

the voters what they think, she said. See www.ocn.me/v23n5.htm#dwfspd.

Powell requested the board approve a resolution calling for the Board of Directors to approve a coordinated election, asking for a mill levy increase for the district (Southern Enclave) and the dissolution of the northern subdistrict on Nov. 7, 2023. The election will be conducted by the El Paso County Clerk, and the Designated Election Official (DEO) will be Fire Chief Andy Kovacs with the assistance of an independent election assistant.

The board approved Kovacs as the DEO for the subdistrict election, 4-0.

Voter education will be crucial, and both ballot measures will either pass together or fail together, said Powell.

The board approved a resolution calling for a coordinated election on Nov 7, 2023, 4-0.

Joint resolution of advocacy and factual summary

Powell requested the Board of Directors for the district and the northern subdistrict approve a joint resolution of advocacy on behalf of the district and subdistrict and approve a joint factual summary for both districts. The joint factual summary states:

- DWFPD provides fire protection and emergency services. It has a 7.0 mill levy base assessed on property tax valuation.
- The DWFPD northern subdistrict provides additional funding to the fire district and is assessed an additional 14.9 mill levy.
- The district and the northern subdistrict have almost the same boundaries. There is one enclave of property to the south that is in the fire district, but it is not in the northern subdistrict and is known as the "Southern Enclave" in this factual summary. See map inset.

Issues and proposal

- Property owners who are in the fire district and the northern subdistrict pay a total of 21.9 mills in property tax. Property owners in the Southern Enclave pay 7.0 mills in property tax because they are only in the fire district.
- The fire district and Monument Fire District (formerly known as Tri-Lakes Monument Fire Protection District) are currently talking about merging. However, they cannot finalize a merger unless the northern subdistrict is dissolved and there is only one Donald Wescott Fire Agency.
- To solve the problem, the northern subdistrict decided to ask voters for approval to dissolve, and the fire district decided to ask voters for approval to increase its property tax to make up the lost revenue from the northern subdistrict dissolving. Both ballot measures will be on the Nov. 7, 2023 ballot.
- Most fire district property owners will receive a 0.5 mill property tax decrease if both ballot measures are approved. This is because if the northern subdistrict is dissolved, it will stop collecting its 14.9 mill property tax, but the fire district will only increase its

property tax by 14.4 mills, so there will be a 0.50 mill savings. DWFPD residents receiving services would be assessed 21.4 mills until the merger is completed.

- Approving the ballot measures would mean that everyone who receives emergency services from the fire district would pay the same rate. This is more equitable, especially to the property owners who are also in the northern subdistrict.
- The proposed merger with MFD depends on the ballot measures being approved. The merger is expected to provide better emergency services due to having more staff, stations, apparatus, coordinated training, and a more efficient administration. On completion a merger would also decrease most fire district property owners' taxes by another 3.0 mills, because MFD assesses 18.4 mills to the residents in its area of coverage.
- Approving the ballot measures will also help save money because it will reduce administrative costs by getting rid of duplicate layers of government and having only one fire agency.
- The Board of Directors urges voters to vote yes to dissolve the northern subdistrict and increase the fire district's (southern enclave) property tax in the Nov. 7 election.

Arguments against the proposal

- Voters in the southern enclave will pay the fire district's property tax increase but won't get tax savings from dissolving the northern subdistrict.
- Some voters might not want the fire district and MFD to merge, and the process is expected to continue if the ballot measures are approved.
- Some voters might want the fire district to provide a lower level of services, instead of increasing its property tax to offset the revenue that will be lost if the northern subdistrict dissolves.

Arguments for the proposal

- Most fire district property owners would get a 0.5 mill property tax decrease, because the fire district's property tax increase (14.4 mills) is less than the 14.9 mills that the northern subdistrict will stop collecting if it dissolves.
- The same tax rate would apply across the fire district's entire jurisdiction.
- Some voters may be in favor of having only one layer of government, which would lower administrative costs.
- Some voters might want the fire district and MFD to merge, the process of which is expected to continue if the ballot measures are approved. If a merger ultimately occurs, property taxes are expected to decrease by another 3.0 mills.

The board approved the district and subdistrict joint resolution of advocacy and the joint factual summary, 4-0.

Note: The complete factual summary can be found at <http://www.monumentfire.org>.

Public comment

Resident Gary Nelson said it would be helpful to know how much the residents would be saving per average home price should both ballot measures pass.

Powell said that until the results of the November election are known with regard to Proposition HH, the final property tax assessment rates for 2024 will be unknown, she said. See www.ocn.me/v23n6.htm#dwfspd.

Special District Solutions assistance

Powell recommended Kurt Schlegel of Special District Solutions (SDS) be hired to provide election-related technical services and support for the DWFPD subdistrict election. Schlegel has 17 years' experience and success with assisting other fire districts in Colorado with similar elections involving mergers. Schlegel will work with the DEO, district staff, and the county election officials from Sept. 8, when the ballot is certified, until the election is completed. The next step in the process is to approve the IGA on Aug. 29, she said.

The board approved hiring SDS to assist with the election process for a fee not to exceed \$12,000, 4-0.

Note: SDS services for the election proposals are expected to cost each district/subdistrict between \$3,000 and \$6,000. The actual cost for services will depend on the hours required, determined by the DEO and the Board of Directors.

2022 audit

Shani Cottrell of Erickson, Brown and Kloster, P.C., said she had worked closely and concurrently during the 2022 audits for DWFPD and MFD, with emphasis on the areas within the IGA. The transfer of capital assets (property, apparatus, and equipment) were reviewed and the depreciation estimates for the net pension assets complied with the Firefighters and Police Pension Association (FPPA) report. Ex-

ecution of the IGA went smoothly, and was handled very well, along with the adjustments to the IGA for assets transferred and the FPPA pension fund, and the typical property tax amendments, she said.

Last year, a management letter for some deficiencies with the accounting policies was issued, but this year nothing was required. Kovacs and Director of Administration Jennifer Martin, and the district accountants were super helpful during the process and are doing a good job. All financial statements for the merging districts should mirror each other, and they do, she said.

The board approved the 2022 audit with authorization for filing with the state auditor, 4-0.

Financial reports

Garrett requested the reason behind a significant jump in the balance from the May to June financial report.

Kovacs said the increase was due to the quarterly transfer of funds (\$782,941) to Tri-Lakes Monument Fire Protection District dba MFD. The district is receiving fire and EMS service under the IGA for an annual fee of about \$3.1 million. See www.ocn.me/v23n4.htm#dwfspd.

The board approved by a 3-0 vote the financial reports for May and June as presented.

Chief's report

See the MFD article on page 11. The monthly chief's reports can be found at www.monumentfire.org.

The meetings adjourned at 5:52 p.m.

Meetings are usually held every other month on the fourth Wednesday of the month. The next regular board meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, Sept. 27 at 4:30 p.m. at Station 1, 18650 Highway 105. For Zoom meeting instructions, agendas, minutes, and updates, visit www.monumentfire.org or contact Director of Administration Jennifer Martin at 719-484-9011.

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**Monument Fire District, June 28 and July 26
Mt. Herman Rd. fire suppressed;
2022 budget amended**

By Natalie Barszcz

At the Monument Fire District (MFD) meeting on June 28, the board heard about the retirement of Battalion Chief Mike Dooley, received the 2022 audit presentation, and approved an extension to the Collaborative Working

Agreement (CBA). At the July 26 meeting, the board heard about a fire on Mount Herman Road and approved the 2022 audit and a resolution amending the 2022 budget. The board also approved the purchase of a chassis for the 2024 budgeted Type 6 brush truck and



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