





**EPC PC (Cont. from 1)**

oped along the corridor, or state or federal funding for a roadway project comes forward (none has been identified at present).

This session was for informational purposes only. A request to

adopt the ACP and incorporate it into the county's master plan will come at a second session during the Jan. 18 Planning Commission meeting.

Helen Walklett can be reached at [helenwalklett@ocn.me](mailto:helenwalklett@ocn.me).

**D38 BOE (Cont. from 1)**

Superintendent KC Somers then introduced new members to the district's strategic plan, policies, committee structure, and members of the administration.

**Departure of superintendent announced**

As part of his board member comment, Schwarz said that Somers had sent an email to staff on Nov. 30 announcing that he has accepted a position in Peoria, Ariz. That district has 36,000 students compared to D38's 6,500 and 4,000 staff in comparison it D38's 800.

Schwarz said that statistics show that a superintendent will generally stay in a position for three to six years. He said D38 was fortunate to have Somers for five years and he wished him the best. Somers will finish the school year at D38.

**Four-day week discussion**

During the Dec. 11 regular meeting, the board had a lengthy discussion about changing to a four-day week schedule beginning in the 2024-25 school year.

Somers reminded the board that the primary reason for considering the change was to determine

whether it would help with staff retention since efforts to significantly increase compensation have been stymied. A task force was created last summer to consider the issue.

Assistant Superintendent Amber Whetstine and Human Resources Director Alice Welch presented results of surveys and private conversations with staff on the subject. To view this presentation, please see boarddocs under the Board of Education tab on the lewispalmer.org website.

When asked whether families had been consulted, Somers responded that unless results of the surveys showed overwhelming support from staff, families would not be consulted.

Whetstine said that advantages of a four-day week could include:

- Time for staff to attend personal appointments.
- Improved morale.
- Potential financial benefits if staff desired a second job.
- More consistency in calendar since we already have several four-day weeks.

Negative impacts could include:

- Interference with athletic programs due to later dismissal times. Athletes potentially

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**Above:** At the regular Board of Education meeting, D38 board President Tiffiney Upchurch recognizes newly elected and re-elected board members. From left are Treasurer Ron Schwarz, Vice President Kris Norris, Secretary Dr. Patti Shank, Upchurch, and Director Todd Brown. *Photo by Jackie Burhans.*

surveys were administered by outside vendor Huron Studer Education. Because this was the first year for both surveys, it will be used as a benchmark. Participants included 540 families and 469 staff (out of about 800).

The families responded that they felt the schools were clean and safe, that education of students was a priority, and students and families were treated with respect. They also responded that they would like to receive more frequent messages or feedback on student performance.

Staff respondents said that they felt that their work positively impacts the community and they have a clear understanding of the goals of the organization and a sense of pride in where they work. As for opportunities, staff said they would like more feedback on their performance and better allocation of resources to maximize effectiveness across the district and in each location.

### Recognitions

Please see boarddocs for the superintendent update on district achievements.

The board recognized the Palmer Ridge High School state champion girls gymnastics and volleyball teams.

Gymnastics coach Kathy Clowes was named state gymnastics coach of the year and volleyball coach Erica Bradley was named volleyball coach of the year. Corey Anderson was named volleyball player of the year.

Greg Saunders (pictured at left) was confirmed as the new principal of Ray Kilmer Elementary. He had served in an interim capacity since last July and had previously been vice principal at Lewis-Palmer High School.

\*\*\*\*\*

The Lewis-Palmer D38 Board of Education generally meets at 6 p.m. on the third Monday of the month at the district's learning center, 146 Jefferson St., Monument. The next meeting will be on Jan. 22.

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

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This represents a loss of \$1.1 million in PPR, as well as \$71,000 in mill levy override money and some student fees.

MA has had to make significant adjustments to its budget but has tried to keep cuts away from the classroom, Gustafson said. MA restructured its teacher compensation to be more competitive and has fully funded its debt service bond payments. Gustafson said that the team went through every single line item looking for opportunities. He noted that tax revenues come in between February and July. Increased interest income has helped, along with new special education (SPED) grants. A \$400,000 emergency connectivity grant was received, which had been applied for by MA's former CFO Marc Brocklehurst. He noted that thanks to Operations Manager Jake Dicus, there were facility rental revenues from both campuses and that MA had used gifts and donations to help balance the budget but was still a little short at East Campus.

Under expenditures, Gustafson added a line item for MA to purchase land for a parking lot at West Campus and looked at revising its HVAC, copier, shredding, custodial, and custodial supplies contracts. He thanked principals for enforcing color copy rules since each color copy costs 10 times what a black-and-white copy costs.

In summary, he thinks MA is well-positioned for the 2024-25 fiscal year when he is expecting a 5% increase in PPR or about \$700 per pupil. He said that MA will not have the big costs for the modular buildings this coming year nor the big Internal Revenue Service (IRS) penalty it had two years ago. MA will be more conservative with its budget and try to make sure it will be in compliance with bond covenants. Finally, he noted he was working on restructuring the Finance Department with his transition.

The board unanimously approved the resolutions to appropriate funds for the midyear amended budget, to use a portion of its beginning fund balance as required by state statute, and to approve an interfund borrowing resolution. The interfund borrowing resolution allows MA to borrow \$250,000 from its general fund and \$100,000 from the preschool fund. The resolution does not specify the use of the borrowed amounts but states that the loans must be repaid when those funds are required to meet obligations or no later than three months after the beginning of the following budget year. In last month's article on MA, Buczkowski noted that the Finance Committee had discussed borrowing from the West Campus to lend to the East Campus (see <https://www.ocn.me/v23n12.htm#ma>).

**Enrollment/retention marketing plan**  
Interim Chief Operating Officer Kim McClelland introduced Kendra Kuhlmann from Marketing, Elementary School Registrar Lena Gross, and Secondary Campus Registrar Laura Polen to present their strategic plan for enrollment and retention.

Gross said the team had made changes they hoped would make a true difference. They had gotten a 96% response rate from the West Campus and an 89% response rate from the East Campus. They added "undecided" as an option and asked what the most important factor would be in parents' decision. The team expected to begin calculating the enrollment numbers and sharing them with the administration team.

Polen said the previous year's enrollment process has been revised and streamlined. One change was to have a separate form for preschool since they ask about potty training. The data is automatically transferred from a Google form to a spreadsheet, eliminating manual data entry. The data is displayed by grade, and they can see waitlist numbers and priorities by applying a filter in addition to showing who has an MA sibling and tracking MA's responses by email or phone.

The team also created email template re-

sponses that they can customize and have coordinated on tour information. Polen said that the team does a pre-enrollment record request, and Kuhlmann added that they might meet with parents to discuss attendance issues and create an attendance contract. Polen said that the ParentSquare system has been very helpful in getting out information and ensuring they are not duplicating efforts. The team has exit interviews if a student leaves midyear, if they accept but don't show up, or if they don't send in their "intent to return" survey. They can generate reports on who intends to report, wait lists, and seat offers for daily review, Polen said.

Gross said the team focused on celebrating community and connectedness after reviewing data and performing a market analysis. Kuhlmann said they surveyed students and families on what they were looking for in a high school. The top words and phrases were community, safe, academics, and quality teachers. Gross said the team used SchoolMint to determine micro factors for choosing alternative education and found that top responses included student achievement, innovation and programs, customer service, and school safety. The team has made an effort to increase its availability. Other families' opinions outweigh data. They noted that 26% of MA's students come from out of district, which is more than other charter schools.

Finally, Kuhlmann said that MA has taken ownership of its Google sites for both campuses, which will allow it to ask for Google reviews and to leverage Google Analytics to understand how its website is being used. Gross emphasized that communication is key, and that MA should keep in touch with families who have been offered seats between February and August. The team suggests hosting a summer festival and facilitating a quarterly information night for prospective families. Gross also said they would initiate an incentive program for current families to bring in new families offering free dress passes for K-8 students or a preferred parking pass for high school students.

**Fundraising plan**  
Dicus gave a presentation about the current state of fundraising as well as ideas for the future. He explained that there is a difference between fundraising and donations, with the former raising funds for specific programs or projects and the latter giving without expecting something in return. The annual gala is MA's biggest fundraising event; Grandparents Day is a fundraiser and there is an opportunity to sponsor library book dedications. School sponsorships are another way to support MA at various levels; MA has a brochure that includes MA's mission and vision. Finally, grants are another form of fundraising that includes the \$400,000 connectivity grant already awarded, as well as a Building Excellent Schools Today (BEST) grant, the Employee Retention Tax Credit (ERTC) program, and a school security grant that is in process.

For donations, the Lynx Fund has been a success, said Dicus. People can donate monthly or on a one-time basis or \$1,996 (the year MA was founded) as Lynx Legacy donors or repeat do-

nors. MA received a school furniture donation worth \$99,000 for the cost of \$5,000. A family donated track uniforms. Greater Grounds Landscaping redid the West Campus playground and is adding turf for a total value of \$20,000.

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Toward the end of the year, MA started offering facility rentals and has developed a pipeline. For next year, Dicus expects to see some modifications to the gala, adding mobile bidding and early bird pricing. The gala already has some committed sponsors with more in the pipeline.

MA has an end-of-the-year matching campaign it is presenting on its Facebook and parent pages. It is trying to streamline using ParentSquare so that it can track communications and will use GiveSmart for all campaigns. He hopes to prepare new families with a packet that outlines the next year's expectations and allows them to donate when paying school fees. Dicus said he should have focused more on the Giving Tuesday campaign but prefers to focus on progress over perfection.

New and updated policies

The MA board unanimously approved seven policies related to finances. Buczkowski said these were the easiest to approve since they don't conflict with any existing policy. The policies are DK Annual Budget, DC Borrowing, DD Grants, DID General Fixed Assets & Inventories, DIE Audits/Financial Monitoring, DK Payroll Procedures, and DKD Travel. Gustafson noted that DK is the one non-standard policy that covers rules on who can authorize permanent employees, stipends,



**Above:** At its Dec. 14 meeting, board member Craig Carle spotlighted Athletic Director Mike Svendsen for his success with the athletic program at Monument Academy including his achievement of getting MA's high school membership in the Colorado High School Activities Association. He also highlighted parent Kristy Davis who heads the West Campus PTO for her help with the new shade structure which will be completed by next year. From left are board President Ryan Graham, parent Kristy Davis, board member Carle, and Athletic Director Mike Svendsen. *Photo by Jackie Burhans.*

and extra duty pay. It lays out how to manage any payroll mistakes. He modeled this policy after a D11 policy he wrote when he worked there. Only the board can approve compensation, he noted, and this puts structure around that process.

The board also discussed at length modifications to policy JG MA Enrollment and Placement, which replaces 1511 Admissions Policy. The policy has been updated with the current version of the MA vision statement and adds a section on enrollment restrictions for kindergarten and first grade. The new section requires students to turn 5 years old on or before Aug. 25 to start kindergarten. Students who have been added to MA's waitlist via a Letter of Interest before Jan. 1, 2024 or who have successfully completed pre-k at MA for the 2023-24 school year will be grandfathered. Similarly, students must turn 6 before Aug. 25 to enroll in first grade.

The policy also clarifies the wait list procedures required by parents and suggests that the Placement Test section could be covered in the Student/Parent Handbook. McClelland said the changes should be messaged to families since it's enrollment season with the caveat that is pending approval of the board. Graham said it would be wise to have legal review the policy. Vice President Lindsay Clinton said that 11 families would be impacted by the modified policy and that this might affect some incoming siblings. McClelland said that the age requirement changes had been discussed at the curriculum meeting, where they said they have very young kids. She said that since the state had approved fully funding kindergarten, it is becoming more of a daycare, and MA is a school of excellence. Gross noted that choice enrollment starts on Jan. 2, and board President Ryan Graham said it should be reviewed by legal and brought to a special meeting on Jan. 5 for approval, so it would only be a few days.

Highlights

Board meeting highlights include:

- Board member Craig Carle spotlighted Athletic Director Mike Svendsen and parent Kristy Davis. He said Svendsen had done a great job with the athletic program and got MA's high school membership in the Colorado High School Activities Association (CHSAA). Davis was recognized for her help with the West Campus shade structure, which will be completed next year.
- Kim McClelland said she would bring a possible homeschool proposal to the board at the January or February meeting.
- The board unanimously approved the 2024-25 elementary and secondary school calendars.
- Gustafson reported that the audit for the 2022-23 schoolyear was finalized, which is about 2 1/2 months earlier than the previous year. MA has submitted all the information on the ERTC to the lawyer for due diligence, but he noted that the IRS has suspended accepting applications due to the level of fraudulent claims.
- Graham reported that the Knollwood roundabout might be ready by the time MA returns from break. The road on the south side by the retaining wall would not be ready until summer.
- Board member Emily Belisle thanked the teachers who served on the Curriculum Committee and noted that it looked like the favorite might be Reveal Math, but it would be presented to the board for approval and to the community for review and would not be in place for the next academic year.
- Board member Matt Ross reported on mid-year survey results for the Student Accountability and Advisory Committee (SAAC) of West Campus. He said that 95% of respondents were likely to recommend MA but that high-level learners needed more challenges and that the math curriculum needed to be updated. Most respondents feel that ParentSquare is working for improved communication and want the board to incentivize teachers to attend community events.
- Clinton said SAAC East had not met in December but would meet in January to review survey results.
- Buczkowski said the governance committee met multiple times and would be prioritizing policies a charter school should have in batches of six or so for reading and approval following a framework for how and when to update policies in the Colorado Association of School Boards format.
- Graham noted that the upcoming election

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would fill two vacancies and is normally conducted by the vice president. Since Clinton is running for re-election, she has a conflict, so the board voted to

appoint Ross to conduct the election.

