

FOREST LAKES (Cont. from 12)

tions for the future now that development fees cannot be relied on as the residential districts grow closer to buildout, said Nichols.

The board approved the rate increases, 4-0.

2024 budget—FLMD, PPMD 2 and 3

The boards unanimously approved the resolution adopting the 2024 budget and appropriating funds for 2024 for FLMD and PPMD 2 and 3.

Nichols said the mill levies are exactly the same as in 2023 for FLMD and PPMD's 2 and 3, and she requested the board approve the resolutions to set the mill levies for the districts, subject to any final change after the El Paso County Assessor notifies the district on Jan. 3 with the adjusted property tax assessments.

Blunk said the debt service mill levy for PPMD 3 will be analyzed in 2024, and it's possible that the mill levy will be lowered in 2025.

The board approved 4-0 the mill levies and transparency notices for FLMD, and PPMD's 2 and 3, subject to any adjustment in early 2024.

Note: The mill levy for PPMD 2 was approved at 55.664 mills, and PPMD 3 was approved at 50 mills for collection in 2024. The mill levy for FLMD is set at 0.000 mills. The 2024 transparency notices for all four districts (including PPMD 1) will be posted in January 2024 at www.forestlakesmetrodistrict.com.

Amended 2023 budget for FLMD

Dykstra opened a public hearing to consider approval of a resolution adopting the amended 2023 budget for FLMD.

Nichols said the amendment is required at the end of 2023 for the conveyance of the public infrastructure from Filings 5, 6, and 7 development and Phase 2 of the Falcon Commerce Center. Collectively it amounts to just over \$24 million (\$9 million includes public infrastructure expenditure for roads that will be conveyed to the appropriate jurisdictions—El Paso County and the Town of Monument). The amendment increases the expenditures to sufficiently cover the conveyance, said Nichols.

The board approved the 2023 budget amendment, 4-0.

2023 audit engagement letter

Dykstra requested the board approve an engagement letter with Hoelting & Co. for the 2023 audits for FLMD and PPMD 2 and an audit exemption request for PPMD 3.

Nichols said the fees had not yet been finalized via letter, but the FLMD's fee was expected to be \$17,150, and the Pinon Pines districts' fees are expected to be \$6,250 each, according to the auditor.

The board approved the engagement letter subject to final legal review, 4-0.

The board approved the third amendment to the TMD Contract Operations Agreement to increase the fee by 10% for a total of \$18,150 per month (the fee includes water and wastewater operations; customer billing; and the increase adjusted for the landscaping fee). See TMD article on page 15.

The Dec. 4 meetings adjourned at 4:53 p.m.

2024 budget—PPMD 1

Dykstra opened the public hearing for the 2024 budget for PPMD 1.

Nichols said the assessed property values rose significantly on existing homes and the little bit of new construction in PPMD 1. She proposed reducing the existing debt service from 31.5 mills to 20.5 mills beginning Jan. 1, 2024, and said she would not know if the district would have enough mill levy to cover the operating expenses and management for PPMD 1 until the adjusted property tax assessment is received on Jan. 3 from the El Paso County Assessor.

President Mike Hitchcock said he did not want to put too much burden on the taxpayer, just pay the bills.

Nichols said even with the 11 mills reduction to the debt service, the district would still retain a little cushion at the beginning of the year and through to the end of 2024.

The board unanimously approved a resolution to adopt the 2024 budget, appropriate funds,

and set the mill levies at 29.133 mills for collection in 2024 (subject to any necessary adjustment after the final evaluation of property tax assessments from the El Paso County Assessor on Jan. 3).

The board unanimously approved the 2023 audit for PPMD1 for a fee of no more than \$6,250.

Annual administrative resolution

Dykstra said the state Legislature mandates that special districts must now provide a town hall for residents to attend annually. The district will hold an annual town hall meeting on the first Monday of December 2024 at 3 p.m. Out of the 120 town hall meetings previously held, only two residents had attended, and although there is good intent by the state Legislature, the meetings have not been super effective to date, he said.

All four boards approved the 2024 annual administrative resolution that includes the addition of an annual mandated town hall meeting. Note: This reporter did not attend the town hall meeting at 3 p.m. on Dec. 4.

Board member election

The board unanimously approved the transparency terms for the board member election scheduled for May 2025.

Note: The all-resident five member PPMD 1 board has two director positions vacant. The three incumbent directors are required to be present to maintain a quorum for voting purposes at each meeting. Board director positions are not term limited.

The meeting adjourned at 4:18 p.m.

Meetings are usually held quarterly or, when necessary, on the first Monday of the month at 4 p.m., via teleconference. Meeting notices are posted at least 24 hours in advance at <https://forestlakesmetrodistrict.com>. For general questions, contact District Manager Ann Nichols at anicholsduffy@aol.com or 719-357-5810.

