- Bush reported that the proposed Monument Ridge East development, located just south of County Line Road and east of I-25, had withdrawn its application to be annexed by the Town of Monument.

Correction

In the article on WWSD in the Dec. 3 issue of OCN,

I attributed a comment about raising tap fees to Jim Wyss. Wyss left the board earlier in 2022. In fact, it was Director Bill Clewe who said he believed raising tap fees would not discourage development in the WWSD service area. OCN regrets the misattribution.

The next meeting is scheduled for Jan. 9, 2023, at 1 p.m. Meetings are usually held on the second Monday of each month at 1 p.m. at the district office at 1845 Woodmoor Drive; please see www.woodmoorwater.com or call 719-488-2525 to verify meeting times and locations.

James Howald can be reached at jameshowald@ocn.me.

Monument Sanitation District, Dec.21

Employees get 9% pay increase

By Jackie Burhans and James Howald

At its December meeting, the Monument Sanitation District (MSD) board approved raises for MSD staff. The board made plans for an election in May that will fill three board seats. A yearly resolution documenting procedural issues was also passed, and the board heard operational reports.

MSD staff gets 9% pay increase

Following an executive session, the board voted to increase staff pay by 9% overall, which includes both a cost-of-living and a merit increase. All district employees will receive the increase.

Three seats on ballot

An election to be held on May 2, 2023, will decide three seats on the MSD board. Seats held by Dan Hamilton, Laura Kronick, and Marylee Reisig will be on the ballot. Board Secretary Reisig is term-limited and may not run again. Board members are elected to four-year terms. The district building at 130 Second St. will serve as the polling place between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m.

Candidates for the open board seats must file a Self-Nomination and Acceptance form between Jan. 1, 2023, and Feb. 24, 2024. The board appointed

Peggy Rupp of Collins, Cole Flynn Winn & Ullmer PLLC as the Designated Election Official. Rupp can be reached by email at prupp@cogovlaw.com.

If three or fewer candidates fill a nomination form with Rupp, the election will be cancelled.

Annual housekeeping resolution passed

The board voted unanimously to approve Resolution 12212022-2, which establishes many of the procedures by which the district operates, for example:

- All legal notices will be published in the Colorado Springs Gazette.
- All meetings will be posted at the district office building at 130 Second St.
- Regular meetings will be held at 9 a.m. on the third Wednesday of each month.
- The district manager is the budget officer.

Highlights of operational reports

- The lift station for the Willow Springs neighborhood is in production and moving about 19,000 gallons of wastewater daily.
- Tenants in the district's office building were notified of a rent increase just under 5 percent to begin with the renewal of their leases on

Jan. 1, 2023.

- District Manager Mark Parker sent a letter approving RAO Investment's request to have their property on Rickenbacker Avenue included in the MSD service area. RAO Investments originally planned to build 134 homes on the property but received approval from El Paso County for only 64.
- David Frisch, an engineer with GMS Consulting Engineers Inc. who has worked on many projects for MSD, has announced his retirement.

Monument Sanitation District meetings are normally held at 9 a.m. on the third Wednesday of the month in the district conference room at 130 Second St., Monument. The next regular meeting is scheduled for Jan. 18, 2023. See <https://colorado.gov/msd>. For a district service map, see <https://colorado.gov/pacific/msd/district-map-0>. Information: 719-481-4886.

Jackie Burhans can be reached at jackieburhans@ocn.me. James Howald can be reached at jameshowald@ocn.me.

Black Forest Fire/Rescue Protection District, Dec. 7

2023 budget approved, mill levy certified

By Natalie Barszcz

At the Black Forest Fire Rescue Protection District (BFFRPD) meeting on Dec. 7, the board approved the 2023 budget and certified the mill levy; approved the 2023 election for the directors, appointing a designated election official; and witnessed two firefighters take the oath of office. The board also received multiple updates.

2023 budget and mill levy certification

President Nate Dowden requested the board approve Resolution 2022-04 adopting the 2023 budget, summarizing expenditures and revenues, and certifying the mill levy at 14.951 mills to generate about \$3.7 million for the general operation of the district. See www.ocn.me/v22n12.htm#bffrpd.

The board unanimously approved the resolution.

2023 district election

Dowden requested the board approve Resolution 2022-05, calling for the 2023 regular district election of directors and appointing the Administrative Officer Rachel Dunn as the designated election official.

The board unanimously approved the resolution.

Firefighters take the oath

Deputy Chief of Operations Chris Piepenburg announced that after passing their probationary reviews, firefighters John Dillon and Jason Higdon would be administered the oath of office. The badges the firefighters receive are on loan and represent a symbol to the community that states they will serve to the best of their ability. The badges are owned and paid for by the community and they are lent to firefighters for as long as they display the top standards and what the community expects when they call 911, he said.

The oath of office was administered by Dowden, and family members pinned on the firefighter badges.

Water availability

Dowden asked Deputy Chief James Rebitski about the location of the Northern Delivery System (NDS) pipeline project route, and if Black Forest would be gaining access to the Colorado Springs Utilities (CSU) tank south of Old Ranch Road and west of Black Forest Road.

Rebitski said the district had been asked to comment on the NDS project because it runs about 100 yards into the district's territory, however it will run from the CSU plant from Highway 83/Northgate Road, north under Roller Coaster Road to the intersection of Hodgen/Baptist Roads, then west about a quarter mile until it routes north behind the Sanctuary Pointe development to the Triview Metropolitan District (TMD) plant. To his knowledge no conversation had occurred between the district and the Colorado Springs fire marshal's office regarding the use of any CSU tank, but 15 fire hydrants are planned along the route of the NDS pipeline. The district will have access to hydrants in an emergency, he said. See www.ocn.me/v22n11.htm#tvmd.

Note: The NDS pipeline is a TMD enterprise designed to convey, treat, and deliver water owned by TMD via CSU's. See www.ocn.me/v22n12.htm#tvmd.

Resident Linda Smith asked about the water cistern on Treasurer Jack Hinton's property.

Hinton said the 10,000-gallon cistern belongs to the district, and it is inspected regularly by the Fire Department.

Rebitski said there are several cisterns on private properties and the district has signed agreements to use those cisterns when needed. Just before COVID-19, a typical quote for an installed 10,000-gallon cistern cost about \$2.50 per gallon (about \$25,000). He had recently been asked about the cost of a 30,000-gallon cistern required for a

subdivision awaiting final approval off of Shoup Road, but costs could be higher now, he said.

Financial report

Treasurer Jack Hinton said that as of Nov. 30, the district had about \$1.262 million in the operational checking account.

The board unanimously accepted the financial report as presented.

Chief's report

Administrative Officer Rachel Dunn said the district received the following for November:

- Ambulance revenue—\$8,834.
- Deployment revenue—\$10,951.
- Total tax revenue was expected to be received on Dec. 10.

Rebitski said the following:

- The district is setting up the static IP address for the Station Alerting system.
- The district is working on facility planning for Stations 2 and 1, and the potential for a new Station 2.
- Several members of the department are submitting ideas to modify station facilities, and sketch plans are being created to save time in the future.
- Pump testing was completed in November and all four pumps "passed with flying colors."
- Heaters have been installed in the barn to create a vehicle repair workshop. Before they can be "fired up," Black Hills Energy will need to install a meter.
- All 11 of the high visibility fire danger signs are now installed around the district.
- Residential risk assessments are performed as personnel are available. For more information, visit www.bffire.org.

Piepenburg said the operational staff are training about 23.4% of their working hours, and that

equates to about nine man-hours of training every 48 hours. About 1,009 hours of training were completed in November. A small brush fire that began in the middle of a field for no apparent reason was extinguished quickly, he said.

Dowden said Fire Chief PJ Langmaid's primary focus and intent continue to be:

- Leadership development for officers and other interested staff.
- Succession planning and development for the continuity of operations and service delivery.
- Strategic planning and alignment for organizational sustainability and stability.
- Building and maintaining relationships with regional partners.
- Research and development to increase the district's capability.

Leadership training attended

Dowden thanked the staff for the professionally presented program that he and Directors Jim Abendschan, Chad Behnken and Kiersten Tarvainen had attended on Dec. 3. The all-hands leadership training provided by Echelon Front Academy and guest speaker Mind Shift "Machine" Nick Lav-

ery was a fabulous training opportunity, and it will stand the district staff in good stead, he said.

Piepenburg said the district received great feedback from the Echelon Front team and the operational staff.

Staff kudos

Hinton expressed his thanks to district vehicle mechanic Gavin Smith for saving thousands of dollars in vehicle repairs every year.

Rebitski said Smith is a blessing to the district. The meeting adjourned at 7:50 p.m.

Meetings are usually held on the third Wednesday of the month at Station 1, 11445 Teachout Road, Colorado Springs. Meetings are open to the public in person or via Zoom. The next regular meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, Jan. 18 at 7 p.m. For joining instructions, updates, agendas, minutes, and reports, visit www.bffire.org or contact Administrative Officer Rachel Dunn at admin@bffire.org or call 719-495-4300.

Natalie Barszcz can be reached at nataliebarszcz.ocn.me.

Monument Fire District, Dec. 7

Meet and confer plus agreement extended; employee handbook revised

By Natalie Barszcz

At the Monument Fire District (MFD) meeting on Dec. 7, the board approved a meet and confer plus agreement and the 2023 employee handbook was approved with the 2022 revisions. The board also heard about the new mission, vision, and values, and received multiple updates. An executive session was held to discuss personnel matters.

Director Jason Buckingham was unable to attend.

2023-24 meet and confer plus agreement

Fire Chief Andy Kovacs requested the board approve an extension to the existing meet and confer plus agreement. He said that over the last couple of months the executive staff had been in discussion with Local 4319 regarding a transition from the meet and confer plus agreement to a collective bargaining agreement. Local 4319 had provided some revisions to the meet and confer plus agreement that included some binding arbitration language, but the district's attorney, Maureen Juran of Widner Juran LLP, had yet to review the revisions. Local 4319 President Lt. Franz Hankins agreed to an extension of the meet and confer plus agreement until April 30, 2023, said Kovacs.

The board approved the extension, 6-0.

2023 employee handbook

Kovacs said the 2023 employee handbook is lengthy, and the board had been provided an electronic copy with updates. The document was extensively revised in 2021, and this year the lion's share was changing the district name from Tri-Lakes Fire Protection District to Monument Fire District. And he noted the following changes:

- A sick pay change requiring operational staff provide a doctor's sick note up to 96 hours (previously 72 hours) and up to 40 hours for the administrative staff.
- The addition of a special events category to avoid shortfalls in staffing during community events. In negotiation with Local 4319, the special events category was created mandating every operational employee sign up for one event annually. The events include all the chipping events, the Fourth of July in downtown Monument, Fire Prevention Month in October, and any other designated events. Volunteers will receive time and a half for an event and the sign-up list will be made available in early 2023 to allow staff to plan. The goal is to transition some of the commitments to the new fire technician position and remove the commitment category in a future revision. The board approved the 2023 employee handbook, 6-0.

Mission, vision, and values change

Kovacs said that with the consolidation of the two fire districts, it was a good time to establish a new set of principles. A committee was formed to estab-

lish a new set of organizational principles to define the new combined fire district. The committee established a new mission and vision statement as well as the new values of character, connection, and commitment. The new mission and vision statement is far less cumbersome than the previous statement, and in addition to a declaration of trust, describes how the employees will treat each other and the community, said Kovacs.

Note: The new Monument Fire District Organizational Mission, Vision and Values document can be found at www.tlmfire.org.

Station 1 training center update

Kovacs said the district continues to evaluate all the options with regard to the best location for the district training center. The district owns 14 acres adjacent to Station 1, and the property at the Town of Monument Public Works Department will likely be too small. A conversation with a land developer was scheduled for Dec. 8 to discuss land availability at the southwest corner of the district (at an intersection near Terrazzo Road and Woodcarver Road). About 2 acres would be needed for a future Station 6, and about 5 acres for a training center site. If enough property can be secured, a training tower could also be included. Building a training center in a commercial area would be preferable, helping to maintain good neighbor relations by avoiding a site next to the residential area at Station 1, he said.