\*\*\*\*\*

The MA School Board meets at 6:30 p.m. on the second Thursday of

each month. The next regular board meeting will be on Thursday, Jan. 11, at 6:30 p.m. at the East Campus. See more information at <https://bit.ly/ma-boe>.

Jackie Burhans can be reached at [jackieburhans@ocn.me](mailto:jackieburhans@ocn.me).

PALMER LAKE  
(Cont. from 1)

Board supports Krob;  
retains his firm

Mayor Glant Havenar opened the special meeting on Dec. 21 with a call for public comments.

Resident Bill Bass, who served a term as mayor from 2021 until 2023, addressed Krob's service to the town, pointing out that the board should not be swayed by hearsay and rumor. "This matter would never have come to light in the way it has had it not been for one person . . . probably 90 percent of the complaints from this party have been incorrect and frivolous, mean-spirited ... accusations that were outright lies that damage the town and people. It should stop." Bass said he supported Krob and his family, adding that Krob's advice had benefitted his administration as well as Havenar's.

Resident Bob Radosevich, who has served the town in many capacities over several administrations, also spoke in support of Krob, pointing out that no harm had been done to the town.

Havenar thanked Bass and Radosevich for their comments and opened an executive session. When the board reconvened to open session, Havenar read a letter to the board from Krob in which he said: "In light of the recent media and social media coverage relating to a personal matter that I am vehemently defending, I have decided to take a step back from representing the town until my personal case is resolved. In the meantime, our firm will assign another attorney to serve as the town attorney with significant experience representing municipalities."

Havenar made a statement on behalf of the board expressing full support for Krob and for the representation of his firm. She said the board looked forward to his return.

2024 budget adopted

Havenar opened a budget workshop on Nov. 29 and said recent social media posts claiming the proposed 2024 budget "defunded" the police were incorrect. She pointed out the budget was balanced and asked for the support of the town.

Town Administrator Dawn Collins said progress was being made in how the town handles the budgeting process, with more involvement from department heads. The proposed budget reduces worker compensation premiums. Collins stressed that property assessments were delayed due to a special session of the state Legislature held following the failure of Proposition HH, and the proposed budget would need to be amended when those assessments were finally available. She said the budget provided a 5% salary increase for the Police Department; other departments would receive smaller increases. The budget included funding for a compensation analysis to provide an objective opinion for future planning.

Havenar said she was concerned about the Police Department getting a larger increase than other departments. Trustee Kevin Dreher expressed the same concern.

The board packet provided for the workshop (<https://www.townofpalmerlake.com/meetings>) contains additional details about the proposed budget. In previous budget discussions, the board prioritized roadway and drainage improvements and water infrastructure. The Water Fund budget has \$500,000 for capital improvement projects. It is over \$90,000 in the black.

The proposed budget adds these new staff positions:

- A full-time deputy clerk in Town Administration.
- A full-time equipment operator in the Public Works department.
- A part-time code enforcement officer in Town Administration (code enforcement is currently handled by the Police Department).
- A part-time records technician for the Police Department.

The proposed budget makes the following reductions:

- Removes one part-time Town Administration staff member.
- Reduces part-time Police Department hours.
- Reduces part-time Fire Department hours.
- Removes one part-time Public Works/Parks Department staff member.
- Reduces capital improvement funding for roads.

At the Dec. 14 regular board meeting, the board continued its work on the budget with the consideration of Ordinance 26-2023, an emergency ordinance to adopt the budget.

Attorney Krob told the board that, although final property assessments were not yet available, he recommended that the budget be adopted at that meeting. He said the board would need to amend the mill levy portion of the budget when the final property value assessments were determined by the state. He warned that if the board did not adopt a budget by the end of the year, it would trigger a requirement for the state to impose a budget on the town that would include 10% across-the-board reductions in all line items. He explained an emergency ordinance to adopt the budget would take effect immediately, whereas an ordinary ordinance would take effect in 30 days, after the end of the year, triggering a budget to be imposed by the state.

The board voted unanimously in favor of Emergency Ordinance 26-2023, which adopted the 2024 budget effective Dec. 14. The board also scheduled a special session for Jan. 3 to amend the 2024 budget in light of the final property value assessment and its impact on the town's mill levy.

Liquor license transferred

The board met as the Local Licensing Authority on Dec. 14 to hold a public hearing on the transfer of a liquor license. Justin T. Cline told the board he was opening Sundance Pit BBQ at 25 Highway 105, which previously had been La Rosa Southwestern Dining. He asked the board to transfer the liquor license owned by La Rosa to his business. Collins confirmed that Cline's application was complete. There were no comments from the public and the board approved the transfer.

Conditional use permit for  
church granted

At its Dec. 14 meeting, the board held a public hearing to consider a request from Jeff Maddox of the Movement Church for a permit to use the building at 304 Highway 105, commonly called the Tri-Lakes Center for the Arts, as a church with services on Sunday morning. Mad-

dox said properties in Convenience Commercial zones can be used as religious institutions if permitted by the board.

The Planning Commission approved the conditional use on a 3-2 vote on Nov. 15, with the requirement to complete inspections by the Fire Department and Pikes Peak Regional Building Department (PPRBD) and to resolve any violations.

Resident Roger Mosely argued the board should not grant permission to Maddox since Maddox is not the owner of the property. Mosely predicted problems with PPRBD if the permit were approved.

Krob asked Maddox if he was aware the building was not zoned for residential use and Maddox answered yes. Krob said permitting use as a church would not include residential use. He added Maddox would need to resolve any viola-



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tions uncovered during inspections.

Havenar closed the public hearing and the board voted on Resolution 77-2023, which would grant the conditional use permit. Trustees Shana Ball, Kevin Dreher, Nick Ehrhardt, Jessica Farr and Dennis Stern voted yes. Havenar voted yes. Trustee Sam Padgett voted no.

**Trail and bridge update**

Wiecks told the board the current plan for the trails and bridges at the Elephant Rock property would, when complete, connect the town center to the property. The plan requires four bridges to be completed. A bridge replacing a temporary log bridge over Monument Creek has been replaced using \$1,100 in Parks Commissions funds. The commission will also fund the second bridge. The design and construction of the bridges is being done by Air Force Academy cadets.

**Resolutions**

- The board tabled Resolution 78-2023, which would have authorized a memorandum of understanding between

the Town of Palmer Lake and Awake the Lake (ATL) to limit ATL's liability for any costs resulting from the presence of town water lines underneath the proposed pickleball courts to a maximum of \$20,000.

- The board voted unanimously in favor of Resolution 79-2023, which authorizes a lease agreement between the town and CORE Electric Cooperative for the placement of an electrical vehicle charger on town property.
- The board voted unanimously in favor of Resolution 73-2023, which accepts the water rate study by Chris Brandewie of Water Rates by Brandewie, LLC.
- The board voted unanimously in favor of Resolution 80-2023, which authorizes an Intergovernmental Agreement between the town and the Colorado Department of Transportation regarding improvements on Spruce Mountain Road. The Pikes Peak Area Council of Governments provided grant funds for the design and construction of the improvements.
- The board voted on Resolution 81-2023, which authorizes a professional services agreement with GMS Engineering Inc. to design improvements to the pedestrian walkway adjacent to Palmer Lake Elementary School. GMS secured a \$150,000 grant for the project; the professional services agreement commits the town to pay GMS \$218,000 to complete the scope of work. Farr voted against the resolution; all others voted in favor.
- The board voted on Resolution 82-2023, which authorizes Dukes Electric Inc. to install Union Pacific Railroad-approved lighting on the pedestrian bridge between the town and the lake at a cost of \$24,800. Farr and Stern voted against the resolution; all others voted yes.
- The board voted unanimously in favor of Resolution 83-2023, which authorizes the town staff to complete the demolition of six cabins and one long building on the Elephant Rock property, including asbestos assessment and abatement.

**Ordinances**

The board approved two ordinances which have been discussed in previous board meetings:

- Ordinance 24-2023, which adopts an updated sign code for the town. Stern voted no; all others voted in favor.



**Above:** At its special Board of Trustees meeting on Dec. 21, Town Administrator Dawn Collins wore her holiday spirit outfit. *Photo by Jackie Burhans*

- Ordinance 25-2023, which prohibits use of motor vehicles on undeveloped rights of way within the town. Farr was the only vote against the ordinance.

**Executive session**

Following the Dec. 14 meeting, the board held an executive session to develop negotiating positions on leasing a portion of the Elephant Rock property to Star View Ranch, to consider the employment contract with the town administrator, and to receive legal advice concerning a complaint against the Police Department.

The board returned to open session and voted to approve the employment agreement for Town Administrator Dawn Collins. Padgett and Farr voted against approving the agreement; all others voted in favor.

\*\*\*\*\*

The next regular board meeting is scheduled for Jan. 11. The board will also meet on Jan. 3 to amend the 2024 budget. See the town's website at [www.townofpalmerlake.com](http://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](mailto:jameshowald@ocn.me).  
Jackie Burhans can be reached at [jackieburhans@ocn.me](mailto:jackieburhans@ocn.me).

*Monument Town Council, Dec. 6*

# Town Council debates sales tax options, Loop Water Authority, Maverik gas station

By Chris Jeub

The Monument Town Council (MTC) meeting in December covered topics such as potential self-collection of sales tax, Loop Water Authority Project participation, and budget resolutions. The meeting underscored practical decision-making for the town's financial and developmental future.

**Sales tax management options unveiled**

During the presentation on sales tax future state options by Sophia Hassman, the MTC delved into the complexities of transitioning to a self-collected sales tax model under Home Rule. Hassman highlighted the benefits of increased oversight, quicker turnaround, and enhanced tax compliance, with the potential for additional revenue streams. Councilmember

ber Marco Fiorito sought clarification on certifications needed for in-house management, to which the response emphasized that a CPA is not necessary, and the first year would require two trained employees. The discussion also included cost considerations, with the hybrid option emerging as the most economical at \$228,798, compared to \$344,840 and \$457,710 for an in-house or contractual option.

Councilmember Laura Kronick asked about the timeline for fund receipts in comparison to the state and was assured that under the proposed self-collect model, funds would be received within two days, as opposed to the state's two-month holding period. Mayor Mitch LaKind and Councilmember Steve King inquired about the potential revenue increase with self-collection, to which the response ranged



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from 8% to 15%, with a break-even point slightly over 2%. Amid these discussions, King sought the opinion of Mona Hirjoi, director of Finance, who expressed torn sentiments, citing increased workload challenges and the difficulty of retaining experienced personnel. Despite the uncertainties, King suggested the option of reverting to self-collection if the chosen approach proved untenable, a sentiment echoed by Town Manager Mike Foreman, who mentioned instances of other municipalities returning to the previous system.

Water Authority participation affirmed, for now

A detailed exchange during the discussion of Resolution No. 59-2023 aimed to affirm the town's participation in the El Paso County Regional Loop Water Authority project. LaKind expressed a desire to extend the resolution indefinitely, prompting Councilmember Kenneth Kimple to seek clarification on the mean-

ing of "participation." Foreman clarified that the town had invested \$250,000 in the project to continue with the design phase. Kimple, however, raised concerns about the lack of definitive answers regarding the project's return on investment and advocated for a decisive move, stating, "It's time to cut the string to ensure our water."

As the dialogue progressed, tensions surfaced as Fiorito also expressed frustration, stating, "We've kicked this can down the road, and we're going to continue drilling wells, [waiting for] a renewable water system.... I want this council to make a decision now." Kronick echoed a sense of frustration, feeling as though the council was being "held hostage." The discussion revealed a diversity of perspectives, with Fiorito advocating for a move toward the Northern Delivery System (NDS) for a renewable water solution, emphasizing its viability within eight months. The eventual vote resulted in a

6-1 approval, with Kimple voting "no," reflecting the complexity and divergence of opinions within the council.

Budget resolutions and tax surplus

All budget resolutions passed unanimously, reporting a 19% tax revenue surplus. Councilmembers acknowledged the hard work of the town staff. Hirjoi and Foreman highlighted the 16.46% reserve and an additional 3% reserve in TABOR, totaling a 19.46% reserve.

Maverik Monument Junction back to Planning Commission

The discussion surrounding Ordinance No. 24-2023, addressing the approval of a planned unit development for Maverik Monument Junction, revealed a debate among MTC members. The proposed 1.5-acre commercial convenience store, slated to open in fall 2024, faced scrutiny over traffic implications and concern for too many gas stations in Monument. Mayor LaKind and Councilmember Kim-

ple raised concerns about traffic inaccuracies and the impact on the town's character, with Kimple expressing worry about emergency evacuation.

The debate escalated when the mayor questioned the absence of the traffic report in the Planning Commission's documentation, leading to a temporary pause in the proceedings. Councilmember Jim Romanello defended the project, emphasizing the necessity of providing options for residents east of town and disputing claims that Maverik would cause excessive traffic.

Tensions flared when traffic engineer responses were challenged, with King expressing concerns about traffic complications. The debate culminated in the decision to send the motion back to the Planning Commission for further review, scheduled for February. The final vote reflected a split decision, with Kimple voting against the motion, asserting that it did not meet the criteria in the first place.