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

Donala Water and Sanitation District, Dec. 7

Water and sewer rates to increase in 2024

By James Howald and Jackie Burhans

At its December meeting, the Donala Water and Sanitation District (DWSD) board held a public hearing and took a vote on a resolution setting new water and sewer rates that will take effect in 2024. The board briefly reviewed its proposed budget for 2024. It also heard financial and operational reports.

New rates for 2024

Board President Wayne Vanderschuere opened a public hearing on water and sewer rates. Resolution 2023-9 leaves most fees and charges unchanged but raises the district's tiered water usage rates by 4% for all tiers. It increases the sewer service base fee to \$7.14 per month plus \$9.95 per thousand gallons of wastewater produced. The minimum wastewater service rate increases to \$31.89 from \$30.66 per month. Construction water will cost \$18.39 per thousand gallons and will not be sold for use outside district boundaries. Residential water and sewer tap fees remain unchanged at \$8,500. Commercial water tap fees for both ¾-inch and 1-inch lines will increase to \$9,350.

The board voted unanimously in favor of the resolution.

2024 budget review

Christina Hawker, the district's Accounts Payable specialist, told the board that when Proposition HH failed, the state Legislature held a special session to address property taxes. The special session pushed back the date by which DWSD must submit its budget so that final property assessments, which are needed for DWSD to finalize its 2024 budget, can be calculated. The final assessments are needed when the district calculates its mill levy, she said. The board scheduled a special meeting on Tuesday, Jan. 9 at 1:30 p.m. at the district's office at 15850 Holbein Drive to approve the new mill levy and submit the proposed budget to the state. Hawker said it would be simple to update the proposed budget once the final mill levy is determined.

Highlights of financial and operational reports

- General Manager Jeff Hodge told the board that despite lower water sales the district would end the year in the black on water sales.
- Hodge said interest on the district's financial reserves would cover the district's bond payments.
- Water Operator Ronny Wright told the board

that the study of hydrous manganese oxide to reduce radium levels in the district's water was complete and he expected a response from the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment by April.

- Vanderschuere told the board that a water district near Pittsburgh had its program logic controllers (PLCs), which were made by an Israeli company, hacked by Hamas. Vanderschuere and Waste Plant Operator Aaron Tolman told the board that DWSD uses PLCs from other manufacturers that are not vulnerable to the exploit used in Pittsburgh.

A special meeting on the 2024 budget is scheduled for Jan. 9. The next board meeting is scheduled for Thursday, Jan. 18 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.

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El Paso County Regional Loop Water Authority, Dec. 12

Board focuses on budgets

By James Howald

At its November meeting, the El Paso County Regional Loop Water Authority (EPCRLWA) board determined its budget for 2023 did not need to be amended and concluded its work on its budget for 2024 with a public hearing. It voted to adopt the 2024 budget as proposed and to appropriate funds. The board also heard a report from its Project Planning and Workflow (PPW) manager and voted on a resolution specifying administrative matters. Finally, the board held an executive session to discuss the selection of an underwriting company.

Board wraps up 2023 budget, approves 2024 budget

Kathy Fromm, of Fromm and Co., the project's accountant, told the board the budget for 2023 did not need to be updated and there was no need for a public hearing or a resolution on that budget.

Board President Jessie Shaffer opened a public hearing on the proposed budget for 2024, which was first presented at the board meeting in October. He noted Fromm had made minor changes based on the board's discussion in November. Shaffer said the 2024 budget anticipated

revenues of just under \$1.2 million and expenditures of \$1.66 million, which would leave projected total reserve funds of \$445,000 at the end of 2024. Shaffer closed the public hearing.

The board voted unanimously to approve the 2024 budget and to appropriate the necessary funds.

Interviews with construction companies

John Kuosman, the EPCRLWA PPW manager, told the board he had been interviewing engineering and construction companies, particularly Forsgren Associates Inc. and Kimley-Horn, and was getting feedback from them that he was using to frame his cost estimates. Their detailed feedback would help determine the financial responsibilities of the authority's participating districts, he said, adding he expected to have a more detailed cost framework ready in early 2024. He said he had also talked to Colorado Springs Utilities about its study of indirect potable reuse technologies and had been asked to sign a non-disclosure agreement concerning that discussion.

Administrative resolution

Russ Dykstra, the authority's lawyer, asked the board to vote on an annual administrative reso-

lution covering operational details such as records retention policy and budgeting schedules. The board voted unanimously in favor of the resolution Dykstra presented.

Executive session

The board held an executive session to discuss the selection of an underwriting company for the authority. The board reconvened into open session and voted to use Piper Sandler, an investment banking company, as its underwriter.

The next regular meeting is scheduled for Jan. 18 at 9 a.m. Regular meetings are usually held on the third Thursday of each month at 9 a.m. at the Monument Town Hall at 645 Beacon Lite Road. Workshop meetings are held the first Thursday of each month at 9 a.m. at the Cherokee Metropolitan District offices at 6250 Palmer Park Blvd., Colorado Springs. Please see loopwater.org or call 719-488-3603 to verify meeting times and locations.

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