Staff departure

Kovacs informed the board that Administrative Assistant Stacey Popovich had taken a position at the Security Fire Department. The district will request board consideration in 2023 to redirect funds toward an education position. The district does not plan on filling the vacant administrative assistant position. See DWFPD article on page 18.

Executive session—fire chief annual review

The board moved into executive session at 7:15 p.m., pursuant to Colorado Revised Statutes 24-6-402(4)(f), to review the fire chief's annual performance.

Meetings are usually held on the fourth Wednesday of the month. The next regular meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, Jan. 25 at 6:30 p.m. at MFD Station 1, 18650 Highway 105. For Zoom meeting instructions, agendas, minutes, and updates, visit www.tlmfire.org or contact Director of Administration Jennifer Martin at 719-484-9011.

Natalie Barszcz can be reached at nataliebarszcz@ocn.me.

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Donald Wescott Fire Protection District, Dec. 7

2023 budget hearing; staff member departure

By Natalie Barszcz

On Dec. 7, the Donald Wescott Fire Protection District (DWFPD) board held a “special meeting” for the 2023 budget public hearing to establish a notice posting location for future board meetings and to approve the 2023 meeting dates, times, and locations. The board also heard about a departing member of the staff.

Directors Charles Fleece and Mike Forsythe were excused.

The board approved the “special meeting” agenda as presented, 3-0.

Administrative Assistant Stacey Popovich thanked the board for arranging a “special meeting” on short notice. The need for the meeting was brought to her attention two days after the November meeting and after realizing the state had accidentally filed the DWFPD 2023 budget and the Monument Fire District (MFD) budget as one district. The need for an additional meeting was then realized to conduct the public hearing and re-submit the DWFPD budget to the state in time to meet the mandatory filing deadline, said Popovich.

Note: The districts, although operating as one fire district, will continue to submit separate budgets to the state until the merger is completed. See [www.](http://www.ocn.me/v22n12.htm#dwfpd)

www.ocn.me/v22n12.htm#dwfpd.

2023 budget hearing

President Mark Gunderman opened the second public hearing for the 2023 budget. See www.ocn.me/v22n12.htm#dwfpd.

The district’s attorney, Emily Powell of Ireland Stapleton Pryor Pascoe PC law firm, confirmed the public hearing for the 2023 budget had been published and no comments had been received, and no members of the public were in attendance.

Gunderman closed the public hearing and made a motion to approve the 2023 budget.

The board approved the 2023 budget as previously presented, 3-0.

The board also approved 3-0, the meeting schedule for 2023, establishing a notice posting location for the district, and the meeting dates, times, and locations.

Staff departure

Fire Chief Andy Kovacs thanked Popovich on behalf of the district for being instrumental during the consolidation process between DWFPD and MFD and announced that Popovich leaves the district after eight years to take an administrative assistant position with the Security Fire Depart-

ment. The district appreciates all her work for both departments over the years, he said, and he wished her well for the future.

Gunderman said that when he joined the board, it did not take him long to realize that Popovich was the glue holding everything together at DWFPD. There have been so many moving parts over the past several years, and he wished her the best of luck on behalf of the board.

Treasurer Duane Garrett and Secretary Larry Schwarz also wished Popovich success for the future.

The meeting adjourned at 4:11p.m.

Future meetings will be held on the fourth Wednesday of the month at Station 1, 18650 Highway 105. The next regular board meeting is scheduled for Jan. 25 at 4:30 p.m. Meeting attendance is open to the public in person or via Zoom. For joining instructions, agendas, minutes, and updates, visit www.wescottfire.org or www.tlmfire.org or contact Director of Administration Jennifer Martin at 719-484-9011.

Natalie Barszcz can be reached at nataliebarszcz@ocn.me.

El Paso Board of County Commissioners, Nov. 29, Dec. 6 and 20

Approval for RV storage special use at Highway 83 property

By Helen Walklett

At the Dec. 6 El Paso Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) land use meeting, the commissioners heard a special use application to legalize the operation of an existing RV storage business at a Highway 83 property. The commissioners also approved the 2023 budget during December.

Highway 83 RV storage special use approved

At the Dec. 6 BOCC land use meeting, the commissioners voted to approve a special use application by Steve Rael Jr. to legalize the operation of the existing RV storage business at his Highway 83 property. The 40-acre property, zoned RR-5 (residential rural), is located on the west side of Highway 83, one-third of a mile south of its junction with Walker Road. The application, originally scheduled to be heard at the Nov. 1 meeting, was rescheduled at Rael’s request to allow him more time to prepare. It came to the BOCC from the Oct. 20 Planning Commission meeting with a recommendation for approval. See https://www.ocn.me/v22n11.htm?zoom_highlight=rael.

Rael filed the special use application in 2019 after he was notified of a code violation the previous year. Jonathan Moore with CTR Engineering LLC, representing Rael, stated that the business was started in 2006 when neighbors asked if they could store their RVs on the property. Moore said that, like many ranchers at the time, Rael did not know he needed a permit from county to do that. He added that the process of getting permission can be a confusing one and that that explained why it had taken time to get to this point.

A July 2022 application from Rael to the Board of Adjustment requesting that the required 50-foot boundary setback be reduced to 30 feet was denied. The business has 42 storage spots but these are being cut to 25, the latter being the number

that was presented at the Planning Commission hearing. Moore reported that work was also underway to move the RVs but was difficult due to some owners being snowbirds and therefore out of state for six months. He asked that Rael be given three months rather than the usual 30 days to get everything built if the storage area were approved. Rael will need to build a 6-foot screening fence as part of the requirements.

Moore said he and Rael had met with the neighbors on site after the Planning Commission hearing to look at different locations for the storage. Most had favored the south side but not all did. Siting the RVs out by Highway 83 was not feasible financially due to issues with drainage and gradient.

Twelve adjoining property owners were notified of the application, with six responding in favor and six in opposition. Four neighbors spoke in support at the hearing. Matt Dunston, co-developer of The Preserve at Walden, north and east of Rael’s property, said he did not see the storage business as a problem. One neighbor said he had no objection to the 25 RV proposal but had spoken against the application at the Planning Commission because he did not find it in harmony with the character of the area. He also feared it would set a precedent for the area, stating that two properties to the south already had RVs parked on them.

Three neighbors spoke in opposition. Jill Fowler, a neighbor who raised the long-running code violation with the BOCC in June and spoke against the application at the Planning Commission meeting, said that none of the reasons given by neighbors in support of the application had anything to do with whether or not the special use met the criteria and the intent established in the county code. She said that the storage in its proposed location did not meet the special use criteria because it was not in harmony with the neighborhood’s character. Fowler said that her property had been devalued by the presence of the storage business and this had been verified by an independent expert. She commented, “He’s been allowed to drag his feet with no financial penalties assessed and he’s been flaunting his violations in my face as well as in the face of the county.”

Fowler concluded, “Bottom line is this RV business does not meet the special use criteria because it’s not in harmony with the character of the neighborhood and it does not meet the intent of the rural home occupation’s special use because it does not protect neighborhood areas from unreasonable impact. It’s all about location that we’re opposing,”

Commissioner Longinos Gonzalez Jr. joined the application hearing part way through and, as a result, was advised by County Attorney Kenneth Hodges that he could not vote unless the vote was split but could make comments. He said he felt the business was not in harmony with the neighborhood. He also said he had concerns with property owners who do things in violation and ask for forgiveness afterward.

Commissioner Holly Williams commented, “At the end of the day I’m looking at the code and I’m having a hard time finding that it is in harmony with the neighborhood.” She moved to deny but the motion did not find a second and failed. She then moved to approve, and this was seconded by Commissioner Carrie Geitner. The vote to approve was 3-1 with Williams voting no.

2023 budget

At their Dec. 6 meeting, the commissioners voted unanimously to adopt and appropriate the 2023 budget. Ahead of the vote, Bret Waters, county administrator, said the \$471.2 million budget places an emphasis on roads and infrastructure as well as park maintenance and resources for emerging issues like homeless camp cleanups. He commented that the budget also makes a provision for adequate employee pay adjustments based on significant inflationary costs. He ended by saying, “Lastly, this budget has a consideration for an economic slowdown in future years by placing more funds in reserve.” Gonzalez commented, “Again, another great effort to continue our prioritization of our roads infrastructure, our public safety, and taking care of our personnel.”

The budget documents can be seen on the county website at <https://admin.elpasoco.com/financial-services/budget-finance/county-budget/>

Other decisions

- Nov. 29—the commissioners approved the final release of bonds for Filings 5 and 7 in the Forest Lakes subdivision following the completion and satisfactory inspection of all required improvements in both filings.
- Dec. 20—approved a memorandum of agreement, special warranty deeds, a non-exclusive permanent easement, and a temporary construction easement agreement for the Highway 105A project. This concerns property owned by James A. Maguire as trustee of the James A. Maguire Living Trust for which the county will pay \$1.03 million.

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



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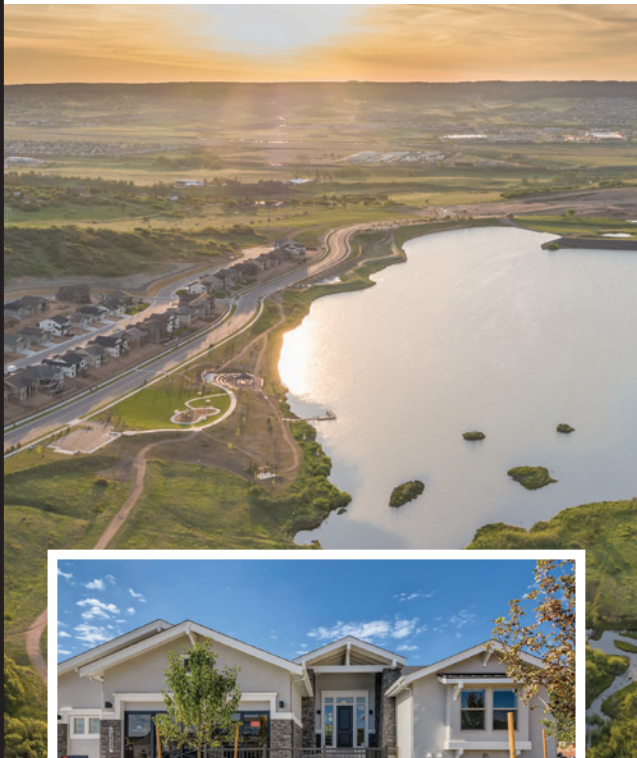
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December Weather Wrap

By Bill Kappel

December turned out to be about normal after all the numbers were added up, but of course the path to get there was anything but normal. We had some wild swings of weather and some late-month record cold. Fortunately, we also received a good amount of moisture, with the month ending with above normal precipitation.

Unfortunately, the year overall was much drier than normal, with only 15.26 inches of total precipitation recorded for the year. This was about 30% less than normal. Temperatures for the year were slightly below normal with a yearly average of 40.0F with our last freeze of spring occurring on June 1 and the first freeze of the season on Oct. 8. We also managed to hit 90 on a couple occasions, with one day in September, five days in July, and two days in June touching 90 or above.

Of course, as always around the Palmer Divide, we witnessed quite a variety of conditions, sometimes all in one day. April was a record dry month that could have led to some extreme fire conditions had we not been helped by Mother Nature in May with a heavy wet snowfall. Summer and fall were both fairly close to normal for both precipitation and temperature. But December did provide some excitement.

December started off quiet and dry, with no measurable precipitation from the 1st through the 11th. We did manage to squeeze out some flurries just before noon on the 6th, but that was it for that period. Temperatures were consistently 5-10 degrees warmer than normal as well to start the month.