Land acquisition approved for Town Hall expansion

In Ordinance No. 26-2023, the council authorized the purchase of the Brower property. Foreman explained that the land would be used to expand the Town Hall and its parking facilities. The ordinance passed unanimously.

\*\*\*\*\*

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. With both of these Mondays being holidays (New Year's Day and MLK Day), the next meetings are scheduled for Tuesday, Jan. 2, and Tuesday, Jan. 16. Call 719-884-8014 or see [www.townofmonument.org](http://www.townofmonument.org) for information. To see upcoming agendas and complete board packets or to download audio recordings of past meetings, see <http://monumenttown-co.minutesondemand.com> and click on Town Council. Chris Jeub can be reached at [chrisjeub@ocn.me](mailto:chrisjeub@ocn.me).

Donald Wescott Fire Protection District, Nov. 27

Merger completion expected by November; 2024 budget approved without mill levy certification

By Natalie Barszcz  
At the Donald Wescott Fire Protection District (DWF-PD) special meeting on Nov. 27, the board heard about the next steps to complete the merger with Tri-Lakes Monument Fire Protection District dba: Monument Fire District (MFD), approved the 2024 budget without certifying the mill levy, set the Board of Directors' meeting schedule, and recognized Lt. Roger Lance Jr. and members of the Local 4319 for helping voters understand ballot initiatives 6A/6B. The board received an update on the station remodels and held a Volunteer Pension Board of Trustees session before the meeting.

Secretary Larry Schwarz and Director Mike Forsythe were excused.

**Nov. 7 election update**  
District counsel Michelle Ferguson of Ireland Stapleton Pryor Pascoe PC law firm, attending via Zoom, congratulated the district on the passing of the ballot initiative 6A/6B and said the district can move forward after the official results are received from the El Paso County Clerk and Recorder. Ferguson said District Attorney Emily Powell had indicated that the election results and a court order for the dissolution of the district would be filed by Dec. 31, and the dissolution would be effective by the end of the year. MFD attorney Maureen Juran will process the merger of the district's boundaries beginning in January 2024 and the process could take about six months to complete, said Ferguson. See [www.ocn.me/v23n11.htm#dwfpd](http://www.ocn.me/v23n11.htm#dwfpd).

2024 budget and district mill levy

Ferguson said the property tax reduction and backfill structure (some special districts will be eligible for state funding to make up for lost revenue from the

property tax assessment reduction) put in place by Senate Bill 2022-238 will remain in effect for 2023, and in addition for 2024, as a result of the special state Legislature session held after Proposition HH failed, the residential assessment rate will drop to 6.7% and the amount of redemption on property tax value increased from \$15,000 to \$55,000 for 2024. The district will see a slight drop in revenue, but it can adjust the mill levy to recoup lost revenue through the de-Gallagher measure that was voter approved. The certificate of assessed valuation from the El Paso County Assessor that the district usually receives on Dec. 10 is extended to Jan. 3. The district must adopt the budget and certify the mill levy before filing with the state by Jan. 10. The board has three options:

- Proceed with the budget hearing and know that if the certificate of assessed evaluation results in a change to the budget, an amendment can be made one time without penalty.
- Open the public hearing and have as much discussion as needed, and vote to continue the hearing until the board is ready to adopt the budget in early January.
- Postpone the entire hearing until early January.
- The board cannot certify the mill levy before receiving the certificate of assessed evaluation, because the mill levy cannot be adjusted after it is filed with the state, and the district could lose revenue. See [www.ocn.me/v23n12.htm#mfd](http://www.ocn.me/v23n12.htm#mfd) and the MFD article on page 11.

Fire Chief Andy Kovacs said he had spoken to the El Paso County Assessor's Office that morning and it is scrambling to provide the

new property value assessments for 2024. Fire districts will receive 100% backfill according to HB23B-1005 Sections 6 and 7. The district should not have to adjust the mill levy, because the backfill will take care of the loss in revenue. Not all special districts will see backfill, but fire districts will, he said.

Ferguson said the backfill will happen, but some districts do not trust the state with regard to the backfill and the process is unclear.

Kovacs said the state imposed the decision, and the district does not want to look like the bad guys and raise the mill levy; it is upon the state to backfill the lost revenue.

Director Charles Fleece agreed the board should

move ahead and approve the 2024 budget minus certifying the mill levy.

President Mark Gun-

derman opened the public hearing on the 2024 budget, heard no comments and confirmed that the district

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District 4: Calhan, Peyton, a portion of Black Forest and surrounding areas (incumbent Milton L. Mathis)

District 6: Falcon, Cimarron Hills, a portion of Black Forest and surrounding areas (incumbent Barry R. Springer)

The "Procedure for Director Elections and Member Voting" is available on MVEA's website at [www.mvea.coop/annual-meeting](http://www.mvea.coop/annual-meeting).

To view a territory map with districts, visit [www.mvea.coop/territory-map](http://www.mvea.coop/territory-map).

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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 14, 2024.
- 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 4, 2024.

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.

**Nominating Committee**

District 1: Steve Burgess • District 4: Al Kobilan • District 6: Carolyn Brown

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received no comments prior to the meeting and an announcement had been made in the Gazette. He closed the public meeting and requested the board approve the 2024 budget, Resolution 2023-08 with the exception of section 4 (the adoption and certification of the mill levy).

The board approved the 2024 budget, 3-0.

The board expects to hold a “special meeting” in early January via Zoom to certify the mill levy for 2024.

Subdistrict dissolution and merger completion process

Gunderman said the board will have a large amount of administrative work for the attorneys of both districts, and he suggested the board meet monthly in 2024 through May and then revert to every other month in July through November if necessary.

The board approved the amended schedule, 3-0.

Staff and public recognition

Gunderman said the DWFPD ballot measure 6A and 6B passed as the final hurdle before formalizing the unification between the two districts and completing the merger process. He thanked the Local 4319 for the unanimous decision to pledge \$10,000 in funding for banners and mailings that allowed the district to get the important message out in an effective manner. It was a team effort led by Lt. Roger Lance Jr., with Corey Trottier, Justin Myers, Justin Chavez, and Rachel Peters canvassing neighborhoods, even on days off shift to engage in the successful education campaign. Gunderman thanked Kovacs for arranging meetings with all of the firefighters on every shift, and he thanked the firefighters for getting the word out in a team effort. District Administrator Jennifer Martin was the unsung hero, completing many extra tasks toward complet-

ing the merger. He also thanked the MFD Board of Directors for taking a leap of faith and allowing the Wescott board to wait an extra year to show the residents how well the merger was working, allowing for the education campaign to pass the ballot measures.

Martin thanked Gunderman and his mother, Mary Gunderman, for their hard work campaigning in the community.

Gunderman said his mother really did promulgate the cause and there was no one she ran into that did not receive a flyer.

Lance said it was easy to think about the campaign in the short term over the past two months, but the discussions began as early as 2010 around the coffee table. He thanked the boards and the executive staff for all the heavy lifting and making the merger happen. Achieving the merger will be the highpoint of his career, he said.

Gunderman said the board was a good team, but unfortunately Secretary Larry Schwarz was moving out of state and would not remain on the board. He appreciated Schwarz’s perspective as a retired battalion chief, and he was a big piece of the merger process. The board came together to make everything seamless, he said.

Recognition award

Gunderman thanked Lance for the special education campaign and said that before he had become a board member, Lance had been part of the committee helping to pass the mill levy increase in 2017, from 7 mills to 21.9 mills. The huge increase was needed to keep the district operational, and it passed by a two-thirds majority vote. Once again, Lance stepped up to educate the community in 2023 to lead an education campaign because the board and executive staff were not legally allowed to campaign. He de-



**Above:** From left, President Mark Gunderman presents a plaque of recognition from the Donald Wescott Board of Directors to Lt. Roger Lance Jr. for his commitment and dedication to the community, through the passage of ballot measure 6A and 6B and his leadership that facilitated the creation of Monument Fire District. Gunderman said Lance had gone above and beyond in service to the community, even educating HOA members on a day off at 8 p.m. *Photo by Natalie Barszcz.*

veloped a strategy in a short time to educate the firefighters and the public, disseminate flyers, information and banners (a couple of which were vandalized in the beginning). Lance hit the mark when it was important to let the voters know early, and without his efforts the ballot measures may not have passed. Gunderman presented Lance with a plaque for his efforts; see photo.

Kovacs said the other L4319 members would be formally recognized at another time.

Board vacancy

Gunderman said he appreciated Schwarz as a board member and his retired battalion chief perspective, and everything the board had achieved under the direction of Kovacs, but as of end of November Schwarz would no longer be a resident within the district. He suggested the board appoint a new secretary and asked Director Charles Fleece to step in and take over the duties of board secretary.

Ferguson said that filling the seat would be unnecessary, although the county could fill the position after 60 days, but that does not usually occur. She requested the board take action and request a formal letter of resignation from Schwarz.

Facilities update

Kovacs said the remodel of Station 5 (Highway 105 “Shamrock Station”) was well underway and was expected to be completed in January 2024. The remodel of Station 4 (Gleneagle Drive) will begin after Station 5 is completed. The Station 4 staff will be accommodated at Station 5 during the six-to-seven-month closure of Station 4, he said.

Financial reports

Kovacs said some of the numbers on the January-September profit and loss statement in the September financial report were negative. Those numbers were due to some accounting errors but the CPA made the corrections for the October financial report.

The board approved the financial reports for September and October, 3-0.

For more updates see the MFD article on page 11 and visit [www.monumentfire.org](http://www.monumentfire.org).

The meeting adjourned at 5:43 p.m.

**Volunteer firefighter pension fund Board of Trustees meeting**  
Trustees Michael Badger and Dennis Feltz attended the volunteer firefighter pension fund meeting via Zoom.

The board approved the financial reports for September and October.

Allocation report and pension fund status

Badger said he had not had the opportunity to get online during his travels to access the spreadsheets for the Board of Trustees’ volunteer pension fund, and he was transfer-

ring information to a new computer, but the fund is no longer running in the red. No specific numbers were available for the allocation report, but the third-quarter report for 2023 reveals the fund is not stellar but doing well enough to give him a sigh of relief compared to 2022 and early 2023, he said.

Gunderman said as long as it is in the black and looking solid and the district is no longer adding any more firefighters to the volunteer firefighter pension fund, it should be okay.

2022 actuarial report

Badger said he had not reviewed the 2022 actuarial report, but Martin had along with the trustees and board members. The report was based on no additional funding or changes in the status and is fully funded at 114%, and he was relieved after some of the doom and gloom of the recommended contributions in 2022.

Gunderman said the district is now under no obligation to make any changes.

Martin said it was great news for the district.

Kovacs said district attorney Powell recommended no additional funding going into 2024.

Gunderman said he agreed that no contribution would be added to the volunteer pension fund in 2023, and he agreed to leave the fund as is, in line with Powell’s and Kovacs’ recommendation. At some point in 2024, the management of the fund will be passed to the MFD Board of Directors on completion of the merger and the Wescott district is dissolved, he said.

Treasurer Duane Garrett said the fund should have longevity now that no other volunteers will be added to the fund.

Gunderman said he did not have an exact date, but definitely by the end of 2024, and maybe by November, MFD could be managing the fund.

Ferguson said the trustees will continue on and sit with the MFD board after the merger is completed.

Note: Board of Trustees meetings are scheduled to be held in May and November 2024 at 4 p.m., before the regular DWFPD Board of Directors meetings on the fourth Wednesday of the month. For details, visit [www.monumentfire.org](http://www.monumentfire.org).

The board approved the 2024 Board of Trustees meeting schedule for 2024, 3-0.

The meeting adjourned at 4:19 p.m.

\*\*\*\*\*

Correction

In the November edition, the cost for the Station 4 air duct cleaning completed by Steamatic was \$3,243. OCN regrets the error.

\*\*\*\*\*

Meetings are scheduled to be held every month through May 2024 on

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the fourth Wednesday at Station 1, 18650 Highway 105. The next regular meeting will be held on Wednesday, Jan. 24 at 4:30 p.m. For Zoom meeting instructions, agendas, minutes, and updates, visit [www.monumentfire.org](http://www.monumentfire.org) or contact Director of Administration Jennifer Martin at 719-484-9011.

Natalie Barszcz can be reached at [nataliebarszcz@ocn.me](mailto:nataliebarszcz@ocn.me).

Monument Fire District, Dec. 6

Concern over mill levy reduction request; property inclusion petitions accepted

By Natalie Barszcz

At the Monument Fire District (MFD) meeting on Dec. 6, the board heard about a mill levy reduction request, accepted five petitions for property inclusion with approved publication and the setting of a public hearing for the petitions. The board also received updates on the merger process, the new career fire academy, and a few recently filled staff positions.

Fire Chief Andy Kovacs attended via Zoom.

Property tax concerns

Vice President John Hildebrandt said that at the Nov.15 meeting he mentioned how the MFD directors are good stewards of the district revenue, spending appropriately, and the floating mill levy that was implemented for 2023 was voter approved. Last year, the district set the mill levy at 18.83 mills and this year the district was planning to go back to 18.4 mills and still might, he said. See [www.ocn.me/v23n12.htm#mfd](http://www.ocn.me/v23n12.htm#mfd). The district did not know the outcome of the “special” state Legislature session at the Nov. 15 board meeting when the board certified the mill levy for 2024.