But the pattern started to change with a cold front moving through late on the 12th. Snow and blowing snow filled in behind this system, with periods of snow and blowing snow continuing into the next afternoon. Most of us picked up 2-6 inches of snow during this initial storm. A second surge of cold air and light snow moved in during the afternoon of the 15th, bringing another round of snow through that evening with another 2-4 inches accumulating. Temperatures dipped well below normal for the period from the

13th through the 17th. Temperatures stayed below freezing during this entire period, which is certainly unusual for us as we generally can break out of the cold for at least a day or two between storms. It was also chilly each morning with lows right around zero each day.

Quiet conditions then returned for a few days as we set the stage for a major Arctic air outbreak that affected most of the country. The first signs of this surge of cold air started on Dec. 18 in the Pacific Northwest, where snow accumulated down to sea level and temperatures dipped to the single digits around Seattle and Portland. Cold air quickly moved into the northern Rockies and upper Midwest, with temperatures tumbling well below zero. The cold air continued to race toward Colorado, with temperatures falling 30-40 degrees in less than an hour as the front moved through parts of Montana, South Dakota, and Wyoming. The cold front reached the Colorado border during the morning of the 21st and pushed over the Palmer Divide early that evening. Temperatures took a sharp drop behind the front with Denver recording a 37-degree drop in 10 minutes. Temperatures were below zero by that evening and stayed below zero through the evening of the 23rd. During this time, temperatures reached -20F to -25F for most locations and high temperatures on the 22nd failed to get above zero. Snow fell with the front, with 2-4 inches of wind-blown snow accumulating.

Another interesting aspect of this cold air outbreak was the relatively shallow depth of the cold air, as most locations above 9,000 feet stayed above the cold with temperatures that were 30-40 degrees warmer than the surrounding lower regions. As the cold air continued to push off to the east over the next few days, we warmed up nicely. This was evidenced on the Palmer Divide when temperatures rose during the evening of the 23rd from just below zero to the freezing mark by midnight, the exact opposite of what would normally happen.

Mild air stuck around through Christmas before a final storm system moved through the end the year.

This storm was of Pacific origins and therefore continued relatively mild temperatures. However, the warmer airmass was also able to hold more moisture, and this produced a snowfall event that was much more similar to a spring storm than a winter storm. This storm produced a quick 8-12 inches of snow from the late afternoon of the 28th through the morning of the 29th. Beautiful Colorado blue skies and cool temperatures stuck around for the last few days of the month, allowing us to enjoy the fresh snowfall.

A look ahead

January can see the coldest temperatures of the year, but there is often a proverbial “January thaw” where mild temperatures make brief appearances. Of course, that’s been the case all winter so far, so hopefully this January will see a shift in the overall pattern to cold and snowy conditions. Unfortunately, precipitation is usually on the low side, with amounts generally less than an inch. The month produces numerous sunny and windy days with quick shots of snow in between.

December 2022 Weather Statistics

Average High	41.0° (+2.7 °)
100-year return frequency value max	50.5° min 32.6°
Average Low	13.0° (-0.3°)
100-year return frequency value max	22.4° min 5.4°
Monthly Precipitation	1.09”
	(+0.08”, 8% above normal)
100-year return frequency value max	2.82” min 0.00”
Monthly Snowfall	19.4”
	(+1.7”, 8% above normal)
Highest Temperature	58° on the 27th
Lowest Temperature	-20° on the 22nd
Season to Date Snow	32.6” (-6.9”)
	(the snow season is from Oct 1 to Sept 30)
Season to Date Precip.	15.26” (-7.03”)
	(the precipitation season, Jan 1 to Dec 31) 22.29
Heating Degree Days	1227 (-58)
Cooling Degree Days	0 (0)

Bill Kappel is a meteorologist and Tri-Lakes resident. He can be reached at billkappel@ocn.me.

Letters to Our Community

Guidelines for letters are on page 31.

Disclaimer: The information and opinions expressed in Letters to Our Community are the responsibility of the letter writers and should not be interpreted as the views of OCN even if the letter writer is an OCN volunteer. The letters are in order by the author's last name.

Monument historic red barn gets a new home

In reference to the pictures and caption about the Sibells' barn that read “Historic Barn Razed” (OCN, December 3, 2022, page 28), I thought I would share the correct story of what happened to it and the horse picture.

The good news is the barn was donated to a military vet moving back to eastern Colorado who purchased property with no buildings on it and is wanting to start ranching. The barn was methodically and carefully dismantled to be reassembled in its new location, helping out a young family looking for a new start. Many local options were explored, including putting it up at a town park. Unfortunately, the cost to move it and place in a new location, following all building codes, rules, and regulations, was extremely high.

The painting of Baron the horse that hung on the barn was fittingly given to a Sibell family friend.

I wanted to inform readers of the very positive outcome that honors the history of the barn and to let them know it was in fact, not razed.

Terri Hayes

Trail rebuild—thank you

Forestry work was conducted north of the Palmer Lake reservoirs during October and November. Due to the heavy machinery involved, several hiking trails were pretty much demolished. After the machinery demobilized in mid-November, several groups of concerned citizens went into the forest and rebuilt the damaged trails. To these volunteers: Thank you for your hard work and con-

tributions to the community. Your efforts are one of the many reasons the Tri-Lakes region is such a wonderful place to live.

Stuart Klein

The County Master Plan is a sham

The recent Flying Horse North approval shows the El Paso County Master Plan does not apply to developers or our elected officials. This vital plan took two years to produce and cost us nearly a million dollars. Its purpose is to promote responsible growth while maintaining quality of life. However, when put to the test it failed. This developer brazenly disregarded guidance for the Black Forest with the confidence that the commissioners would support anything they want. And that is exactly what they did. The request made it past the Planning Commission and was enthusiastically approved by our Board of County Commissioners. Their vote is against the very Master Plan they so unanimously approved and promised to uphold. Their dereliction conveniently allows this developer to insert an approximate 4,000-person community, with a large hotel complex, directly into the cherished

Black Forest enclave renowned for its wildlife and open spaces.

The process revealed an intimate developer/commissioner relationship and an unfortunate disrespect for the impacted citizens: first, several commissioners proclaimed an owner can do whatever they want with their land, making a mockery of zoning and the master plan itself; second, the Planning Commission and Board of County Commissioners crafted their meeting agendas to help the developer by scheduling the topic at the very end to weed out constituents' voices; and third, at each proceeding, the board chairmen graciously gave the developer unlimited time to argue their position while admonishing the citizens to keep their opposing comments short. Enough is enough, our leaders just gave developers the precedence they need to exploit our county's pristine countryside, irrespective of official guidelines and public concerns. Our officials must cease their love for developers and start supporting the citizens they serve and the plan they approved.

Chris Sorenson.

Between the Covers at Covered Treasures Bookstore

Get cooking in the new year

By the staff at Covered Treasures

“I love to take something ordinary and make it really special.”—Ina Garten

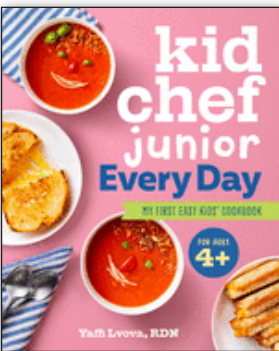
The new year is a wonderful time to get cooking whether it's on your own or with kids. Here are some splendid places to start.

Kid Chef Junior Every Day: My First Easy Kids' Cookbook

By Yaffi Lvova (Rockridge) \$19.99

The fun and easy everyday cookbook for kids ages 4 to 8. Help kids develop their cooking expertise as

they make tasty, wholesome meals the whole family can share. By helping cook their own meals, they'll learn essential skills and get excited to try new foods. This book covers safety practices and skills, filling ravioli, kneading dough, and tips and tricks to customize recipes.



Betty Crocker Cookbook, 13th Edition: Everything You Need to Know to Cook Today

By Betty Crocker (Harvest Publications) \$32.50
The cookbook that generations trust is fully updated and revised, everything radically refreshed with busy families in mind, and in a durable, lay-flat format. You'll find 1,300-plus recipes covering every mode of cooking, gluten-free and vegan recipes and full nutritional information. Perfect for any cooking level, this foundational tome covers basic kitchen tools and staples, plus charts for cooking times and storage, measurement conversions, and creative inspirations.

Go-To Dinners: A Barefoot Contessa Cookbook

By Ina Garten (Clarkson Potter) \$35
Cooking during the pandemic inspired Ina to rethink the way she approached dinner, and the result is this collection of uncomplicated, comforting, and delicious recipes. You'll find many freeze-ahead, make-ahead, and simply assembled recipes that make dinner a breeze. Ina guides you on turning leftovers into something deliciously different. She shares her favorites to serve with store-bought ingredients. Finally, there are plenty of prep-ahead and easy sweets that everyone will rave about.

The Complete Cookbook for Young Chefs: 100+ Recipes That You'll Love to Cook and Eat

By America's Test Kitchen Kids (Sourcebooks) \$19.99
Best-seller and IACP Award Winner, America's Test Kitchen brings its scientific know-how, rigorous

testing, and hands-on learning in creating the cookbook every kid chef needs. Recipes for breakfasts, snacks, beverages, dinners, desserts, and more were thoroughly tested by more than 750 kids to get them just right for all skill levels. Step-by-step photos of tips and techniques help young chefs feel like pros.

Good Housekeeping Dishes for Two: 125 Easy Small-Batch Recipes for Weeknight Meals & Special Celebrations

By Good Housekeeping (Hearst Home) \$30
Make delicious meals for one or two with 125 simple and satisfying easy recipes. The experts take the guesswork out of small-batch cooking and share their favorite weeknight meals. You'll also find secrets on how to downsize any recipe; cooking techniques; clever shopping strategies and storage tricks; recipes for occasions such as date night, anniversaries, and holidays; and more.

What's for Dessert: Simple Recipes for Dessert People

By Claire Saffitz (Clarkson Potter) \$37.50
Claire Saffitz returns with an all-new collection of 100 dessert recipes for icebox cakes, pies, cobblers, custards, cookies, and more, all crafted to be straightforward, simple, and streamlined. Fans will find all the warmth, encouragement, and foolproof recipes with loads of troubleshooting advice that they've come to count on from Claire.

Dinner in One: Exceptional & Easy One-Pan Meals

By Melissa Clark (Pamela Dorman Books) \$28
Melissa Clark brings her expertise and no-fuss approach to one-pot/pan cooking, with streamlined steps to ensure you are in and out of the kitchen with as little cleanup as possible. Expect to find a bevy of sheet-pan suppers, skillet dinners, Instant Pot pinch hitters, comforting casseroles, crowd-pleasing pasta meals, vegetable-forward mains, and tips for turning recipes vegan.

The Art of the Board: Fun & Fancy Snack Boards, Recipes & Ideas for Entertaining All Year

By Olivia Carney (Gibbs Smith) \$27.99
With Olivia Carney's friendly guidance, and over 75 seasonally inspired boards, recipes, and cocktails, you'll find all you need for fun, stress-free entertaining year-round. The introduction walks you through equipment and ingredients, and the appendix covers everything from board care to how to bring your skills to the next level. There are even suggestions to make your boards travel friendly. And since each board is labeled with difficulty level, approximate cost, and dietary accommodations, you'll always find a showstopper to fit your lifestyle and budget.

Until next month, happy reading.
The staff at Covered Treasures can be reached at books@ocn.me.

January Library Events

Explore the resources at your library

By Harriet Halbig

As we start a new year, come to the library or check online at ppld.org to see some of the resources available.

If you click on *Research* on the home page and open the list of data bases, you'll find such possibilities as language instruction through *Mango*, genealogy resources, and such consumer resources as *Consumer Reports*. There are also a number of foreign language newspapers and magazines.