Hildebrandt made the following personal comments:

- The citizens defeated Proposition HH by 18% in a 40/60 vote, after being assaulted with political ads, stating how a reduction in taxes would be good, and the TABOR funds be used in part to backfill revenue to special districts.
- After the “special session” Gov. Jared Polis held in late November to discuss property tax relief, a bill with insufficient relief for property owners was passed in SB 23B001.
- Polis then sent a letter to the special districts requesting districts reduce mill levies, but Proposition HH was insufficient before it failed, and now it is upon special districts to reduce mill levies.
- The cost of apparatus over the years has increased from \$680,000 to \$850,000 to \$1 million, and after 2027 new requirements will tack on another \$100,000. See [www.ocn.me/v23n10.htm#mfd](http://www.ocn.me/v23n10.htm#mfd).
- The district continues to grow, and with growth comes the responsibility to serve more residents, and the need to purchase more equipment that is subject to inflation.
- The district pays good wages to retain high-caliber staff and cannot “willy nilly” reduce property taxes so homeowners pay less, but he understands that no one wants to pay more taxes, including himself.
- The residents saw right through proposition HH, but I do not like being thrown under the bus by Polis, and the whole thing just peeves me off.

President Mike Smaldino said he had “duly noted” the personal comments made by Hildebrandt.

Director Roger Lance said he echoed the comments made by Hildebrandt.

Note: Before the meeting, Hildebrandt presented this reporter and each board director with a copy of The Colorado Springs Gazette article: “Polis asks to reduce property tax levy,” dated Dec. 1, 2023 by Marianne Goodland. See DWFPD article on page 9.

Financial report

Smaldino said the November financial report was not available for the board to review due to the board meeting being earlier than usual.

Kovacs said the November and

December financial reports would be reviewed in January.

Combined district merger update

President Mark Gunderman of the Donald Wescott Fire Protection District (DWFPD) Board of Directors thanked the district and the board for their patience during the merger of the two districts. He said that now that the completion of the merger is near after the passing of the ballot measure to dissolve the DWFPD subdistrict, the district will have one mill levy. He thanked Kovacs and his “phenomenal” leadership and the entire executive staff for combining the district staff and building a culture—and that is what makes it stick along with the leadership, the timing, and the right people involved, he said. The DWFPD board expects to have the merger wrapped up by mid-summer, he said.

Hildebrandt said he appreciated the DWFPD board for the tremendous level of trust it placed on the district and the board to combine the districts.

Gunderman said for the most part the process was painless, with just a few obstacles to overcome, and it goes to show that it was time to merge the districts.

Smaldino thanked Gunderman and the Wescott board and said the right pieces and players created a seamless transition up to and including the election. The MFD board will not forget that DWFPD existed, and this board is proud to serve the combined district, he said.

Wescott resident Gary Nelson congratulated both boards and the district staff, and said although the merger appeared seamless, he knows there were a lot of feet paddling under the water, but it appeared as smooth as ducks gliding across the surface. The level of service, quality, and care has increased in DWFPD, and he appreciates the dedication to complete the merger that has been 20 years in the making, he said.

**Petitions for property inclusion**

Bradley said the district received a list of properties from the El Paso County Sheriff’s Office (EPCSO) that were within the greater district boundaries, but not officially within the district. Letters were sent to property owners and the following five properties were the first to petition for inclusion:

- 774 Forest View Way – Baker Property
- 3954 Roberts Ridge Place – Meisinger Property
- 4330 Green Mountain Drive – Parr Property
- 4075 Deer Valley Court – Sperando Property
- 4320 Green Mountain Drive – Swenson Property

Bradley requested the board make a motion to accept the five petitions for inclusion as presented, set a public hearing on Jan. 24, 2024 at the regularly scheduled board meeting, and ordered the fire chief or his delegee to publish a notice of the hearing as required by state law.

The board unanimously approved the motion.

Kovacs said the district had received a few more petitions for inclusion of property into the district in addition to the five proposed. He expects several more will petition for inclusion over the next couple of months.

Director Tom Tharnish, Monument Public Works Department, asked if the new water tank in Forest View Acres was included in the list since it is right in the middle of some of the properties.

Kovacs said the address was included in the audit provided by EPCSO and not currently included in the district.

Tharnish said he would discuss a petition for inclusion with Town Manager Mike Foreman.

Note: The properties listed were built at various times from 1982 to 2017 and are located in Wildland Urban Interface areas within unincorporated El Paso County. See [www.ocn.me/v23n12.htm#mfd](http://www.ocn.me/v23n12.htm#mfd). The district is unable to collect impact fees for properties built in unincorporated areas.

Career Fire Academy update

Bradley said the following:

- The development of a com-

bined Career Fire Academy began in September between himself, Kovacs, and Fire Chief PJ Langmaid and Deputy Chief of Operations Chris Piepenburg of Black Forest Fire Rescue Protection District (BFFRPD).

- The district realized there would be no access to the Colorado Springs Fire Department (CSFD) for outside agencies in early 2024.
- The CSFD Fire Academy leadership did not want to exclude outside agencies in early 2024, but the district could not forgo training new firefighters until the second half of 2024.
- The districts are partnering



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with Pikes Peak State College (PPSC), and their Fire Academy Cadre interviewed five self-paying students to make up the numbers of the Career Fire Academy.

- Two students were accepted by PPSC to complete a full academy of about 16 to 18 students, with nine from the district and four or five students from BFFRPD. See [www.ocn.me/v23n12.htm#tmd](http://www.ocn.me/v23n12.htm#tmd).
- Lt. Steve Buckner will be the district’s new training officer and assist at the academy that is set to begin on Jan. 15.
- The district has been invited to assist with the fire science program for PPSC, and the goal is for the combined Career Fire Academy to become the El Paso County Fire Academy.

Fire academies are expensive to run, but PPSC is bearing much of the cost and it will be a cost-

effective project for the district. The district is aiming high, and we will see what happens, said Bradley.

Smaldino said it will be neat to see, and he hopes other districts will watch, jump in and send recruits.

**Chief’s report**

Kovacs apologized for being unable to attend the meeting and thanked the board for its support throughout the year and said Lt. Curt Leonhardt had accepted the logistics position. The Wildland Fire (Type 3) engine ordered in 2021 was expected to be delivered to Front Range Apparatus mid-December, then delivered to the district before Dec. 25. It is a Christmas miracle, he said. Note: The chief’s report for November will include December activity and was not available for the meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 7:02 p.m.

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**Correction**

The December edition of OCN should have stated Firefighter Wyatt Benoit left the district on Nov. 26 and joined CSFD. As stated in the October chief’s report, Lt. Chris Keough resigned from the district in October. OCN regrets the error.

\*\*\*\*\*

Meetings are usually held on the fourth Wednesday of the month. The next regular meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, Jan. 24 at 6:30 p.m. at Station 1, 18650 Highway 105. For Zoom meeting instructions, agendas, minutes, and updates, visit [www.monumentfire.org](http://www.monumentfire.org) or contact Director of Administration Jennifer Martin at 719-484-9011. Natalie Barszcz can be reached at [nataliebarszcz@ocn.me](mailto:nataliebarszcz@ocn.me).

Black Forest Fire/Rescue Protection District, Dec. 28

Exclusion process progressing; 2024 budget approved

By Janet Sellers

At the Black Forest Fire Rescue Protection District (BFFRPD) meeting on Dec. 28, the board approved the exclusion process for 952 properties, approved a revised 2024 budget, and four probationary firefighters were sworn into the district, with families pinning on the badges. The district also announced a new volunteer, search-and-rescue dog Koda.

All five board directors were present.

**Dual service area discussed**

A discussion addressed budgeting issues related to the loss of property tax revenue that will occur when Colorado Springs residents in a dual service area, are excluded from the district. The residents in the dual service area (near Woodmen Road) are subject to dual taxation by the City of Colorado Springs and BFFRPD, but will be assessed fire and emergency services taxes only by the city when excluded from the district.

Background: Until August 2013, the properties in the exclusion areas received fire and emergency services from BFFRPD, and those residents were assessed taxes for fire and emergency services by the district. In August 2013, Colorado Springs Fire Department (CSFD) opened a fire station to provide services in the dual service area and those residents then became subject to dual taxation. About 2,200 homes were subject to dual taxation when the board requested the exclusion process begin in 2018. The process has been slow and only about 700 homes have been excluded to date. See [www.ocn.me/v21n9.htm#bffrpd](http://www.ocn.me/v21n9.htm#bffrpd) and [www.ocn.me/21n10.htm#bffrpdandwww.ocn.me/v22n2.htm#bffrpd](http://www.ocn.me/21n10.htm#bffrpdandwww.ocn.me/v22n2.htm#bffrpd).

The board unanimously approved a resolution for the City of Colorado Springs to take ac-

tion to exclude 952 addresses from the BFFRPD area of responsibility. The property addresses will be checked for accuracy. The property exclusion is still under consideration.

**Homeowners petition for inclusion**

The board unanimously approved 12 homeowner petitions for property inclusion into the BFFRPD service area.

**Financial report**

The directors discussed financial information, and Treasurer Jack Hinton reported \$1.89 million in the bank with no funds from property taxes received in November. BFFRPD has \$2.655 million in total assets with expenditures at 89% of the total budget. The financial report was accepted.

**Repairs needed**

The concrete floor for the training program has been finished, and repairs to the bay doors regarding the motors and heaviness of the doors due to the glass included are out for bids.

**Department updates**

The district has hired three people to attend the January 2024 Career Fire Academy. Fire training in 2023 included structure training with Falcon Fire District, heavy vehicle extrication training with Monument and Falcon fire districts, and live fire training with CSFD. The new tender that is being built will be inspected by Gavin Smith, fleet manager, in the first week of January.

**2024 budget revised**

A revised 2024 budget with wage and leave schedules, was unanimously adopted. The budget was originally built on a premise that proposition HH would pass. Since it failed, the budget needed revisions which included a 4.7% cost of

living adjustment. However, this is not enough to remain competitive with other departments. The district will increase the operations staff from eight to 10 people with an unexpected increase of 8.75% in health insurance.

BFFRPD intends to close 2024 debt-free. The total revenues proposed for 2024 are about \$7 million, to include a \$373,301 reimbursement from the state under the SB23B-001.

**Investment strategies discussed**

A discussion was led by Hinton concerning the need for revamped financial policies and procedures that should be available to all department members and the public. These procedures would also cover investment strategies. Considerations for optimizing investment strategies were discussed. The changes incorporated into a document will be reviewed by the attorney for the fire district before being adopted, and this may need a work session. The subject was tabled until the January meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

\*\*\*\*\*

The January 2024 meeting was changed from Jan. 10 to Jan. 17. 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 Jan. 17 at 7 p.m. For joining instructions, updates, agendas, minutes, and reports, visit [www.bffire.org](http://www.bffire.org) or contact Director of Public Relations Brooke Reid at [Admin@bffire.org](mailto:Admin@bffire.org) or call 719-495-4300.

Janet Sellers may be reached at [JanetSellers@ocn.me](mailto:JanetSellers@ocn.me).

Natalie Barszcz also contributed to this article.

Forest Lakes Metropolitan District, Pinon Pines 1, 2, and 3, Dec. 4 and 13

District participates in Northern Delivery System; rates increase for 2024; budgets approved

By Natalie Barszcz

At the Forest Lakes Metropolitan District (FLMD) and Pinon Pines Metropolitan District (PPMD) 2 and 3 meeting on Dec. 4, the board approved participation in the Northern Delivery System (NDS), approved the 2024 budgets and mill levies subject to receiving the Jan. 3 revised property tax assessment, and approved rate increases and an updated contract for services with Triview Metropolitan District (TMD). The board received budget-related updates on the Northern Monument Creek Interceptor (NMCI) pipeline project and the Pikes Peak Regional Water Authority/Colorado Springs Utilities (CSU) Indirect Potable Reuse Study.

A town hall meeting preceded the regular board meetings via teleconference at 3 p.m. District Manager Ann Nichols confirmed that no residents attended the six-minute meeting to receive updates on the FLMD public infrastructure project status, and the PPMD 1 and 2 outstanding debt and financial statement reviews. The PPMD 1 all-resident board members did not attend any of the scheduled meetings on Dec. 4. A rescheduled special meeting was held on Wednesday, Dec. 13 at 4 p.m. At the PPMD 1 special meeting, the board approved a reduction in the debt service mill levy for PPMD 1, adopted the 2024 budget, certified the mill levy (pending the Jan. 3 revised property tax assessments), and approved the annual administrative and board member election resolutions.

Note: The meetings were held via teleconference.

**FLMD and PPMD 2 and 3**

Treasurer/Assistant Secretary Douglas Stimple, chief executive officer of Classic Homes, was excused.

**Northern Delivery System participation agreement**

District Attorney Russell Dykstra of Spencer Fane

LLP requested the board approve a proposal for the district to buy into the capacity of the NDS.

Nichols said:

- The district proposes a participation agreement in the NDS to connect the district to the CSU water storage tank (Highway 83) and deliver return flows back to the district.
- TMD upfronted the cost of the NDS that is awaiting completion of the pump station at the Highway 83 tank before water can be delivered. See [www.ocn.me/v23n12.htm#tmd](http://www.ocn.me/v23n12.htm#tmd).
- The district will own 3.7% of the total share capacity of the pipeline.
- CSU will charge a convey, treat and deliver fee annually to TMD for 25 years. The district will pay 3.7% of the total annual cost billed to TMD (subject to CSU rate increases).
- The delivery fee will also increase incrementally for FLMD if TMD needs to increase the meter size in the future.
- The district budgeted \$200,000 in 2023 and \$800,000 in 2024 (split into five payments of about \$199,506).