Under *Find a Good Book*, you can enter the title of a favorite book and see others which are similar in characters or plot. You can also see listings of all books in a given series.

In the coming year, children's programs will remain on the same schedule with *Toddler Time* at 9:30 and 10 on Wednesdays in Monument and *Story Time* on Tuesdays at 10:30. There are two adult book clubs, one in the morning and one in the evening.

In Palmer Lake there is an adult book club which meets the first Monday of each month. *Family Story Time* is on Fridays at 10:30.

Check at the front desk for *Take and Make* kits for children or adults and check the website under Programs by location to see offerings for children, homeschoolers, teens, and adults.

We hope to see you soon at the library.
Harriet Halbig may be reached at harriethalbig@ocn.me

Palmer Lake Historical Society, Dec. 11

89th Annual Yule Log Hunt

By Marlene Brown

Continuing a long tradition, the Town of Palmer Lake held the 89th Annual Yule Log Hunt on Dec. 11 at the remodeled Town Hall. The Yule Log celebration was brought to Palmer Lake by Lucretia Vaile and Miss Evalena in 1933. Fifty people wearing red and green capes went on the hunt for a hidden log. The first yule log was found by C.R. Hays. He then rode the log back to town pulled by the other searchers. They were greeted by 200 cheering residents and visitors. As tradition held, half of the log was burned and the other half was saved for the next year. See palmerdividehistory.org for more stories.

This year's Yule Log Finder was David Leidenberger. It was the fifth time a member of his family has discovered the log. Children in the hunt get to take turns riding on the 8-foot log as it was pulled back to town. The original two-man saw that was used in 1933 is then used to cut the log in half. Shown in the photo is Leidenberger carrying half of log to be burned in the fireplace at the Town Hall and the other half to be saved for next year.

After traditional Christmas songs are sung in the Town Hall, the first drink of the wassail is served to the finder of the log, and then all the guests partake in a cup of wassail.

The recipe for wassail to make at home: two quarts of apple cider, one finely chopped lemon, one finely chopped orange, 1/4 teaspoon of ground cloves, 1/4 teaspoon of nutmeg, two baked apples, 1/2 teaspoon of finely chopped cinnamon bark, and 1/2 to 1 cup of sugar (to taste). Heat cider and spices to boiling, add finely chopped fruit, and serve hot.

The Town of Palmer Lake has supported many of the events for the holiday season, including the

Star Lighting, the Town Tree Lighting, Potluck for Yule Log Hunt, and the Palmer Lake Holiday Light Contest.

The Palmer Lake Yule Log Association is responsible for continuing the tradition of Yule Log Hunt. See its Facebook page, Palmer Lake Yule Log, for more information.

The next meeting of the Palmer Lake Historical Society will be from 6 to 8 p.m. Jan. 19 at the Palmer Lake Town Hall, when the group holds its Annual Potluck and Membership meeting. A brief business meeting will include election of 2023 officers and a 30-minute film on the settlement of the Palmer Divide. The meeting is open to the public.

Marlene Brown can be reached by email at malenebrown@ocn.me.



Above: David Leidenberger, this year's Yule Log Finder, carries half of the Yule Log on Dec. 11 in the Palmer Lake Town Hall. Photo by Marlene Brown.

High Altitude Nature and Gardening (HANG)

Lords of the rings: our magnificent, ponderous pines

By Janet Sellers
“There is fairly robust evidence that plant cells can perceive and respond to pressure waves, like the kind that are generated by sound in the environment and touch—like, say someone walking up to a tree and hugging it.”—
Ask Sam, the NHPR report by Sam Evans-Brown.

Pine trees are smart engineers.
Pine trees make their life with “smart materials.” Their leaves are needles, letting in sunshine but making snow fall through to the ground. The pine needles on the ground let rain and snowmelt sift through them to the earth and keep the moisture in, weed competition out. The pine tree can disperse essential protective oils from its bark and needles. This envelops and protects the forest, the wildlife, and us from various pathogens. The pine needles have nutrients the tree needs and recycle themselves to feed the forest. Underground is the Wood Wide Web of the forest.
The ponderosa can grow 200 feet tall or more, with girths up to 3 to 4 feet across. It is named for its ponderous (heavy) wood and is a major lumber tree in the Southwest. They reach maturity at 150 years and live 200-400 years; some were found as old as 600 to 800 years old. The oldest recorded ponderosas are 900 years old in the Utah WahWah Mountains.

A truly giving tree
Pine tree soil is specially made by and for pine trees. If we plan for it, the pine tree is our garden friend. We need to make rich soil for our intended plants via compost of those crop materials. We can enrich our soil needs for our gardens, and the pine tree’s needles will still protect our plants as mulch and water protection.
Pine cones close in wet weather to protect the seeds but open and disperse seeds in dry weather, keeping out pathogens. We can use the wood from our forest landscape (fire mitigation efforts of “dog hair” fallen trees and branches) to heat our homes in winter.
The pine pollen is edible and filled with protein, other nutrients, and even testosterone. Some studies show pine pollen may stimulate the immune system, boost brain health, support detoxification, promote weight loss, alleviate pain, and prevent some forms of cancer. Many men who take pine pollen believe that it can offer benefits such as improved athletic performance, greater muscle mass, and enhanced personal function of increased energy and libido. So, when spring rolls around and that yellow pollen is all over, we can celebrate first, then dust it off.
Janet Sellers is an ethnoecology researcher, writer, photographer, designer, artist, and chronicler of life and landscapes. She is director of Janet Sellers Fine



Above: On ponderosa, even heavy snow will fall through the needles and not harm the tree in most cases. The bark of the tree can protect the ponderosa in a wildfire. Forest fires are most often touched off by lightning. According to Steve Hirst of the U.S. Forest Service, “lightning isn’t enough to finish off a ponderosa. When lightning hits one, “It flash-boils the sap, and it just blows the bark off. It doesn’t burn the tree.” Photo by Janet Sellers.

Arts and lives near Monument, Colo. She can be contacted at janetsellers@ocn.me.

Art Matters

Who buys art and why?



By Janet Sellers
People buy things they want. Collectors want inspiration. Artists, venues, and art lovers are glad to know art collectors buy art because they like it and want to be near it. Artists make imagination real in ways most could not on their own. Making something tangible from imagination brings ideas to physical form.
In a meeting with my art group, Sveva D’Antonio said she hungered for the vision that artists can give her besides the one she can see with her own eyes. This is always music to my heart!
Sometimes art collectors admit they long for the “one that got away” so they buy an artwork as soon as possible. They don’t want to regret not having something they know they love that provides personal value. Aarti Lohia, a global art collector who sits on the boards of philanthropies and museums, said in an Artnet interview that early in art collecting, she once let a favored watercolor get away. It was sold to someone else, and she was de-
termined never to repeat such a mistake.
Where do art collectors like to go for art? Lohia supports the gallery ecosystem, saying, “I really like engaging with galleries and gallerists and the fruitful conversations that can come about with them. Galleries are so vital to the arts ecosystem and, in an era with increasing premiums and pressures on galleries, it’s important that we do not forget what a tremendous deal of work they put into introducing and developing the careers of artists.”
Prosperous galleries work assiduously. They sell the artists’ works. They develop relationships on behalf of artists, curators, and collectors. When I worked at Far East Fine Arts in San Francisco, my boss, Mr. J.Y. Tsao, was constantly networking on the phone or traveling far away. His great love for art informed his business acumen for the artist, the artworks, and for himself.
Tsao knew when and how much the price of artworks increased as an asset. Once, another dealer kept precious works for several months. Tsao

knew the artworks had appreciated, but the sale was not complete. The dealer held out for months in order to sell high to his client, but this would cheat Far East Fine Arts of due profit. Tsao called him and vociferously informed the dealer their months-old agreement would be void sans immediate payment. Then he got off the phone, turned to me calmly, and cheerfully invited me to have a nice lunch.
His amazing self-control in business strength and kindness for us as staff taught me a powerful lesson: Be disciplined in business yet be kind at every opportunity. We had a wonderful lunch in Chinatown. Then we returned to the gallery. All afternoon, I joyfully continued my work of translating texts for an upcoming exhibition.
Janet Sellers is an award-winning artist, writer, creatives coach and public speaker. She enjoys making art and sharing art stories. Contact her at JanetSellers@OCN.me.

Snapshots of Our Community

TLWC to accept 2023 grant applications starting Jan. 15



Left; Eligible groups can start applying for grants from the Tri-Lakes Women’s Club (TLWC) on Jan. 15. Groups eligible to apply for grants up to \$2,000 include nonprofits, public service organizations, and public schools that serve the Tri-Lakes area. The TLWC grant program focuses on smaller organizations that typically don’t have the staffing or resources to pursue grants from major granting foundations. In the photo taken Oct. 1, Monument Warriors Team Coordinator Lisa Glen displays the new track uniforms and sound system purchased with a TLWC 2022 grant. Photo by Sue Leggiere.

Monument Hill Kiwanis sponsors North Pole Craft Fair, Dec. 3



Above: On Dec. 3, the Monument Hill Kiwanis Club presented the 16th annual North Pole at Tri-Lakes Arts and Crafts Fair at the Grace Best education center, 66 Jefferson St. in Monument. A variety of arts and crafts were featured, and the "Cookie Walk" returned. Live music entertained visitors throughout the event. **Below:** RF Smith greeted visitors and explained how the Monument Hill Kiwanis Club contributes to our community and its youths. *Photos by Steve Pate.*



Above: Members of the Monument Hill Kiwanis Club took part in the North Pole at Tri-Lakes Arts and Crafts Fair at Grace Best Education Center on Dec. 3. The fair is one of the ways the Kiwanis raise money for El Paso County nonprofits. From left are, Kathy and Rich Strom, Rich Hicks, Scott Ross and Mark Zeiger. *Photo by Warren Gerig.*

Monument Hill Kiwanis rang the bell at King Soopers and Walmart



Left: Mahlon Lang of the Monument Hill Kiwanis Club was one of the members who rang the bell for the Salvation Army during the holiday season. Club members act as bell ringers outside King Soopers and Walmart in Monument from the day after Thanksgiving through Christmas Eve. Overall, Kiwanis volunteers contribute over 750 hours each year to this project. All proceeds are donated to the Salvation Army. *Photo by Bob Harrigan.*

Monument celebrates Small Town Christmas, Dec. 3



Above: Elves were on hand to greet visitors and celebrate Small Town Christmas in Historic Monument on Dec. 3. Here, an elf stands by Bella Casa and the Roost, two local shops, welcoming passersby into the stores. **Below:** The costumed gnome

guest artist at the Roost offered her newest work, *Gnomes and More Gnomes*, for her first ever presentation and sale. Can you find the human among the gnomes here? *Photos by Janet Sellers.*



Monument tree lighting, Dec. 3



Above: Local dancers performed parts of their *Newfangled Nutcracker* holiday program Dec. 3 at the Limbach Park band stage as part of the Monument holiday tree lighting event.. *Photos above, top left and below by Janet Sellers. Photo bottom left by Michael Weinfeld. See also the photo on page 1.*



Shield616 awards Monument PD protective gear, Dec. 5



Above: The Monument Police Department (MPD) has been awarded six more sets of protective armor. Donors, supporters, and several officers gathered at Arlene's Beans on Dec. 5 for Shield616 to present the equipment to MPD. Shield616 is a nonprofit ministry created to support first responders throughout Colorado,

Oklahoma, and Wyoming with new, upgraded vests and other safety items to protect them while doing their job. For more information and to donate, go to shield616.org/donate. *Photo by Marlene Brown.*

Monument Lake closed for sewer replacement project, Dec. 5



Above: Monument Lake closed on Dec. 5 for a sewer improvement project. Palmer Lake Sanitation District is upgrading the main sewer line from 12 inches

to 18 inches. The work is expected to be finished this month. *Photos by Michael Weinfeld.*