Tom Blunk of CP Real Estate Capital, representing Forest Lakes LLC and Forest Lakes Residential Development, said it was important to protect water rights with TMD and complete the loop for the district.

Nichols said even though the district is not quite ready to exercise control of its return flows, the water supply including surface water is virtually all 100% reusable to extinction, and all the first use water supplied to customers can be recaptured and legally reused. It is essential in this environment to retain water rights and get the water back to the district when needed, and the TMD agreement will allow this to happen (via an existing interconnect) when the Beaver Creek flows into Bristlecone Lake are not very high, she

said.

The board approved the NDS Participation Agreement with TMD, 4-0.

**Future water reuse possibilities**

Nichols said the district is considering moving its wastewater treatment to CSU in the future through the NMCI pipeline. The NMCI pipeline project request for proposal design is in process, and CSU is close to choosing a consultant. The NCMI will move ahead only if after 30% of the design phase reveals the pipeline is the most efficient way to provide service to customers, instead of making the costly regulatory requirements to the Upper Monument Creek Waste Water Regional Treatment Facility. The 2024 budget includes \$90,000 for the district’s share of the design cost. The Pikes Peak Regional Water Authority/Colorado Springs Utilities Indirect Potable Reuse Study would cost about \$350,000, and a grant for \$250,000 had been requested from the Colorado Water Authority. If the grant is successful, the remaining cost of \$100,000 will be split between the participants, she said.

**Rates increase for 2024**

Dykstra said the district had not received any public comments before the meeting. He opened a public hearing for the proposed 2024 rate increases for water, wastewater, and landscape services for FLMD and noted the increases had been published over 30 days in advance and posted appropriately on the FLMD website from Oct. 11, 2023.

Nichols recommended the board approve the proposed 7% increase in water and wastewater service rates, with no change in development fees, and a \$1 increase for the irrigation/landscaping monthly fee. The increase is necessary to get the rates up to a level that will sustain opera-



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**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.forest-lakesmetrodistrict.com](http://www.forest-lakesmetrodistrict.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](mailto:anicholsduffy@aol.com) or 719-357-5810.

Natalie Barszcz can be reached at [nataliebarszcz@ocn.me](mailto: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 in 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](http://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](mailto:jameshowald@ocn.me). Jackie Burhans can be reached at [jackieburhans@ocn.me](mailto:jackieburhans@ocn.me)

#### 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](http://loopwater.org) or call 719-488-3603 to verify meeting times and locations.

James Howald can be reached at [jameshowald@ocn.me](mailto:jameshowald@ocn.me).



Triview Metropolitan District, Dec. 13

2024 budget public hearing presented; rate increases discussed

By Natalie Barszcz

At the Triview Metropolitan District (TMD) meeting on Dec. 13, the board held a public hearing for the 2024 budget, deferring its approval until after the district property tax assessments are received on Jan. 3, discussed future rate increases, and approved a participation agreement for Forest Lakes Metropolitan District (FLMD) to participate in the Northern Delivery System (NDS). The board also approved multiple resolutions and agreements for 2024.

President Mark Melville was excused.

Note: Due to snow affecting travel in the region, a quorum could not be reached until 5:48 p.m.

District Manager Jim McGrady confirmed that the district had posted the public hearings in The Gazette, to include the issuance of additional debt in the form of a Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB) loan and the switch to Zoom-only attendance.

2024 budget

McGrady said the district would not receive the final property tax assessment from the El Paso County Assessor until about Jan. 3, and the district would need to certify the mill levy no later than Jan. 10. Under normal circumstances, the district usually certifies the mill levy by Dec. 15 and a special meeting to certify the 2024 mill levy would be needed on Jan. 8 or 9. Before the change in the state Legislature, the district was planning to lower the debt service mill levy to 16 mills for 2024, for a total of 20.5 mills, down from the 24 mills assessed in 2023. The change may need to be revised after the property tax assessed valuation is received from the assessor.

He suggested the board consider the following items:

- A 10% rate increase to the Tier 1 water rates to cover the cost of conveying water from Colorado Springs Utilities (CSU).
- A sewer utility rate increase in February or March of about 9% to 10% before the heavy water use season that usually begins in April/May.
- The district expects an increase of wastewater flow through the Upper Monument Creek Regional Waste Water Treatment Facility from 640,725 to about 957,838 gallons.
- A potential lease of 300 acre-feet of water with Pueblo if 2024 is a dry year, budgeted at \$70,000.
- An increase in the Amcobi National meter reading service fee.
- The budget allocates \$500,000 to purchase land for a future office building. The district office lease expires in 2025, and no buildings are available for lease or purchase within the district.
- \$150,000 is allocated in the budget for Burke Hollow Park.
- Well transformer and pump replacement costs.
- Northern Monument Creek Interceptor for the 30% design cost for \$350,000.
- About \$564,000 for the annual availability of service fee for CSU to convey, treat, and deliver the district's water through the NDS.
- An additional storage tank at Plant B to be built behind the existing tank. The purchase is made possible with a matching \$1 million through the American Rescue Plan Grant. The design for the tank is budgeted at \$250,000. The extra storage will assist fire-fighting needs and will allow the blending of surface and well water. It will be the last tank the district builds.
- Arkansas Valley Irrigation Co. water rights utilization (annexation into Buena Vista) for \$2.5 million. About 528 acre-feet of water is available to run through the NDS.
- The NDS pump station is budgeted at \$4.5 million. The district has spent about \$16.7 million to date, and upon completion it is expected to total about \$22 million (the total includes Segment D connecting to the west side of I-25 near Old Denver Road).

The budget allocation will decrease for:

- Engineering fees—as the district nears buildout and plan reviews are fewer.
- Development services and water attorney fees.
- Water testing now that all tests have been

completed for radium, and it is under control.

- Electric utilities are expected to decrease when the NDS pump station is online and the well operations decrease. The cost to run the NDS pump station will be less than 100% of well operations.
- The Vac truck is paying for itself quickly by avoiding costly outsourcing for sewer line cleaning.
- The district expects about 75 tap fees to generate about \$903,000 in 2024.

McGrady said every district has different costs, and typically the district's rates are lower than most, but fixed costs are driving rate increases and the district needs to ensure debt can be paid. The district is considering an increase to the tap fees that have not increased in three years, but it is important that growth pays for itself with tap fees, he said.

Water Attorney Chris Cummins said the board is not approving the mill levy until Jan. 3 due to the failure of Proposition HH and the outcome of the state Legislature special session in late November. The board will adopt the 2024 budget by Jan. 10 based on the new El Paso County Assessor's property tax assessment numbers, expected on Jan. 3. The rate increases will be approved separately in early 2024 after a public hearing.

Vice President Anthony Sexton said the budget review reveals the things the district would like to do, but nothing is set in stone, it is simply a guideline except for the mandatory expenses. Funds for projects can always be reallocated and projects rolled over to 2025—it is a work in progress. He likes to see the district always tightening belts, and if there is extra cash the district gets to do things like the NDS. The district has done rate increase studies, and the cost of the goods is increasing. The only way to keep the district operational is to increase rates when necessary. The district rates are low to mid-tier within the area and the 2024 budget looks good, he said.

Director Jason Gross said he would need to look at the proposed rate tables, but a 10% increase considering inflation does not sound unreasonable.

Treasurer/Secretary James Barnhart said the expenses are higher as the district transitions from well water to deliver renewable water to the district. Renewable water is just more expensive and there is just no way to "shake" that it is a big contributor, he said.

McGrady said the district never knows how much revenue will be generated from water sales, and the budget can be trimmed and tightened as needed, but the district is projecting about \$5 million in cash at the end of 2023.

In a 3-0 vote, the board approved the following:

- An audit engagement letter between TMD and Haynie & Co. to perform the district's 2023 financial audit for a fee not to exceed \$27,500 (including expenses).
- The Northern Delivery System Joint Funding and Participation Agreement between TMD and Forest Lakes Metropolitan District (FLMD), with authorization for the district manager to sign. See FLMD article on page 12.
- An intergovernmental agreement between TMD and Lewis-Palmer School District 38 regarding the dedication of a 20-foot perpetual, non-exclusive easement to provide for future Higby Road improvements between Jackson Creek Parkway and Bowstring Drive. In exchange the district would make improvements to Creekside Drive and Leather Chaps Drive near Bear Creek Elementary School.
- Amendment 3 between TMD and FLMD to provide utility operations services for a monthly fee of \$18,150 in 2024. The terms and fee structure for the landscaping and snow removal services was extended to Dec. 31, 2024, with authorization for the district manager to sign.
- Resolution 2023-10, an amendment to a loan contract from the Colorado Water Conservation Board for the Stonewall Springs Reservoir Complex Loan Contract, up to a

maximum principal amount of about \$5.2 million at about a 3% interest rate.

Note: The board packet for the Dec. 13 meeting can be found under Board Meeting Agendas & Minutes at [www.triviewmetro.com](http://www.triviewmetro.com).

Baptist Road intersection

Gross asked if Baptist Road was within the district's area of responsibility and if a change could be made to the intersection opposite 1st Bank to prevent motorists illegally cutting through the left-turn intersection to avoid travelling east to the Leather Chaps Drive intersection to turn around and reach the Kings Soopers shopping complex.

McGrady said the district has no jurisdiction over Baptist Road except for maintaining the north sidewalk and it does supply water and wastewater services to the commercial properties on the south side of Baptist Road and the corner of Struthers Road. El Paso County owns and maintains the road and the traffic lights on Baptist Road, he said.

Executive session

The board moved into an executive session at about 8:20 p.m., pursuant to Colorado Revised Statute 24-6-402(4) (a), (b), (e), to discuss acquisitions and receive legal advice for negotiations regarding water acquisitions, strategic planning, and change cases. No actions were taken after the executive session. The meeting adjourned at 9:24 p.m.

\*\*\*\*\*

Meetings are usually held on the third Thursday every month at the district office at 16055 Old Forest Point, Suite 302. The next regular meeting is scheduled for Thursday, Jan. 18 at 5:30 p.m. For meeting agendas, minutes, and updates, visit <https://triviewmetro.com>.

Natalie Barszcz can be reached at [nataliebarszcz@ocn.me](mailto:nataliebarszcz@ocn.me).

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Woodmoor Water and Sanitation District, Dec. 12

Board approves rate increases and budget

By James Howald

At its December meeting, the Woodmoor Water and Sanitation District (WWSD) board concluded public hearings on rate increases and on its proposed budget for 2024. Both hearings were opened at its November meeting. The hear-

ings were followed by votes on the rates and the budget. The board renewed the management contract between the district and the Chilcott Ditch Co. The board also heard financial and operational reports. The meeting ended with an executive session.



**Rates increases for 2024 approved**  
At the beginning of the public hearing on rates, District Manager Jessie Shaffer told the board that an incorrect rate for Tier 2 water usage had been published on the district’s web page. The Tier 2 rate covers water usage from 6,001 to 25,000 gallons per month. Shaffer said the district intended to raise the rates for all usage tiers by 4% but had incorrectly published a 1.9% increase for Tier 2 water. Correcting the rate would require a 30-day waiting period while the new rate was announced to the public, he said. Shaffer explained that the average residence uses 6,785 gallons of water a month, so the bulk of revenue is from Tier 1 water sales and the impact of the lower rate would be negligible. He recommended keeping the lower rate in place, enabling the board to finish its work on rates quickly.

There were no comments from the public, and board President Brian Bush closed the hearing.

The board accepted Shaffer’s recommendation and voted unanimously in favor of Resolution 23-04, which adopts the rates as published. Note: Details about the 2024 rates and fees can be found in the December issue of OCN here: <https://www.ocn.me/v23n12.htm#wwsd>.

**2024 budget approved**  
Bush continued the hearing on the 2024 budget opened at the November meeting.

Shaffer told the board that the proposed budget included a 25% increase in potable water

tap fees but made no change to sewer tap fees. He estimated the district would see \$4.2 million in tap fees in 2024 if it sells 90 new taps as expected. He listed some fees that will increase in 2024 to allow the district to recoup the cost of delivering services, such as installing new water meters, which are more expensive than previous meters. Engineering fees charged by the district are increasing to \$120 per hour. He noted that some construction projects expected to be completed in 2023 needed to be carried over to 2024.

There were no comments from the public on the budget, and Bush closed the hearing. The board voted to approve Resolution 23-05, which adopts the budget as proposed and appropriates the funds required. Bush and Directors Bill Clewe, Roy Martinez, and Tom Roddam voted in favor; Director Dan Beley voted against, arguing that the water tap fees should have been raised 47% as the district’s rate consultants advised.

**Contract with Chilcott Ditch Co. renewed**  
Shaffer asked the board to renew its contract with the Chilcott Ditch Co., explaining this contract needed renewal every year. The contract obligates WWSD to provide accounting and administration services to the ditch company for a fee of \$1,500 per month. The new contract did not increase the fee, Shaffer said. WWSD also provides labor to the ditch company for an hourly rate. Shaffer said the new contract increased the hourly rate from \$36 to \$39 per hour.