From a reader: The Moon, the Stars, and Mars, Dec. 8



Above: I took this photo on Dec. 8. It shows the Palmer Lake Star, the full moon with Mars, and a passing train. You have to love Palmer Lake! *Photo by John Emmons.*

David Arkenstone and Friends at TLCA, Dec. 9



Left: David Arkenstone and Friends performed an eclectic mix of instrumental music to an appreciative sold-out audience at the Tri-Lakes Center for the Arts on Dec. 9. Arkenstone, a five-time Grammy nominee with numerous Billboard hits, was accompanied by Kimberly Zaleski (flutist), Megan Shung (violin), Carlyn Kessler (cello), and Josh Gilgoff (percussion). Inspired by Tchaikovsky’s Arabian Dance from the Nutcracker ballet at an early age, Arkenstone proceeded to become a world-renowned dynamic instrumentalist and musical storyteller. His music has been heard in movie and television scores, World of Warcraft and other video game soundtracks, themes for various NBC Sports events, and in over 60 released studio albums. The concert play list included a mix of genres and winter themed songs including Jade Mountain, Arabian Nights, I Saw Three Ships, The Ice Palace, Snow Dance, and Snows of Avalon. *Photo by David Futey.*

Friends of Fox Run Park Ornament Party, Dec. 10

Right: On Dec. 10, kids of all ages joined the Friends of Fox Run Park Volunteers—including local high school Honor Society volunteers—to make festive holiday ornaments from wooden tree cookies and eat holiday treats with spiced cider. The free annual event celebrates and appreciates the Friends and is held at Fox Run Park in the Warming Hut next to the Twin Ponds. Twin Ponds is always frozen this time of year, but it was much warmer—and jollier —inside the Warming Hut. *Photo by Janet Sellers.*



A Christmas Carol at Palmer Lake Town Hall, Dec. 10



Above and Left: At Palmer Lake Town Hall on Dec. 10, the “Funky Little Theater Company” (a Palmer Lake Arts Council event), gave its modern, fantastical adaptation of *A Christmas Carol* complete with fireside chats that led into the old-timey story with its timeless message that all people can choose to share kindness and compassion, but only while they are alive, and especially in the wintry holiday season. The story is Charles Dickens’ 1843 response to society’s scorn of poverty, especially child poverty; Dickens wished to put forward arguments against it. Dickens’ powerful Victorian-era story later inspired several aspects of Christmas, including family gatherings, seasonal food and drink, dancing, games, and a festive generosity of spirit. *Photos by Janet Sellers.*

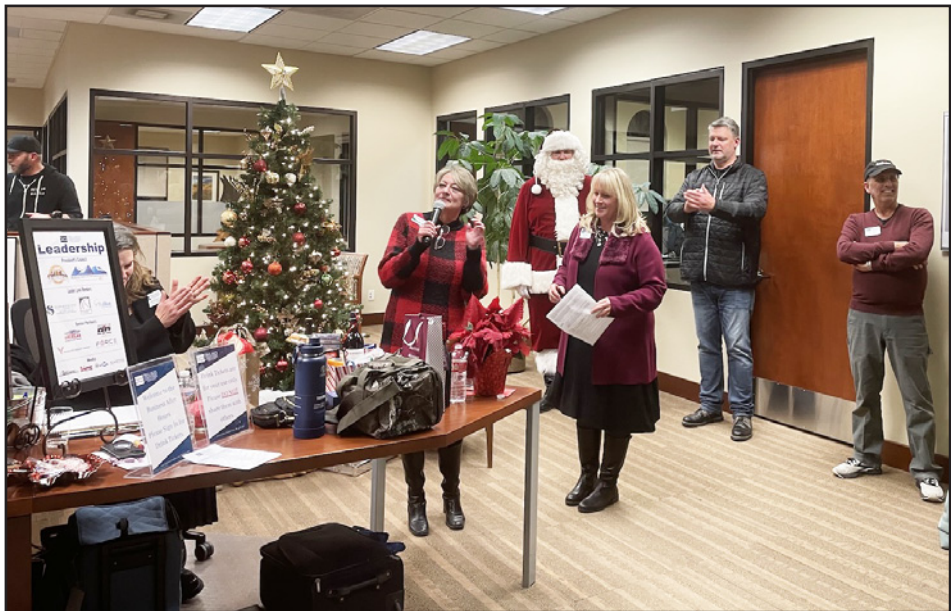
Wreaths Across America, Dec. 17



Above: Monument cemetery took part in the national Wreaths Across America program on Dec. 17. The local program was organized by Wreaths Across America coordinator Sheri Miller. Retired U.S. Lt. Col. John Sharp laid the Army wreath. Aviation ASW Operator Third Class Doug Lyons, U.S. Navy veteran, laid the Marine Corps wreath and gave the closing prayer. Ken Kimple, U.S. Navy retired, laid the

Navy wreath. Rep. Terri Carver, U.S. Air Force retired, laid the Air Force wreath. Trustee Sana Abbott laid the Space Force wreath; U.S. Navy Senior Chief William Doyle laid the Coast Guard wreath; Lt. Col. Tim Marburger, U.S. Air Force, retired, laid the Merchant Marines wreath and Mayor-elect Mitch LaKind, U.S. Navy veteran, laid the POW/MIA wreath. *Photo and caption provided by the Town of Monument.*

Chamber Christmas Party, Dec. 20



Above: Leann Hemenway (center) of Community Banks of Colorado welcomes the Tri-lakes Chamber of Commerce as hosts of their yearly Christmas party Dec. 20. Also pictured to her right: Santa Claus (Jeff MacLean of Thrivent Financial), President and CEO of the Chamber Terri Hayes, Justin Styll of Tall Boy Marketing, and Board Chairman Eric Metzger of EmPower Technologies. *Photo by Chris Jeub.*

Monument Preserve Wildfire mitigation as of Dec. 27



Above: Continuing efforts to mitigate wildfire risks are evident along trails in the Monument Preserve. Substantial groves of Gambel oak and other vegetation have been removed along the trail just south of Mount Herman Road leading to Monument Rock as seen Dec. 27. *Photo by Steve Pate.*

Pikes Peak Fireworks, Dec. 31



Above: Members of the Pikes Peak AdAmAn Club set off fireworks from the top of Pikes Peak at midnight New Year's Eve, a tradition it started in 1922. The mountaineers climbed Pikes Peak on Dec. 30 and 31 to ignite the spectacular display seen all over the area including in Monument. These photos were taken in the Costco parking lot on North Nevada Avenue. The AdAmAn Club is dedicated to the memory of the original members, Ed Morath, Fred Morath, Fred Barr, Willis Magee, and Harry Standley. They intended to add only one new member a year, which is where the AdAmAn club got its name (AdAmAn=add a man). The club now has more than 100 current, honorary, associate, and charter members. *Photo by Michael Weinfeld.*

Why advertise in OCN?

- OCN is mailed FREE to every resident and business in the Tri-Lakes area. We mail more than 22,000 copies every month and put another 600 copies in stacks throughout the area. OCN has the largest mailed circulation and the third-largest circulation among local newspapers in El Paso County after The Gazette and The Colorado Springs Independent. We put copies of OCN into the hands of those people most likely to buy your products or services: local residents and businesses.
- OCN is a primary source for Tri-Lakes area news. Since its founding in 2001, OCN has been presenting unbiased, detailed coverage of Tri-Lakes area governmental entities and their deliberations and actions. Credibility is key. Advertising in a credible medium typically rubs off on the advertisers in that media.
- OCN gives preference to Tri-Lakes area businesses. As part of OCN's long-standing commitment to encouraging the economic health of the Tri-Lakes area, we offer a significantly discounted ad rate to Tri-Lakes area businesses as a way to help local businesses like yours succeed.
- OCN's low ad rates and monthly publication schedule help stretch your ad budget. OCN has one of the lowest ad costs per printed copy of any local publication. Since OCN is a monthly publication, your ad is out there for a month—more than four times longer than other local papers. Many of our advertisers tell us they're still getting calls in the third and fourth week of the month.
- OCN doesn't use contracts. You aren't tied down. Adjust your advertising month-to-month to meet your changing needs. Our advertisers run ads in OCN because they see benefit in it, not because they're bound by a contract they signed months before. To reward frequent advertisers, OCN has a Frequent Advertiser Bonus (FAB) rewards program. You earn up to 10% of your ad cost as a reward you can use to reduce the cost of future OCN advertising. The more you advertise with OCN, the more you save. Thanks to our FAB rewards program, OCN advertisers have saved more than \$105,000!
- You are supporting a good thing. Your advertising dollars support a unique all-volunteer, Tri-Lakes-focused effort to present factual, comprehensive news to all Tri-Lakes area residents and businesses.

And the best reason of all: It works!

Crystal Wright, Crystal's In-Home Training - "I have had the best success with advertising in the Our Community News for my business. 95% of my new clients are coming from this local paper, and I couldn't be more pleased. If you are thinking of advertising in the Monument area, I recommend you advertise with this paper."

Mike Smith, Woodsmith Custom Creations - "OCN is the only paper that works for me. I've tried other newspapers, one that comes out daily and another that comes out weekly. Compared to the results I get from advertising in the OCN the other papers are flops. I get a fairly priced ad in my targeted area with calls referencing my ad every month. It can't be beat!"

Randi and Dale Sehestedt, Woodmoor Handyman and Snow Plowing - "OCN is the only paper we advertise in and it consistently brings us plenty of good local customers. Great paper and great people to work with."

Mary Sue Hafey, Fringe Benefits Custom Interiors - "Since I starting advertising with OCN years ago, it has helped brand my company while consistently increasing my exposure and sales!"

Elba D'Asaro, Spa Medica - "OCN ads work!"

Mike Reaster, Guitar Lessons - "Ads in OCN work great for me. I tried other local papers and got no response. Thanks to my ads in OCN, I can work from home and make a decent living. All my work comes from my ads in OCN."

For more information on advertising, go to www.ocn.me/advertise.htm or contact John Heiser at (719) 488-3455 or ads@ocn.me.

An important message for our readers
OCN needs your help!

Our Community News is an all-volunteer organization. For the past 20 years, our volunteers have provided unbiased reporting on important local issues, including real estate development, fire departments, school districts, and water availability. We have provided a very favorable platform for advertising local businesses. We have published letters to the editor to allow you to express your opinions on events affecting the Tri-Lakes area.

Now we find that we have more tasks than we have volunteers. Some vital jobs where we could use your help:

- Reporters. Reporting on local meetings, what

they talked about and what they decided.

- Mailing assistants. Counting and lifting tubs of papers to take the monthly mailing to the post offices and stacks of papers to local businesses, loading and unloading mailing tubs from a truck at two locations, preparing postoffice paperwork, tub labels, subscription labels, etc.
- Drivers. Driving a rental truck to various post offices once a month.
- Ad sales assistants. We need volunteers who love OCN to contact local businesses and encourage them to advertise in OCN.

The time and skills involved vary greatly from job to

job. OCN will provide whatever equipment and training you need.

Please join us today! Meet a group of interesting and committed people. Learn new skills—use your enthusiasm and creativity to benefit our community and celebrate unfiltered information.

Please call Publisher John Heiser at (719) 488-3455, or email johnheiser@ocn.me to see how you can contribute. Contact John today! He is waiting to hear from you. Together we can ensure that OCN continues to provide a vital service to our wonderful Tri-Lakes community.

Our Community Notices

By Janet Sellers

Although we strive for accuracy in these listings, dates or times are often changed after publication. Please double-check the time and place of any event you wish to attend by calling the information number for that event. Please notify us if your event listing needs to be updated.

D38 free and reduced price school meals policy

Applications for free and reduced price school meals, instructions and an information letter to households are available at each school or online at www.lewispalmer.org/nutritional services.

Drop the Distracted Driving

Colorado has a law that bans texting while driving for drivers of all ages. CDOT found that most people have a “Do Not Disturb While Driving” feature on their phone in a recent survey, but many don’t know how to use it. The unexpected can happen in an instant. Be proactive, learn how to enable this feature see DropTheDistraction at distracted.codot.gov.

Colorado Auto Safety and Traction Law

During winter storms, or when conditions require, CDOT will implement the Passenger Vehicle Traction Law. CDOT can implement the Passenger Vehicle Traction and Chain Laws on any state highway; the law requires specific tire tread depths, chains (or an approved alternative traction device such as Tire Socks). See <https://www.codot.gov/travel/winter-driving/tractionlaw>.

Winter Car Safety per CDOT

Make sure all vehicle systems are in safe operating condition. Even locally, include: sturdy scraper/snowbrush, snow shovel, sand for traction, flashlight, tow strap, jumper cables or battery jump starter device, extra batteries, multi-tool (leatherman type), blanket or sleeping bag, gallon jug of water, first aid and essential medications, flares/reflectors to signal for help and warn other motorists, battery or crank-powered radio for emergency broadcasts. Checklist: <https://www.codot.gov/travel/winter-driving/winter-preparedness>.

The safety stop is now state law

Bicyclists in Colorado now have safe and legal options for navigating through intersections after governor Jared Polis signed Colorado house bill 22-1028 into law on Wednesday, April 13, 2022. The new law, which allows bicyclists and users of low-speed conveyances to treat stop signs as yield signs and stop lights as stop signs when they already have the right of way, goes into effect immediately statewide. Info: bikecoloradosprings.org.

Neighborhood safety

What qualifies as suspicious activity? “If you see something, say something.” It’s vital to report to local law enforcement. Suspicious activity can refer to any incident, event, individual or activity that seems unusual or out of place. Some common examples of suspicious activities include: A stranger loitering in your neighborhood or a vehicle cruising the streets repeatedly. Someone peering into cars or windows. Here’s what local authorities and Colorado Department of Public Safety says is needed information: Who did you see; what did you see; when did you see it; where did you see it; why it is suspicious. Call 911 or your local law enforcement agency.

Seniors Driver’s License Electronic Renewal
With the implementation of the Driver’s License Electronic Renewal By Seniors Act (HB21-1139), Colorado seniors now have the permanent ability to renew their driver license or identification card online, but there are new laws to understand. Information is online via mycolorado.state.us. Some restrictions apply to drivers aged 21-80, and drivers over 80 need a special doctor’s statement. Coloradans who are concerned about an elder family member’s ability to drive should email dor_mvhelpdesk@state.co.us.

DMV online and kiosks

Clerk & Recorder’s Office provides motor vehicle and driver’s license services. 30+ services at mydmv.colorado.gov. Renew registration online or at a kiosk. Make ap-

pointments. check in for appointments and wait where it’s convenient for you. The DMV encourages Coloradans to skip the trip and use its online services whenever possible. So before your next trip to the DMV, remember to save time, go online. Visit DMV.Colorado.gov/Save-time for more information. See epcdrives.com.

MVEA offers rebates

For information on MVEA’s energy efficiency rebates, visit www.mvea.coop/save-energy-money/rebates/, or call 800-388-9881. See ad on page 12.

Free search for Unclaimed Property

Unclaimed property is tangible or intangible property that has had no activity for a specific period of time. Once the property is in the custody of the state of Colorado, the State will maintain custody of the property in perpetuity until the rightful owner or heirs come forward to claim. The State Treasurer’s Office provides this service free of charge. Colorado: Great Colorado Payback - [Colorado.gov](http://Colorado.gov/findyourunclaimedproperty.com) (findyourunclaimedproperty.com) SAME AS: <https://colorado.findyourunclaimedproperty.com/app/what-is-ucp>

The Sunflower is for people with non-visible disabilities



Watch for green and yellow sunflower lanyards, bracelets, and ribbons, discreet ways to make the invisible visible. Wearing the Sunflower discreetly indicates to people around the wearer including staff, colleagues and health professionals that they need additional support, help or a little more time. However big or small, your help moves us closer to a society where people recognize that an offer of help, understanding and kindness can make a huge difference to the daily experiences that a Sunflower wearer has.

Tri-Lakes Cares Needs Your Support

Tri-Lakes Cares is the only food pantry and human services organization located in and serving northern El Paso County through emergency relief and self-sufficiency programs. The community-based, volunteer-supported center is a critical resource for our neighbors in need. The best way to help support Tri-Lakes Cares is to donate. Visit <https://tri-lakescares.org/donate> to find out how to donate money, medical items, personal supplies, or food. Please check the web for current needs in our food pantry at <https://tri-lakescares.org/donate/current-needs>. Donation drop-off hours are Monday thru Thursday, 10 am to 4 pm. For more information about Tri-Lakes Cares or how you can help, contact Nicole Pettigrew, director of Volunteers and Community Partnerships, at 719-481-4864 Ext. 111.

WMMI seeks volunteers

WMMI has positions for docents/tour guides, front desk, landscaping, and building and maintenance. For more details, contact Loretta, 719-488-0880, or email Volunteer@wmmi.org.

Free services for seniors

Mountain Community Senior Services offers free transportation and handyman services to Tri-Lakes seniors. Private transportation to medical appointments or a grocery store is now provided by Envida, 719-633-4677. If you need grab bars in the bathroom, a ramp to your door, or repair of stairs or railings, please call 719-488-0076, and leave a message or visit www.coloradoseniorhelp.com.

Senior Beat newsletter—subscribe for free

Each monthly Senior Beat newsletter is full of information for local seniors, including the daily menu of the se-


nior lunches offered Monday through Friday at the Mountain Community Mennonite Church, 643 Highway 105, Palmer Lake. It also contains the schedule of the classes and events for the month at the Senior Citizens Center and senior-friendly library programs. To subscribe, send an email with your name and mailing address to SeniorBeat@TriLakesSeniors.org. Senior Beat can also be viewed online at www.TriLakesSeniors.org.

Can you volunteer today?

- OCN needs your help. See article on page 28.
- Links to local organizations with an immediate need for volunteers are listed on the county’s website, www.elpasocountyhealth.org/volunteering-and-donations, for groups like Care and Share, Crossfire Ministries, blood donations, Early Connections (volunteer from home opportunity), foster an animal, Medical Reserve Corps of El Paso County, Salvation Army, Silver Key, and United Way (ongoing opportunities).
- The Colorado State University Extension office in El Paso County has several opportunities for individuals interested in volunteering. <https://elpaso.extension.colostate.edu/volunteer-opportunities/>
- Committed to building healthy, caring communities, these El Paso County volunteer-based and non-profit organizations rely on the hard work of individuals like you. Reach out today and find out how you can play a part by becoming a volunteer in El Paso County. Get involved in El Paso County volunteering non-profits and organizations! <https://www.americantowns.com/el-paso-county-co/volunteer-organizations/>.
- The El Paso County Sheriff’s Office Volunteer Program is composed of a collective citizens group with a true and common desire to partner with the El Paso County Sheriff’s Office by volunteering their services while learning more about the internal workings of the law enforcement community. <https://www.epcsheriffsoffice.com/volunteer-program-0>.
- The El Paso County Volunteer Program is a wonderful opportunity for citizens to learn about the various functions of county government as well as give back to the community. The County’s numerous boards and commissions need your experience, talents and time. <https://bocc.elpasoco.com/volunteer>.
- The El Paso County Fair started as a potato festival in 1905 and has grown into so much more. We will be celebrating our 117th Fair, July 16th -23rd! <https://www.elpasocountyfair.com/p/getinvolved/volunteer-opportunities>
- The Friends of El Paso County Nature Centers is a 501(c) 3 nonprofit whose mission is to support Bear

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 **ANIMAL MOVERS**

Matt Penfound (OWNER) (303) 660-4816
Professional Trapper (719) 570-1757

Creek and Fountain Creek Nature Centers. The organization is comprised of an executive board of elected officers and a general membership governed by official Bylaws and Articles of Incorporation as a 501-c-3 nonprofit organization. <https://communityservices.elpasoco.com/nature-centers/>

nature-center-volunteers/
• Children’s Literacy Center provides free one-on-one literacy tutoring to Tri-Lakes children in grades 1-6 who are reading below grade level! Tutoring is at the Tri-Lakes Senior Center on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 5:30-6:30 p.m., and our Summer Session will

run through Aug. 14. For more information, to become a volunteer tutor or to enroll your child, visit www.childrensliteracycenter.org or email Christine Jeffson at Christine@childrensliteracycenter.org.

Our Community Calendar

By Janet Sellers

Although we strive for accuracy in these listings, dates or times are often changed after publication. Please double-check the time and place of any event you wish to attend by calling the info number for that event. Please contact calendar@ocn.me with changes and additions.

GOVERNMENTAL BODIES

- **Forest Lakes Metropolitan District, Pinon Pines Metropolitan District 1, 2 & 3 board meeting.** Typically meets quarterly on the first **Mon.**, 4 pm Meetings are held via teleconference. For virtual joining instructions and updates see www.forestlakesmetrodistrict.com.
- **El Paso County Planning Commission meeting,** Thu., **Jan. 5 & 19**, 9 am, Regional Development Center, 2880 International Circle, Colo. Springs. Meetings are live-streamed on the El Paso County News & Information Channel at <https://www.elpasoco.com/news-information-channel>. Normally meets first & third Thu. (as required). Info: 719-520-6300, <https://planningdevelopment.elpasoco.com>.
- **El Paso Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) regular meeting,** usually every **Tue.**, 9 am. BOCC land use meetings are being held every first and third Tuesday of the month as needed at 1 pm. Please note there is no meeting scheduled for Jan. 3. View agendas and meetings at www.agendasuite.org/iip/elpaso. Meetings are held at Centennial Hall, 200 S. Cascade Ave., Suite 150, Colo. Springs. Info: 719-520-6430.
- **Monument Board of Trustees meeting,** Tue., **Jan 3**, 6:30 pm, Town Hall Board Room, 645 Beacon Lite Rd., Monument. Normally meets first and third Mon. Info: 719-884-801, www.townofmonument.org/260/Board-of-Trustees for remote attendance links.
- **Palmer Lake Board of Adjustments,** Tue., **Jan. 3**, 5 pm, 28 Valley Crescent St., Palmer Lake. Normally meets first Tues., as needed.
- **Woodmoor Water & Sanitation District board meeting,** Wed., **Jan. 9**, 1 pm, 1845 Woodmoor Dr., Monument. Normally meets second Mon. Info: 719-488-2525, www.woodmoorwater.com.
- **D38 Parent and Community Advisory Committee,** Tue., **Jan. 10**, 6-8 pm, Kilmer Elementary School. Meets the second Tues. Info: tmckee@lewispalmer.org or 719-785-4243
- **Tri-Lakes Wastewater Facility Joint Use Committee meeting,** Tue., **Jan. 10**, 10 am 16510 Mitchell Ave. Meets second Tue. Info: Bill Burks, 719-481-4053.
- **Palmer Lake Sanitation District board meeting,** Wed., **Jan. 11**, 9 am, call-in only: 650-479-3208, Access Code 76439078, 120 Middle Glenway. Meets second Wed. Info: 719-481-2732, www.plsd.org.
- **Monument Planning Commission meeting,** Wed., **Jan. 11**, 6 pm Town Hall Board Room, 645 Beacon Lite Rd., Monument. Meets second Wed. To see the options for remote public participation in each meeting, visit www.townofmonument.org/263/Planning-Commission-Board-of-Adjustment. Info: 719-884-8028. www.townofmonument.org.
- **Palmer Lake Board of Trustees meeting,** Thu., **Jan. 12**, 26, 5 pm, Palmer Lake Town Hall, 28 Valley Crescent, Usually meets second and fourth Thu. Info: 719-481-2953. www.townofpalmerlake.com.
- **Monument Academy School Board meeting,** Thu., **Jan. 12**, 6 pm at the East Campus in the band room. 4303 Pinehurst Circle. Meets second Thu. Info 719-481-1950, <https://www.monumentacademy.net/school-board/board-meeting-minutes/>.
- **Lewis-Palmer School District 38 board meeting,** Mon., **Jan. 16**, 6-10 pm, Normally meets third Mon. This meeting of the Board of Education will be live-streamed on the district’s YouTube channel: www.youtube.com/user/LPSDCCommunity, agenda, supporting documents at <https://go.boarddocs.com/co/lewispalmer/Board.nsf/vpublic>. Info: 719- 488-4700, vwood@lewispalmer.org, www.lewispalmer.org district’s YouTube channel: www.youtube.com/user/LPSDCCommunity. Contact Vicki Wood. Phone: 719.481.9546 Email: vwood@lewispalmer.org Web-site: <https://www.lewispalmer.org>.
- **Monument Board of Trustees meeting,** Mon., **Jan. 16**, 6:30 pm, Town Hall Board Room, 645 Beacon Lite Rd., Monument. Normally meets first and third Mon. Info: 719-884-801, www.townofmonument.org/260/Board-of-Trustees for remote attendance links.
- **Monument Sanitation District board meeting,** Wed., **Jan. 18**, 9 a.m., 130 Second St. Zoom meeting. Find joining instructions on the website. Meets