The board voted unanimously to renew the

contract.  
**Financial, operational, and engineering reports**  
Board Treasurer Roy Martinez told the board that November was a normal month in terms of water usage. He said the district was at 81% of its expected water sales for the year.  
Operations Superintendent Dan LaFontaine said there had been some small breaks in pipelines during November, one of which was complicated by the presence of an unmarked electric line. The district was running entirely on ground water, he said.  
District Engineer Ariel Hacker gave the board an update on the status of new and existing wells. Site work has begun on Well 22. Drilling of the well at the Central Water Treatment Plant property, just northwest of the Lewis-Palmer Middle School football field, has not yet begun, she said. Some equipment had to be abandoned at the bottom of Well 12. Well 16 is out of production due to a motor failure.

\*\*\*\*\*  
The next meeting is scheduled for Jan. 8, 2024 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](http://www.woodmoorwater.com) or call 719-488-2525 to verify meeting times and locations.  
James Howald can be reached at [jameshowald@ocn.me](mailto:jameshowald@ocn.me).

Monument Sanitation District, Dec. 20

Board sets bonuses and salary increases

By Jackie Burhans and James Howald  
At its December meeting, the Monument Sanitation District (MSD) board decided on bonuses and salary increases for its staff. It also renewed letters of engagement with the district’s engineering, accounting, and auditing companies and scheduled a workshop to review its duties and responsibilities.

**Bonuses and salary increases**  
Board President Dan Hamilton told the board that he was happy with the performance of the district staff and had surveyed the bonuses given by surrounding districts to their managers, which varied from no bonus to \$5,000. Last year, MSD gave General Manager Mark Parker a bonus equal to one month of his salary. He proposed giving Parker a \$4,000 bonus for 2023.

After some discussion, the board settled on a \$4,500 bonus for Parker, and bonuses for Accounts Administrator Cheran Allsup and Environmental and Regulatory Compliance spe-

cialist James Kendrick proportional to their pay rates. The board voted unanimously in favor of a motion to provide bonuses in those amounts.

Regarding salary increases, Hamilton reminded the board that last year it had given 9% increases. He said the Denver Aurora Consumer Price Index was 4.5% and suggested rounding that up to give a 5% salary increase to district staff in 2024. The board voted unanimously for a 5% increase.

**Letters of engagement renewed**  
Parker told the board that the district’s auditors had asked the board to renew letters of engagement with companies providing services every year. He provided the board with letters of engagement for GMS Engineering Inc., the district’s consulting engineers, for Haynie & Co., the district’s accountants, and for Olson Reyes & Sauerwein, the district’s auditors. The board voted unanimously to renew all three letters of engagement.

Woodmoor Improvement Association, Dec. 13

Board changes fencing standards, parking limits, election process

By Jackie Burhans  
At its December meeting, the Woodmoor Improvement Association (WIA) board discussed modifications to fencing, parking, and elections. It also discussed the Christmas lights contest, got updates on past items, and heard board reports.

**Fencing standards modified**  
The board considered a modification to the fencing standards in its Project Design Standards Manual (PDSM), which can be found under Governing Documents at <https://woodmoor.org/governance/>. Citing recent variance approvals and the need to modernize its standards, the board unanimously agreed to the changes, which were read aloud. Under “Fencing, walls, enclosures, & raised gardens,” the language will include the following points:

- A. No fence or partial fence, section or walls, or enclosures may be placed on any lot without the approval of the Architectural Control Committee (ACC).
- B. The only three decorative fences approved are split rail, dowel, and slip board built with the tongue and groove technique without the use of metal hardware and require either two or three rails. These fence types are to be rustic and open in appearance, shall not be painted or stained, and must remain of natural color. It may be protected by a clear sealant. Residents are permitted to add galvanized 14- to 16-gauge 2-by-4 wire mesh to contain animals and children.

For further clarification, residents are encouraged to reach out to ACC Administrator Bob Pearsall.

The board voted unanimously to approve these changes.

**Driveway parking limit increased**  
Board President Brian Bush introduced the topic of increasing the maximum driveway parking limit from three to four cars as a way of modernizing WIA’s rules and recognizing reality. He noted that when the original limit was set, it was unusual for families to have two cars, whereas now it is not unusual for kids of driving age to have their own cars. He also noted that county ordinances allow for street parking but said it was an

appearance, safety, and security benefit to have owners park in their garages or driveways. Finally, he said, this increase would cut down on the number of complaints, covenant hearings, and requests for variances.

Covenants and Forestry Administrator Justin Gates reported that Woodmoor Public Safety (WPS) had processed 276 visits to houses for excess vehicle complaints over the last three years, the vast majority of which were for four cars. The complaint process can take up to 24 hours of WPS’ time to check the houses, send a letter, and follow up.

Covenants Director Per Suhr asked why WIA has this limit at all. Bush replied that no one wants to see Woodmoor look like a recreational vehicle park or used car lot. ACC Director Ed Miller said this rule could be reviewed annually and increased or eliminated as needed. Public Safety Director Brad Gleason suggested there should be some deterrence, but WIA still can issue a variance for someone with more cars, noting that this is usually only a request from people with larger driveways or otherwise it would be hard to move the cars around. This change would reduce WPS responses, staff issue handling, and resident street parking, which is a win, he said.

The board voted unanimously to approve this change.

**Board election process**  
Resident Jennifer Davis asked if the board still intended to do its own ballot counting for its board elections. Bush replied that the counting would be done by two staff tallying the votes simultaneously. Anyone could watch, he said, and it takes about an hour and a half. The board had previously had the League of Women Voters do the counting, but doing it internally saves about \$1,000.

Ballots will be sent out on Jan. 2, according to Homeowner Association (HOA) Manager Denise Cagliari. Bush asked the board to consider not sending stamped return envelopes with the ballots, noting that only about 600 of the 3,400 ballots sent out are returned, and the cost of stamps will rise to 68 cents in January. Residents can drop their ballots off for free or put their own

stamp on the envelope. Bush pointed out that WIA could save over \$2,000 by eliminating the stamps, but there was a risk that it might not receive a quorum of 340 votes. Miller pointed out that including stamps only started in 2009, and WIA had never missed its quorum. Cagliari noted that about 10% of residents dropped off their dues in person and confirmed that some people reuse the stamped envelopes for their own mail. Bush said WIA could send an eBlast and put up signs reminding residents to turn in their ballots.

The board voted unanimously to approve this change.

- Board reports**
- The board had previously agreed to take advantage of Mountain View Electric Association’s (MVEA) offer to provide bill credits for winning a Christmas light contest run by WIA. There will be three \$75 and three \$25 bill credits for the top two winners in three categories. The board unanimously agreed to run the contest, with WPS providing the nominations for the board to review and pick the top two winners.
  - Common Areas Director Steve Cutler got unanimous approval to apply for a \$9,075 matching grant for noxious weed spraying.
  - Cutler reported that the new pet waste station contractor had started on Dec. 1, saving hundreds of dollars per month and improving the consistency of service.
  - Bush reported for Treasurer Connie Brown that it looked like WIA’s revenues would exceed its expenses by \$25,000.
  - Suhr said there were 15 covenant-related items in November, with nine resolved via friendly communication, one unfounded complaint, and one HOA check. No hearings were scheduled for December or January. Bush noted that WIA preferred informal resolution of covenants.
  - Gleason noted that it is the season for porch pirates and recommended the use of delivery lockboxes available by Amazon and others. He also said the damaged Toyota RAV4 was at the body shop and should be ready around the first of the year.



- Miller reported that there have been 560 projects submitted so far in 2023, which is a decrease of 7.7% from 2022. The approval percentage is 98.8%.
- Forestry Director Cindy Thrush said there were three Forestry and Firewise visits in November and that WIA was preparing its final grant reimbursement package, having exhausted the \$275,000 in matching grants

for mitigation. She is working with the state to secure additional funding in the new year.

\*\*\*\*\*

The WIA Board of Directors usually meets at 7 p.m. on the fourth Wednesday of each month in the Barn at 1691 Woodmoor Drive, Monument. There will be no regular board meeting in January. Instead, the annual meeting will be held on

Jan. 29, and the reorganization meeting will be held on Jan. 31; both will be at the Barn at 7 p.m. The WIA calendar can be found at [www.woodmoor.org/wia-calendar/](http://www.woodmoor.org/wia-calendar/). WIA board meeting minutes can be found at [www.woodmoor.org/meeting-minutes/](http://www.woodmoor.org/meeting-minutes/) once approved and posted.

Jackie Burhans can be reached at [jackieburhans@ocn.me](mailto:jackieburhans@ocn.me).

## December Weather Wrap

By Bill Kappel

The El Niño pattern was in full effect in December, with temperatures and precipitation above normal around the Palmer Divide. During El Niño patterns, the storm track over the southern U.S. becomes stronger and more active. This often brings a series of storms through California and the southwestern U.S. and along the southern Plains and Gulf Coast. At the same time this allows warm air to move into the central Plains and Ohio Valley, which bottles up the cold air in Canada. Therefore, cold air outbreaks are less common. And this December we didn't see any Arctic fronts move through. This was the opposite of 2022, when some very cold air moved in the week before Christmas.

The month started out with some light snow each of the first three days, although temperatures were only slightly below average. During the period, 2-4 inches of snow fell, with highs reaching the 30s each afternoon. Mild conditions moved in soon after, with highs reaching near daily record levels in the mid- to upper 60s on the 6th. As is normal, this was ahead of a storm system that was approaching the region from the west. This storm brought a quick change in the weather starting the morning of the 8th, with areas of snow showers increasing to snow and blowing snow during the day and continuing into the early morning of the 9th. This storm brought another 4-8 inches of snow to the region over the two-day period. Temperatures were cooler as well, with highs reaching the mid-20s on the 9th and overnight lows in the single digits above and below zero.

Another change moved in for a few days, but this time temperatures didn't warm up as much, only reaching normal levels in the 30s and 40s before another quick-moving storm brought 1-4 inches of snow to the area and cooler temperatures on the 13th. Of course, the nice part about

each of these snowfalls during the first two weeks of the month helped get us in the Christmas spirit with plenty of fresh snow on the ground. However, a longer streak of mild and dry conditions then moved back in from the 15th through the 22nd. Temperatures peaked on the 19th, with highs reaching the upper 50s to low 60s.

However, this pattern began to break down just in time for Christmas with a large area of low pressure developing over eastern Colorado and slowing moving into Kansas and Nebraska. Initially this storm brought a couple inches of snow into Christmas. Then a brief break occurred on Christmas Day before the storm continued to intensify to our east. At the same time, the storm took an unusual pattern and retrograded back to the west. This produced a prolonged period of strong northerly flow and moisture in the region from Christmas night through the morning of the 27th. This snow came in waves with a good period of heavy snow and wind the morning of the 26th and a second period of heavier snow and wind during the afternoon and evening of the 26th.

There were a couple of unique aspects with this storm. First, its northerly flow meant that the topography of the Palmer Divide was very important in developing snowfall and keeping temperatures cold enough for snow. This meant areas to our north around Denver and to our south in Colorado Springs received very little snowfall and in some cases rain showers. The other aspect was the location of the low-pressure system to our east. This left us right on the far western edge of the storm, and therefore areas farther east received more snowfall and areas farther west much less. The dividing line was right around I-25, with areas to the east picking up 6-10 inches and areas to the west only a couple inches at most. During this period, temperatures were cool as well, with highs below freezing and lows

touching zero on Christmas morning.

After this storm departed, conditions were quiet and sunny heading into New Year's weekend. Temperatures responded, climbing from the 30s on the 28th to the 40s on the 29th and the 50s on the 30th.

### 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 experiences numerous sunny and windy days, with quick shots of snow in between.

### December 2023 Weather Statistics

Average High	43.2° (-0.5°) 43.7
	100-year return frequency value max 50.5° min 32.6°
Average Low	19.4° (+6.1°) 13.3
	100-year return frequency value max 22.4° min 5.4°
Monthly Precipitation	1.51" (+0.50", 44% above normal)
	100-year return frequency value max 2.82" min 0.00"
Monthly Snowfall	27.2" (+9.5", 45% above normal)
Highest Temperature	66° on the 5th
Lowest Temperature	0° on the 25th
Season to Date Snow	41.7" (+2.2") (the snow season is from Oct 1 to Sept 30)
Season to Date Precip.	26.38" (+4.09") (the precipitation season, Jan 1 to Dec 31)
Heating Degree Days	1046 (-239) 1285
Cooling Degree Days	0 (0)
Bill Kappel is a meteorologist and Tri-Lakes resident. He can be reached at <a href="mailto:billkappel@ocn.me">billkappel@ocn.me</a> .	

## Letters to Our Community

Guidelines for letters are on page 23.

Disclaimer:The information and opinion 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 arranged in alphabetical order based on the last name of the author.

### Bell ringers help the needy

It has been my honor to be a bell ringer for the Salvation Army (SA) at Safeway in Monument to greet the wonderful, generous Tri-Lakes community. There were smiles and stories shared perhaps because of my patter as I welcomed folks with "Young lady (under 80) you look terrific today; I thought the sun was bright but your halo is blinding me." A time or two my "Merry Christmas young man" was corrected by "I'm 85" or "I'm 91." Had my 82 beat! The outpouring of cash donations was heartwarming as was noted by the downtown SA staff. The volunteers of the three sites in this area should be proud of the community response.

John Howe

### D38 school board elections

It's a shame that Todd Brown ran unopposed to the D38 school board. I say that because of my personal interactions with Todd. I was on a tour of Lewis-Palmer Middle School a few years ago with Todd. He was disinterested in education and learning about kids and how they learn. As soon as the topic turned to curriculum, he left. He certainly has no knowledge or concerns regarding kids with special needs, gifted kids, or twice exceptional kids. Todd wants to be on the board because he is sure that the board is "hiding" money or spending it on exorbitant salaries. Some of his animosity comes from events that occurred 20 years ago when he didn't even live here. He listens to the malcontents.

Todd was the administrator of the LP Parents Facebook page, which is simply a propaganda machine for those who want to destroy public education. He allowed others on the LP Parents site to debase and slander people personally and professionally. He especially let Derek Araje attack people for their opinions. But if you said something back to Derek, then you were "admonished" by Todd on the LP Parents page.

When asked why Derek wasn't "admonished," Todd said he handled Derek privately. LOL!

If you are concerned about your child's education, I suggest you keep an eye on Todd Brown. I believe he will only bring animosity to the board and the district. District money will not be spent on what is best for kids, nor on teachers. As a fiscal conservative, and the principal of LPMS for seven years (two consecutive years as a John Irwin School of Excellence), and who returned money back to the district every year from my budget for 32 years, I am dismayed at Todd's approach to education.

Terry Miller

### Appalled at MA's gender transition policy

Once again, I am appalled and disgusted by Monument Academy's new gender transition

policy! Not only is it discriminatory in nature, it blatantly states it's going against state and federal law. Another portion states the administration can notify the community, these students are minors, what gives you the right to disclose anything about them? You also talk about 4th Amendment rights; you have removed any rights of these students!

I am also curious if District 38 is sanctioning this illegal policy and will they pay for the lawsuits that will certainly ensue! (MA has already received a letter from the ACLU.) If MA is depending on parents to foot the bill, then I hope they have deep pockets!

Finally, I resent any of my tax dollars going to this dysfunctional institution!

Claudia Swenson

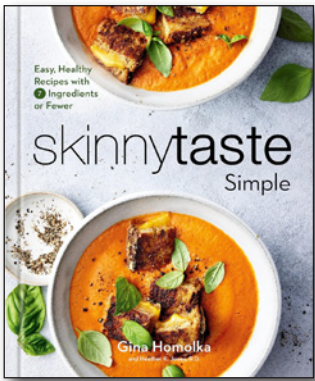
### Between the Covers at Covered Treasures Bookstore

## Books that are a great way to start the new year

By the staff at Covered Treasures  
"And now we welcome the new year. Full of things that have never been."—Rainer Marie Rilke

Here are some books that will help you navigate 2024.

Skinnytaste Simple: Easy, Healthy Recipes with 7 Ingredients or Fewer: A Cookbook  
By Gina Homolka (Clarkson Potter Publishers) \$35  
Skinnytaste Simple has recipes with no more than seven ingredients, with maximum flavor and nutrition. From hearty breakfasts to crowd-pleasing dinners, there are recipes that many will love. Each recipe features a photo, icons that indicate recipes that may suit your dietary needs (such as gluten-free,



dairy-free, vegetarian), and nutritional info, with the most up to date Weight Watchers points available on the Skinnytaste site.

Walk: Slow Down, Wake Up, and Connect at 1-3 Miles per Hour  
By Jonathon Stalls (North Atlantic Books) \$17.95  
In 2010, Jonathon Stalls and his blue heeler husky mix began their 242-day walk across the United States, relying on each other and the kindness of strangers along the way. In this collection of essays, Stalls explores walking as waking up. Walk is an urgent and glorious call to slow down, look around, and engage with the world in front of us. It's an invitation to move, to connect, to participate deeply in the world—and to dissolve the barriers that separate us from each other and the living Earth.

The Stress Prescription: Seven Days to More Joy and Ease (Seven Days)  
By Ellisa Epel (Penguin Life) \$15  
In The Stress Prescription, Dr. Epel distills decades of research, infused with wisdom, into a



practical yet transformative seven-day plan of science-based techniques that can help you harness stress through more positive challenge and purpose. Dr. Epel shows us how we can “stress better” by training our minds and bodies to shift toward a flexible, beneficial stress response that can actually enhance health. You will develop a more robust mindset, build the resources you need to turn stress into strength, and fill your days with more joy, connection, and ease.

Outlive: The Science and Art of Longevity  
By Peter Attia (Harmony) \$32  
In this operating manual for longevity, Dr. Peter Attia draws on the latest science to deliver innovative nutritional interventions, techniques for optimizing exercise and sleep, and tools for addressing emotional and mental health. Dr. Attia’s aim is less to tell you what to do and more to help you learn how to think about long-term health, to create the best plan for you as an individual.

Aging and longevity are far more malleable than we think; our fate is not set in stone. With the right roadmap, you can plot a different path for your life, one that lets you outlive your genes to make each decade better than the one before.

Awe: The New Science of Everyday Wonder and How It Can Transform Your Life  
By Dacher Keltner (Penguin Press) \$28  
In Awe, Dacher Keltner presents a radical investigation and deeply personal inquiry into this elusive emotion. Revealing new research into how awe transforms our brains and bodies, alongside an examination of awe across history, culture, and within his own life during a period of grief, Keltner shows us how cultivating awe in our everyday life leads us to appreciate what is most humane in our human nature. And during a moment in which our world feels more divided than ever before, and more imperiled by crises of different kinds, we are greatly in need of awe.

Atomic Habits: An Easy & Proven Way to Build Good Habits & Break Bad Ones  
By James Clear (Avery Publishing Group) \$27  
James Clear draws on the most proven ideas from biology, psychology, and neuroscience to create an easy-to-understand guide for making good habits inevitable and bad habits impossible. Along the way, readers will be inspired and entertained with true stories from Olympic gold medalists, award-winning artists, business leaders, life-saving physicians, and star comedians who have used the science of small habits to master their craft and vault to the top of their field.

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

January Library Events

2024 Adult Reading Program announced; Toddler Time resumes

By Harriet Halbig  
The 2024 Pikes Peak Library District Adult Reading Program will begin on Feb. 1 and last until March 31. More information will be in the next issue of OCN.

Monument Library will begin offering Toddler Time again in January. Sessions will be at 9:30 and 10 on Wednesday mornings, followed by Stay and Play.

Story Time on Tuesdays in Monument will not resume, but Family Story Time will continue at Palmer Lake on Fridays from 10:30 to 11:15.

There are a few changes on a district-wide basis. Use of The Hall adjacent to Penrose Library will be discontinued beginning May 1, 2024. A few reservations are still available before that date. Staffing posed a problem. The Special Collections department is now called Regional History and Genealogy. The department offers an extensive collection of maps, periodicals, government publications and pamphlets, and family history resources back to Colonial times.

Materials must be used on site. Hours for the department are 10 to 5 Tuesday through Saturday. Database resources will also change in 2024 as the district reviewed usage and expense. For details, please see the district website, ppld.org.

Happy New Year from the library, and we look forward to seeing you soon.  
Harriet Halbig can be reached at harriethalbig@ocn.me.

Palmer Lake Historical Society, Dec. 17

90th Annual Yule Log Hunt

By Marlene Brown  
As part of Christmas activities, the Town of Palmer Lake, with the Palmer Lake Historical Society (PLHS) helping with the ceremonies, held the 90th Annual Yule Log Hunt on Dec. 17 at the Palmer Lake Town Hall. The event is known to be the longest-running yule log ceremony in the United States.

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 the hidden log. The first yule log was found by C.R. Hays. He then rode the log back to town pulled by the other hunters. They were greeted by 200 cheering residents and visitors. The log was cut in half, half of the log was burned, and the other half was saved for the next year.


This year’s yule log was found by Josephine Maslak of Erie, Colo. The log was then cut in half with a hand saw. Half of the log was burned in the fireplace at the Town Hall. According to tradition, Christmas songs are sung by everyone in the Town Hall, then the first drink of the wassail, a traditional warm drink of apple cider and spices, is served to the finder of the log, and all the guests are then welcome to partake in a cup of wassail.

The Town of Palmer Lake supports the Yule Log Hunt and has proclaimed the second Sunday before Christmas to be known as Yule Log Sunday. Many thanks to Palmer Lake Yule Log Association for continuing the traditions of Yule Log Hunt. See its Facebook page—Palmer Lake Yule Log—for more information.

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The next event for the PLHS will be at 6 to 8:30 p.m. Jan. 18 (doors open at 5:30 p.m.). The Annual Potluck Supper and Membership Meeting will be held at the Palmer Lake Town Hall. A brief business meeting will include a recap of 2023 and the election of 2024 officers. The meeting is open to the public. For more information, go to palmerdividehistory.org.

Marlene Brown can be reached at malenebrown@ocn.me



**Above:** Pictured at the 90th Annual Yule Log Ceremony are Mistress of Ceremonies Patricia Atkins, Master of Ceremonies Niall Byrne, and euphonium and Call to Hunt player Nolan Byrne. Photo by Mike Cimino.

High Altitude Nature and Gardening (HANG)

The wonderful gifts of the pine tree

By Janet Sellers  
We live in a high desert pine forest clime. Our soil and environment have been optimized for millions of years for the native plants that include our pine trees. Besides lumber, the pine forests offer much to us that we may not know, but the Native Americans who lived here for thousands of years have a deep understanding of the forest benefits to our health and land stewardship.

From root to crown, our local ponderosa pine tree holds much benefit for nature in its up to 800 years of forest ecology life—and for us. Our area has been an important conservation place, too. In an article this year about the origins of the nearby Monument Nursery (on Mount Herman Road), Eric Swab of the TrailsandOpenSpaces.org (TOSC) shared some historic facts about our beloved local forests, a huge factor for why we all live here in the Tri-Lakes region.

“By the mid-19th century, the U.S. government owned much of the forested land in the West. Over the years these forests had been devastated by wildfires, and by logging for the railroads, mining and the building industries. The government was beginning to realize that something needed to be done to protect this resource, this ‘green gold,’ that was so important to the growth of the country.” The forests had to be replenished, and the Monument Nursery became the place where millions of seedlings got their start to protect the forests and the land of the mountain West.

Pine forests have natural oils released by the trees for many reasons, particularly to protect the health of the trees. A pine tree releases its scent messages to other trees about pathogens and pests. The pine scent comes from chemical compounds called terpenes. If the bark of the tree is damaged, the tree can release protective resin that deters pests and fungal growth. The pine scent also deters insects such as mosquitos.

One of the surprising facts for newcomers to our area about our pines is regarding pine needles. They make excellent mulch for landscaping (as evidenced by the forests themselves) and provide some health benefits to people and animals by breathing the pine scented air. Some species of pine, such as the white pine, are used in beneficial teas, but needles of the ponderosa are not used for this.

Pine needles decompose very slowly so they don’t need replacing as often as other mulches. However, eventually needles will break down and enrich garden soil. By the time the needles fall from the tree, they have lost a lot of their acid composition, and as the soil microbes digest them, they become close to neutral. They moderate soil temperature in summer and prevent winter soils from freezing and heaving roots from the ground.

In fire-prone areas, care must be taken in using any natural mulch. Pine needles hold in ground moisture, knit themselves together to stay put even on sloped areas, and allow snow and rain to sift through them to nurture the soil. The natural soil in our area is specific to support the native plants of pine forests, yet pine needle mulch topping does not bother food or flower garden plants, since these must be planted into appropriately amended soil. Then pine mulch does its job to keep in soil moisture while keeping out weeds.

There are many books and U.S. Forest Service pamphlets as well as online details if one has an interest in learning more about the benefits of pine trees and pine needle mulch.

Janet Sellers is an avid “lazy gardener” letting Mother Nature lead the way for natural growing wisdom. Reach her at JanetSellers@OCN.me.

Art Matters

Why people should live with art

By Janet Sellers  
An artist may or may not show their work publicly. Fortunately, most artists will show and sell their creations. It is an act of sharing, and of course a strategy for attracting attention to one’s creative prowess.

Living with art gets you beyond everyday activity.  
“It’s a matter of pure enjoyment, but also, living with art gives people a sensitivity, absolutely, and more feeling, more understanding,” Peter Selz, founding director of the Berkeley Art Museum, said in a recent interview for the library about the University of California at Berkeley art lending program. “Living with art gets you be-



yond everyday activity into a deeper world.”

Such library loans, museum loans, or rentals assemble a collection of works touched by the hand of the artist and make them available to students, which would support a meaningful extension of the university’s art teaching program. Many museums also have lending libraries of original art, and artists can offer their works in this way as well. Original art is available to live with and display, for a short while.

Even animals make art with a purpose

I recently saw a video of a puffer fish making an extraordinary sand mandala exhibition to attract a female mate. The male creates an elaborate mandala in the sand about 30 meters below the ocean surface

and must maintain it carefully. A female will evaluate the structure and choose the male after evaluation and completion of other courtship behaviors. The females leave the nest but males stay and will care for the eggs and protect them until they hatch in about a week. They will chase off predators or other rival males that come to the nest. The mandala nest will deteriorate over time and won’t be used again.

Art as attractant and courtship display

The National Library of Medicine (in an article on communicative and integrative biology) reports that, “The bowerbird makes elaborate structures and decorates them with colorful objects. These are not nests. The operational definitions of art, judgment, and aesthetics

suggest that great bowerbirds are artists and have an aesthetic sense. Males create art because their created bower is voluntarily viewed by females, leading to changes in their behavior up to and including courtship with the artist. Male bowerbirds have an aesthetic sense in that they have to create the bowers and forced perspective, and appear to constantly maintain and improve the bower geometry.”