- third Wed. Info: 719-481-4886, www.colorado.gov/msd.
- **Palmer Lake Town Planning Commission meeting,** Wed., **Jan. 18**, 6 pm, Palmer Lake Town Hall, 28 Valley Crescent. Meets third Wed. Info: 719-481-2953, www.townofpalmerlake.com.
 - **Academy Water and Sanitation District board meeting,** Wed., **Jan. 18**, 6 pm. Usually meets third Wed. Public can join the Skype meeting: <https://join.skype.com/PACujKTn7Nrh>. Check the website for a link: <https://academywsd.colorado.gov/notices-and-alerts>. Meets third Wed. Info: 719-481-0711, <https://academywsd.colorado.gov>.
 - **Black Forest Fire/Rescue Protection District board meeting,** in person or via Zoom, Wed., **Jan. 18**, 7 pm, Station 1, 11445 Teachout Road, Colorado Springs. Find updates and Zoom meeting joining instructions at www.bffire.org or contact Administrative Officer Rachel Dunn at 719-495-4300. Meetings are usually held on the third Wednesday.
 - **Donala Water & Sanitation District board meeting,** Thu., **Jan. 18**, 1:30 pm, 15850 Holbein Dr. In 2023, meets fourth Wed., Check the website for the access code for the electronic meeting. Info: 719-488-3603, www.donalawater.org.
 - **Triview Metropolitan District board meeting,** Thu., **Jan. 19**, 5:30 pm, 16055 Old Forest Point, Suite 302, Monument. Normally meets third Thu. Info: 719-488-6868, www.triviewmetro.com.
 - **Monument Fire District board meeting,** in person or via Zoom, **Jan. 25**, 6:30 pm., Station 1, 18650 Highway 105, Monument. Find updates and Zoom meeting joining instructions at www.tlmfire.org or contact Director of Administration Jennifer Martin, at 719-484-0911. Meetings are usually held on the fourth Wednesday.
 - **Donald Wescott Fire Protection District board meeting,** meets in person or via Zoom, Wed., **Jan. 25**, 4:30 pm, Tri-Lakes Monument Fire Protection District Station 1, 18650 Highway 105. Usually meets the fourth Wed. Find updates and Zoom meeting joining instructions at www.wescottfire.org or contact Director of Administration Jennifer Martin at 719-484-9011.
 - **Woodmoor Improvement Association annual meeting,** Mon., **Jan. 30**, 7 pm, Woodmoor Barn, 1691 Woodmoor Dr. Sign-in begins at 6:30 pm. The WIA Board Reorganization meeting will be held on Feb. 1 at 7 pm at the same location. The WIA Board normally meets fourth Wed. Info: 719-488-2693, www.woodmoor.org.

WEEKLY & MONTHLY EVENTS

- **Northern El Paso County Coalition of Community Associations (NEPCO) meeting,** Sat., **Jan 14**, 10 am–12 pm., Woodmoor Barn, 1691 Woodmoor Dr. Members of local HOAs welcome. Usually meets bi-monthly second Sat. of the month. www.nepco.org.
- **The Centering Prayer Group at Black Forest Community Church,** first **Sat.**, 8:30-10 am The Old Log Church. Centering prayer opens and closes the meetings with discussion and fellowship in between; open to all. Contact Rev. Roger Butts, 719-433-3135, for information.
- **Half Day Prayer Group at Benet Hill Monastery,** first **Sat.**, 9 am-12 pm. All vaccinated guests are welcome. Contact Sister Therese at (719) 355-1638 or (719) 355-1650 or stherese@benethillmonastery.org. See ad on page 3.
- **Monument Hill Kiwanis Club meeting,** every **Sat.**, 8 am. www.MHKiwanis.org, MonumentHillKiwanis@gmail.com for details, guests are welcome. service leadership clubs, Key clubs, Builders Club and K-kids at D38 schools. Empty bowls dinner and silent auction Oct. 12. Memberships open to the public. Info: RF Smith, 719-210-4987, www.MHKiwanis.org. See ad on page 3.
- **Neighborhood Net Ham Radio,** every **Sat.**, 10 am Amateur ham radio operators practice for emergencies on weekly repeater nets so neighbors can help neighbors. Sign up at www.mereowx.org/neighborhood-net or contactus@mereowx.org.
- **The Wine Seller Free Wine Tastings,** every **Sat.**, 1-4 pm, 2805 Roberts Dr., Monument. Info: 719-488-3019, www.thewineseller.net.
- **Palmer Lake Art Group,** second **Sat.** A variety of art programs are offered after the social gathering and business meeting. Guests welcome. 300 Hwy 105, NE corner of I-25 and 105. 9:30 am. Info: 719-460-4179, www.palmerlakeartgroup.com.
- **Lions Club Bingo,** every **Sat.** (except the first Sat.), 8:30 am-1 pm and first Mon., 5:30-10 pm Tri-Lakes

Lions Club’s portion of the proceeds benefit those in need in the Tri-Lakes community. Updated info and location: Jim Naylor, 719-481-8741 or www.trilakeslionsclub.org.

- **Tri-Lakes Parkinson’s Disease Support Group,** third **Sat.**, 10 am-noon, Monument Community Presbyterian Church, 238 Third St., Monument. Info: Syble Krafft, 719-488-2669; Barry (group president), 719-351-9485. If you need any help, please call Syble or Barry.
- **Benet Hill Monastery,** Let us pray with you, walk in the forest, come up and visit prayer sites, every **Sun.** worship is 10:15 a.m., 3190 Benet Lane, 80921. See ad on page 3.
- **Tri-Lakes United Methodist Church,** every **Sun.**, 8 and 11 am traditional, 9:30 am contemporary. Both in-person (no registration necessary) and live stream at www.tlumc.org/live. Watch live or replay: www.facebook.com/tlumc, www.youtube.com/tlumc.org. Info: 719-488-1365, www.tlumc.org. 20256 Hunting Downs Way, Monument. See ad on page 2.
- **Fuel Church** Sunday Service, every **Sun.** Service times, 11:00 am Live service streaming at www.fuelchurch.org at 11:40 am on www.fuelchurch.org. Mountain Community Mennonite Church, 643 Hwy 105, Palmer Lake. Nursery and kids’ service. Non-denominational, spirit-filled. Need prayer? Email us info@fuel.org. See ad on page 5.
- **Ridgeview Baptist Church,** every **Sun.**, 10:30 am, temporarily meeting at 9130 Explorer Dr., Colorado Springs, 80920. Info: 719-357-6515 or www.ridgeviewcolorado.org. See ad on page 6.
- **The Forest Chorus,** first and third **Mon.**, 7-8:30 p.m., at the Black Forest Community Center. most months. The group supports community events, leading sing-along audience participation, and occasionally perform a wide variety of music for fun. For more information please email: blackforest-news@earthlink.net. Previous choir or barbershop experience is preferred.
- **Women’s A.A. Step Study,** every **Mon.**, 6:30 pm, meeting remotely, check for details. Family of Christ Lutheran Church, 675 Baptist Rd. Park in west lot. Info: 866-641-9190.Al-Anon Zoom Meeting, Just for Today Online, every Mon., 9:00 - 10:00 am Zoom Meeting ID: 889 4142 7446, Password 349309
- **Al-Anon Zoom Meeting,** Just for Today Online, every **Mon.**, 9-10 am Zoom Meeting ID: 889 4142 7446, Password 349309.
- **Monument Life Recovery Group,** every **Mon.**, 6:30-7:30 pm, The Ascent Church, 1750 Deer Creek Rd. This faith-based support group is for those seeking freedom from all hurts, habits, and hang-ups. Day-care provided for children under age 11. Info: 303-946-2659, www.liferecoverygroups.com/meetings/life-recovery-group-3/.
- **Amateur ham radio W0TLM** (Tri-Lakes Monument ham radio Association), third **Mon.** All amateur ham radio operators or those interested in becoming one are welcome. Info: www.W0TLM.com
- **La Leche League breastfeeding support group,** second **Mon.**, 7 pm, . Partners and helpers welcome (and babies and kids, too) so we can meet our breastfeeding goals together. Black Forest Community Center 12530 Black Forest Rd, Colorado Springs, CO 80908. For more information, contact RachelKLangley@gmail.com
- **Centering Prayer Group at Benet Hill Monastery,** every **Tue.**, 10-11 am. All vaccinated guests are welcome. Contact Sister Therese at (719) 355-1638 or (719) 355-1650 or stherese@benethillmonastery.org.
- **Essentrics Fitness Program at Senior Center,** every **Tue.**, 9 am & **Thu.**, 10 am, Grace Best Education Center, 66 Jefferson St, Monument, CO 80132. Registration & info: Sue Walker, 719-330-0241, www.trilakesseniors.org.
- **GriefShare Support Group,** last **Tue.** of the month, 10:30 am-noon. NEW LOCATION: Tri-Lakes Senior Center, 66 Jefferson St. in the Grace Best Elementary School building. The Tri-Lakes Silver Alliance has partnered with Colorado Palliative and Hospice Care to host a 13-session grief support group in Monument. RSVP, info: Sue Walker, 719-330-0241.
- **Children’s Literacy Center,** every **Mon. & Wed.**, 5:30-6:30 pm. Provides free one-on-one literacy tutoring to Tri-Lakes children in grades 1-6 who are reading below grade level. Tutoring is at Grace Best Education Center, 66 Jefferson St. Monument. For more information, to become a volunteer tutor, or to enroll your child, visit www.childrensliteracycenter.org or contact Rachel Morin, Tri-Lakes Senior

- Center Coordinator, CLC 610-246-1047 (cell)
- **Senior Citizen Lunches**, Connections Café sites, every **Wed.** will have “grab and go” (prepared meals). A \$2.25 donation is requested. Call 719-884-2300 to reserve your meal. Meals on Wheels and Home Delivered Meals will deliver frozen meals for the week to Monument. Food Pantry offers a “pick up only” Mon.-Fri., noon-12:30 pm, Mountain Community Mennonite Church, 643 Hwy. 105, Palmer Lake. Monthly menu in Senior Beat newsletter. Stay for bingo the second Thu. Reservations requested: 719-884 2300.
 - **Colorado Springs Philharmonic Guild Listening Club**, third **Wed.** Free virtual event. Maestro Wilson will conduct monthly hour-long programs. RSVP at www.cspguild.org.
 - **Gleneagle Sertoma**, first and third **Wed.**, 11:45 am to 1 pm at Beasts and Brews, 7 Spectrum Loop, Colorado Springs. The longest continuously serving civic service organization in northern El Paso County features a program speaker addressing local topics of interest. Duane Gritzmaker, dwgritz@gmail.com or 719-649-9220.
 - **Senior Social**, fourth **Wed.**, 12455 Black Forest Rd. Info: www.aarpchapter1100blackforest.weekly.com.
 - **Tri-Lakes Church of Christ** Wednesday night fellowship classes, every **Wed.**, 6-7:30 pm, 20450 Beacon Lite Road, Monument (corner of Beacon Lite & County Line Roads). Info: 719-488-9613, greg-smith@trilakeschurch.org, www.trilakeschurch.org.
 - **Tri-Lakes Cruisers**, first **Wed.**, 7 pm. A nonprofit car club. Tri-Lakes Chamber of Commerce community room, with numerous activities and events each month. Club membership applications are now being accepted and are available on the website: <https://tl-cruisers.weebly.com>.
 - **AARP Black Forest #1100**, second **Wed.**, noon. All ages welcome. In-person, Black Forest Lutheran Church, 12455 Black Forest Rd.
 - **Tri-Lakes Women’s Club (TLWC)** monthly meeting: Fri., **Jan. 20**, 11:00 am, Falcon Club, USAFA. Third Fri. Speaker: Mary Kelly, PhD, CSP, CDR, US Navy (ret). Program: *How To Be Graceful And Grateful During Times Of Crisis, Challenge Or Change*. Meetings open to TLWC members. To become a member, or learn about the club, visit our website at tlwc.net. Contact Info: Tri-Lakes Women’s Club membership@tlwc.net
 - **Senior Bingo**, third **Wed.** Silver Alliance Senior Center, Space is limited to 16 participants. RSVP & info: Sue Walker, 719-464-6873, or email sue@monumentalfitness.com.
 - **Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 7829**, third **Wed.**, 7 pm, Tri-Lakes Chamber of Commerce community room, 166 2nd St., Monument. New members welcome. Info: Post Commander and POC Bruce Beyerly, Bruce.Beyerly@gmail.com.
 - **VFW Auxiliary to Post 7829**, third **Wed.**, 7 pm, The Country Club at Woodmoor, 18945 Pebble Beach Way, Monument. Guests are welcome to join; contact carlsonmkc@aol.com for instructions on how to connect. If you are a relative of a veteran who served on foreign soil during war or other military action, you may be eligible. Info: Kathy Carlson, 719-488-1902, carlsonmkc@aol.com.
 - **Pikes Peak Genealogical Society**, **Wed.**, **Jan. 11**, 6:30pm Zoom hangout, 7 pm start; second **Wed.**, guests welcome. Usually meets at The Venue, Library 21c 1175 Chapel Hills Drive Colorado Springs (currently only Zoom). Info:ppgsPresident@ppgs.com.
 - **Al-anon Meeting: Monument Serenity AFG**, every **Thu.**, 7-8 pm, Ascent Church (formerly the Tri-Lakes Chapel), 1750 Deer Creek Rd., Monument. Info: MonumentSerenity@gmail.com.
 - **Palmer Divide Quiltmakers**, first **Thu.**, 6:30-8:30 pm at Monument Chamber of Commerce building, 166 2nd St, Monument, CO.
 - **Al-Anon meeting**: Letting Go, every **Thu.**, 9-10:15 am at Ascent Church, 1750 Deer Creek Rd., Monument. For additional information go to www.al-anon-co.org.
 - **Networking breakfast**, first and third **Thu.**, Tri-Lakes Chamber of Commerce in person or via Zoom 166 2nd Street Monument 7:30-9 am free registration at www.TriLakeschamber.com.
 - **Fuel Church Griefshare**, every **Thu.**, 5:30-7:30 pm 643 State Highway 105, Palmer Lake. Email info@fuel.org. 643 Hwy 105, Palmer Lake.
 - **A.A. Big Book Study**, every **Thu.**, 7 pm, Family of Christ Lutheran Church, 675 W. Baptist Rd. Call 425-436-6200, access code 575176#.
 - **Palmer Lake Historical Society**, Jan. meeting is a

- potluck dinner, **Thu.**, **Jan. 19**, 6:00- 8:00 pm. Usually meets third **Thu.**, doors open 6:30pm, meeting 7:30pm. Palmer Lake Town Hall, 28 Valley Crescent St.
- **Friends of Fox Run Park**, fourth **Thu.** Zoom meeting, 7 pm, email friendsoffoxrunpark@gmail.com, they will email you the link the day of the meeting. Join the growing group to learn about volunteering and supporting the park for forest safety, trails, trees, education, more. Info: friendsoffoxrunpark@gmail.com Gleneagle Women’s Club, membership luncheon, third **Fri.**, Sept-June, various venues, 12 activity groups, i.e., hiking, bridge, etc. Guests welcome. For information contact Amy Miller (310) 941-1590.
 - **Senior Book Club**, second **Fri.**, 11 am-noon, Silver Alliance Senior Center, all are welcome. Coffee & snacks served. RSVP & info: Sue, 719-330-0241.
 - **Tri-Lakes Monument radio Association**, Details: Contact Bob Witte, 719-659-3727.
 - **Monument Dementia Caregiver Support Group**, Second **Sat.** 9:45-11:15 am. Meets in Person, First National Bank Monument (581 Highway 105, Monument, CO 80132). Meets monthly, 2nd **Sat.** Contact: Registration is required, call 800-272-3900 or email khare@alz.org to register.

SPECIAL EVENTS

- **VOLUNTEER TODAY! Our Community News mailing day**, **Thu.**, **Feb. 2**; approx. 9 am–2 pm. We are all volunteers at OCN and need YOUR help, even for an hour two, getting the papers ready to mail. Contact AllenAlchian@ocn.me to sign up and get the address and exact times.
- **Palmer Lake Outdoor Classic youth hockey day**, **Fri.**, **Jan. 6**, 6 pm face-off, **Jan. 7**, 9 am, start. On Palmer Lake. Proceeds support Outdoor Classic and Lewis Palmer hockey team.
- **Covered Treasures Bookstore**, **Sat.**, **Jan. 21**, 12-3, 105 Second Street, Monument. Susan Miner book launch, *Jewels of Kidron*.
- **Tri-Lakes Chamber of Commerce**, Networking, **Tue.**, **Jan. 10**, 5 pm–7:00 pm, members free, \$15 for non-members. Details: www.trilakeschamber.com. 719-481-3282.
- **St. Peter Catholic School**, Open House, **Sun.**, **Jan. 29**, 12-1pm. 124 First St. Monument. See ad on page 2
- **Affordable Flooring Connection** special New Year offers. see ad on page 2.
- **Cornerstone Cleaners**, special offers through **Jan. 31**. 1030 W. Baptist Road, near King Soopers. See ad on page 4.
- **Eagle Wine & Spirits**, special offers through **Jan. 31**. Baptist Road next to King Soopers. See ad on page 3.
- **MVEA board nominations by committee** due Mar. 16 and petition due Apr. 6. See ad on page 9.
- **Monument Cleaners**, special offers through **Jan. 31**. 15932 Jackson Creek Pkwy., in Monument Marketplace. See ad on page 5.
- **Monumental Med Spa**, special offers through **Jan. 31**. at the loft, 4 Hwy. 105 Palmer Lake. See ad on page 7.
- **Noel Relief Centers**, new patient special. 950 Baptist Rd #130, Monument. See ad on page 7.
- **Tri-lakes Collision**, special offers through **Jan. 31**.

Content

Articles in Our Community News focus on the deliberations of Tri-Lakes area governmental bodies such as the Monument Board of Trustees, Palmer Lake Town Council, and many of the local water, sanitation, fire, and school district boards.

Unlike papers that try to figure out what the “story” is and then get quotes on each side to presumably lead the reader to conclude what the “truth” is, OCN’s role is to report in detail on public meetings of local governmental entities. We report what was talked about and what was decided. By reading OCN, you can find out what you might have learned if you had attended those public meetings. In this context, “truth” is that the articles accurately represent what transpired at the meetings.

The content of ads, inserts, and letters to the editor in OCN is solely the responsibility of the advertisers and authors who place those ads, inserts, and letters. The appearance of an ad, insert, or letter in OCN does not imply endorsement of the ad, insert, or letter’s content or purpose. While OCN does not knowingly run false ads, inserts, or letters, we do not research the accuracy of that content. Readers are encouraged to do their own research prior to committing to use the products or services offered or accept the conclusions of letters to the editor. Readers with concerns about the content of an ad, insert, or letter should take up those concerns with the advertiser or author.

Contact John Heiser, Publisher, at johnheiser@ocn.me or (719) 488-3455 with any questions.

- See ad on page 5.
- **The Living Room Plants**, special offers through **Jan. 31**. 12229 Voyager Pkwy, Suite 100. See ad on page 5.
 - **YMCA** Jan. 1-31 \$0 join, 1-day free pass special offer. See ad on page 6.

Our community calendar carries listings on a space-available basis for Tri-Lakes events that are sponsored by local governmental entities and not-for-profit organizations. We include events that are open to the general public and are not religious or self-promotional in nature. If space is available, complimentary calendar listings are included, when requested, for events advertised in the current issue. To have your event listed at no charge in Our Community Calendar, please call (719) 339-7831 or send the information to calendar@ocn.me or Our Community News, P.O. Box 1742, Monument, Colorado 80132.

Letters to Our Community

Our Community News welcomes letters to the editor on topics of general interest to readers in the Tri-Lakes area. We do not knowingly print letters that are substantially the same as letters that have been submitted to other publications. To ensure that OCN contains a variety of viewpoints, each letter writer is limited to a maximum of one (1) letter per issue and six (6) letters within a twelve (12) month period. To submit a letter, please:

- Email your letter, preferably as an attached Microsoft Word document, to editor@ocn.me or mail a copy to **Our Community News, P.O. Box 1742, Monument, CO 80132-1742**.
- Identify your submission as a letter to the editor and confirm that it has not been submitted to any other publication.
- Include a suggested headline or title that summarizes the topic you are addressing.
- Limit your letter to no more than 300 words including your suggested headline and closing.
- Include your full name, home address, phone numbers, and email address, if you have one. Only your name will be published.
- Submit your letter so we receive it no later than midnight, Friday, two weeks prior to the publication date.

If you have not received an acknowledgement two days after your email submission or one week after you mailed your letter, please contact John Heiser, Publisher, at (719) 488-3455 or editor@ocn.me. At OCN’s sole discretion, we may ask you for clarification of your statements. Include references, such as website links, in your letter for any facts and figures you cite. OCN does not guarantee every letter will appear in print or on-line and does not guarantee a publication date. The number of letters printed on a particular topic or in a particular issue may be limited. Letters containing personal attacks or endorsements for or complaints about individually-named commercial products or services will not be published.

Look for our next issue
Saturday, Feb. 4

Ad space reservations due: **Fri., Jan. 13**
Finished ad artwork due: **Fri., Jan. 20**
Letters to the editor due: **Fri., Jan. 20**
Calendar items due: **Fri., Jan. 27**

Visit our website to read, download, and search all the back issues at
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OCN is published on the first Saturday of each month by Colorado Cooperative Association
Our Community News, Inc.
John Heiser, President
(719) 488-3455—FAX: (828) 649-2720

Advertising: ads@ocn.me
Back issues: www.ocn.me
Editorial content: editor@ocn.me
Event information: calendar@ocn.me

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Our Community News (OCN), with a **mailed** circulation of over **21,700**, is a unique all-volunteer monthly newspaper mailed FREE to every resident and business in the Tri-Lakes area. OCN is a primary source for Tri-Lakes area news that gives advertising preference to Tri-Lakes area businesses. OCN's contract-free low ad rates and monthly publication schedule help stretch your ad budget while supporting an important Tri-Lakes-focused effort to present factual, comprehensive news to all Tri-Lakes area residents.

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