Just as a male bowerbird chooses and displays its found treasures to be viewed and ascertained by his audience (female bowerbirds), so does a museum curator, who is responsible for designing displays and arranging art for exhibition. The bowerbird guards his creative display or artwork, and the museum curator is guardian of the artwork and exhibit. Both will have

a voluntary audience to view and make judgments about acceptance of the works.

While these fascinating art experiences are temporary for appreciation, we can take a prompt from the phenomenon. When we like a work of art, we can get it for posterity. Some artworks are one of a kind, some are handmade prints or photographic prints in editions of specific multiples. Many artworks become family heirlooms, and some collectors’ artworks go out for a paid loan to museums for view or are sold at a profit for the collector as the artwork increases in value.

Janet Sellers is an artist, writer, and speaker. Her paintings, sculptures, and print artworks are exhibited coast to coast and locally in Colorado. Contact her at JanetSellers@ocn.me.

Snapshots of Our Community

TLWC Grant process opens Jan. 15



Left: In a photo taken Oct. 1, Monument Warriors Team Coordinator Lisa Glen displays the new track uniforms and sound system purchased with a Tri-Lakes Women’s Club (TLWC) 2022 grant. Eligible groups can start applying for grants from the 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. Photo by Sue Leggiero.

Monument Tree Lighting, Dec. 2



Above and below: The wail of a fire truck siren announced the arrival of Mr. and Mrs. Claus (Jeff and Sarah MacLean) Dec. 2 at Limbach Park in Monument. They hopped off the truck and were immediately surrounded by children. Shortly after their arrival, the countdown to the tree lighting began. A cheer erupted when the lights turned on. Kids lined up to give their Christmas wishes to Santa while adults took advantage of the food, drink, and entertainment throughout the park. Earlier in the evening, the crowd was serenaded with several Christmas carols by the Lewis-Palmer D38 Middle and High School Choirs. Photos by Michael Weinfeld.

Small Town Christmas, Dec. 2



Above: Monument merchants took part in the annual Small Town Christmas event on Dec. 2 complete with music, goodies, snow, and Santa. Santa appeared around town and took time with Mrs. Claus to greet dozens of children who came to La Casa Fiesta. The Morris family, including Mom and Dad, Mary and Shawn, gathered around Santa (John Howe) and Mrs. Claus (Claudia Swenson) for a photo to put in their family album. Photo provided by the Morris family.

Below: All along the streets of Monument downtown, visitors enjoyed libations to buy and complimentary treats while buying gifts at the shops. Shown here, the Trails End Tap Room had an outdoor craft fair with the Trombone Christmas musicians. Photo by Janet Sellers.



High School Choirs, Dec. 6



Above: Choirs from Lewis-Palmer (LPHS) and Palmer Ridge (PRHS) High Schools presented a holiday concert at LPHS auditorium on Dec. 6. Madeline Smith, director, conducted choirs from both LPHS and PRHS in seasonal presentations that included Christmas, Hanukkah, and even a rendition of Robert Frost’s Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening. LPHS choirs included Treble Voices and Mixed Choir, and PRHS choirs included Chamber Singers and Women’s Ensemble. Janice Kinsley, collaborative pianist, accompanied LPHS choirs and Nancy Jacobsen, collaborative pianist, accompanied PRHS choirs. Photo by Steve Pate.



## Arkenstone at TLCA, Dec. 9



**Above:** On Dec. 9, a capacity audience at the Tri-Lakes Center for the Arts (TLCA) ushered in the holiday season as they spent the evening listening to *A Winter's Eve* with David Arkenstone & Friends. Arkenstone, a five-time Grammy nominee, was accompanied by virtuoso musicians Josh Gilgoff (percussion), Laurann Angel (violin), Emily Elkin (cello), and Kimberly Zaleski (flute), with candles lining the stage for a festive atmosphere. They performed songs from Arkenstone's albums *Christmas Lounge*, *Celtic Christmas*, and his latest album *Winterlude*, applying genres including Celtic, new age, neo-classical, and world museum to the songs that emphasized the extent of their musical talents. The song list included *I Saw Three Ships*, *Deck the Halls*, *Ice Palace*—a song inspired by a story told by his grandmother—Tchaikovsky's *Arabian Dance* from the *Nutcracker* ballet, and *Warm Lights Flicker Across the Lake*. *Photo by David Futey.*

## AARP elects officers, Dec. 13



**Above:** AARP Chapter 1100 Black Forest elected officers for 2024 at its meeting Dec.13. Roy Rozak was elected president, Stan Beckner, vice president, Jim Belk, treasurer, and Lin Rozak, secretary. A Board of Directors was also voted on. After the vote, members enjoyed a catered buffet dinner. *Photo by Stan Beckner.*

## TLMA holiday concert, Dec. 15-17



**Above:** On the weekend of Dec. 15-17, the Tri-Lakes Music Association offered its annual holiday music program at the Palmer Ridge High School auditorium. The evenings featured special performances from its orchestra, brass instruments, strings, piano works and vocals of solos, duets, and full choral works sharing holiday favorites and innovative pieces. Donations were accepted on behalf of Tri-Lakes Cares and the Music Association, both of which are nonprofit volunteer organizations for community benefit and enrichment. *Photo by Janet Sellers.*

### An Audio Newspaper?

We are now posting audio files for many of our news articles. Go to [www.ocn.me](http://www.ocn.me), navigate to the page containing that issue. and look for the phrase "Listen to this article." You can use the players on the page or download the audio file to listen to it on your devices. Toward the top of that page is a link to download a ZIP file of all the audio files for that issue. If you have questions of problems, please contact [johnheiser@ocn.me](mailto:johnheiser@ocn.me) or call (719) 488-3455. Thanks for listening!

## Career and Technical Ed at LPMS



**Above:** On Dec. 11, Lewis-Palmer Middle School hosted a Career and Technical Education (CTE) showcase with projects, teachers, and students in its cafeteria. LPMS offers Gateway to Technology, Robotics, Web Design, CAD Design and 3D Printing, and Yearbook as well as Health Science (Medical Detective and Forensic Science). In the photo is Sean Sanger, 7th Gateway to Technology teacher in the CTE Department. For more information about D38's CTE program, see <http://lewispalmer.org/page/career-technical-education>. *Photo by Jackie Burhans.*

## TL Dynamic Rotary distributes coats



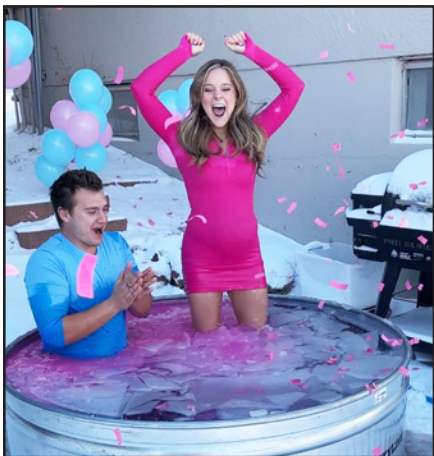
**Above:** The Tri-Lakes Dynamic Rotary handed out more than 350 new winter coats to Tri-Lakes Cares clients as part of its second annual Warm Hugs new coat drive. Coats were distributed on Dec. 11 and 14. As one recipient said, "[There's] something about having a new coat that can't be duplicated." The coats were collected at donation boxes at local businesses around Monument as well as at a coat and cash donation day Dec. 2. In photo are, from left, Rotary members Jeremiah Baty, Alisha Baty, Shannon Schurr, Soul Santa (Terrance Beasley), Rotary Community Service Director Laurie Beasley, Katie Lenger, Brenda Small, and Nicole Schoolsky at the coat distribution event at Tri-Lakes Cares. *Photo by Julie Keim.*

## Friends of Fox Run Park, Dec. 17



**Above:** Friends of Fox Run Park, the volunteer organization that helps with tasks and education at Fox Run Regional Park, held its annual holiday "celebrating community" event on Dec. 17 at the warming hut near the twin ponds. Visitors and hikers at the park enjoyed hot cocoa, roasted marshmallows, and s'mores as well as making wooden ornaments from the park's fallen pine branches. Representatives from the Native American Sacred Trees and Places were also on hand to share local history and knowledge of the special significance and historic cultural traditions unique to the park. The Friends of Fox Run Park is accepting volunteers of all ages for upcoming seasonal opportunities with park tasks and trails, which include forest education and conservation, and can be contacted at [FriendsOfFoxRunPark@gmail.com](mailto:FriendsOfFoxRunPark@gmail.com). *Photo by Janet Sellers.*

## 100 million+ view gender reveal



**Left:** Monument residents Micah and Kya Jeub released a live video revealing the gender of their third child—during an ice bath. Pink paint shot through their bath to reveal a girl is on her way. Their video went viral on TikTok, YouTube, and other social media platforms, garnishing over 100 million views. *Photo by Chris Jeub, Grandpa, who attended the reveal.*

### Correction

In the December issue of OCN, it was stated that Jeanette Breton founded Bearbotics. "Coach" Breton is head coach of Bearbotics, FIRST Tech Challenge (FTC) Head Coach, and founder of Monumental Impact for Technology, Engineering & Entrepreneurship (MITEE). See <https://monumental-impact.org/>. OCN regrets the error.



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.

Voyager Parkway Near Spectrum Loop will close

Voyager Parkway near Spectrum Loop is closed as part of the ongoing Powers Boulevard Extension Project. The project to build an overpass for the future extension of Powers Boulevard started Monday, Nov. 20. The closure is expected to last into fall 2024. The goal is to get the bridge in place to alleviate traffic impacts once the Sunset Amphitheatre that opens in the Summer of 2024.

Children’s Literacy Center

The 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 pm, and the Summer Session will run through Aug. 14. For more information, to become a volunteer tutor or to enroll your child, visit [www.childreosliteracycenter.org](http://www.childreosliteracycenter.org) or email Christine Jeffson at [Christine@childreosliteracycenter.org](mailto:Christine@childreosliteracycenter.org).

Community volunteers

Many students need volunteer hours for scouting, civics classes, clubs, or would just like to volunteer for the good of it. Friends of Fox Run Park will have some openings for student volunteers (and grownups, too) most of the year for various tasks. Besides tasks, the group offers information and skills demonstrations for each 2-3 hour session, and celebrates volunteers at the park with annual community events. The Tri Lakes Cares on-site garden in Monument also needs volunteers in Fall, Spring and Summer. Gardening tasks include preparing garden beds, weeding, sowing seeds, and developing the compost. Bring gardening gloves, some tools will be provided on the workdays. Contact Janet Sellers at [JanetSellers@ocn.me](mailto:JanetSellers@ocn.me) or Marlene Brown at [MarleneBrown@ocn.me](mailto:MarleneBrown@ocn.me) for more information.

MVEA outage notifications

Please add your phone number to your MVEA account to streamline outage reporting and restoration notifications. To report an outage please call or text "OUT" to (800) 388-9881. Visit MVEA's Outage Center before the storm. There is information about preparing for outages, electrical safety, outage reporting, a link to the outage map, and more.

Palmer Lake Parking

Restrictions during snow

When there is an accumulation of two inches or more of snow, the parking restrictions shall be in effect. No person shall stop, stand, or park any vehicle on any portion of a snow route, or leave, abandon, or permit to remain stalled any vehicle, which is stalled on any portion of a snow route and take immediate action for placing the vehicle to be parked lawfully. Parked vehicles shall be removed from all streets within the town, including those which are not designated snow routes. Parking information details: <https://www.townofpalmerlake.com/pw/page/parking-restrictions-during-snow>.

Get Help in Larkspur

Larkspur Church has a Food Bank and Care Center that offer a good variety of non-perishable food items, as well as clothing for men, women, and children, some household items available too. We're here to help. If you are in need, or know someone who is, please reach out to Jeff at [gethelp@larkspur.church](mailto:gethelp@larkspur.church). If you would like to donate contact Jeff by the same email to arrange a pick up.

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. For more information: [www.flydenver.com/accessibility](http://www.flydenver.com/accessibility), [www.hdsunflower.com/us/](http://www.hdsunflower.com/us/), and [www.disabled-world.com/disability/types/invisible/](http://www.disabled-world.com/disability/types/invisible/).

Tri-Lakes Cares needs your support

Tri-Lakes Cares is the only food pantry and human services organization 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 learn 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 Mon.-Thu., 9 am-4 pm. For more information about Tri-Lakes Cares or how you can help, contact Tri-Lakes Cares at 719-481-4864 or [info@tri-lakescares.org](mailto:info@tri-lakescares.org).

Silver Key at Tri-Lakes Senior Center

Silver Key at Tri-Lakes Senior Center, formerly known as the Tri-Lakes Silver Alliance Senior Center, has been providing exciting programs and activities to area seniors who have a zest for fun and learning. As the older adult population is growing, our services are in high demand. 719-884-2300 66 Jefferson St, Monument.

Volunteers needed for student tech makerspace

Monumental Impact (MI) organizers are building a community of mentors and volunteers to enable and support high school students interested in technology, engineering and entrepreneurship. MI manages a makerspace in Monument in partnership with D38 school district. MI offers internships to high school students for industry experiences and hosts D38's competitive robotics team, Bearbotics, in the makerspace and organizes various events to share projects and to compete. Contact Jeanette Breton at [Jeanette@MonumentalImpact.org](mailto:Jeanette@MonumentalImpact.org) or [volunteer@monumentalimpact.org](mailto:volunteer@monumentalimpact.org) for more information.

Can you volunteer today?

- **Links to local organizations** with an immediate need for volunteers are listed on the county's website, [www.elpasocountyhealth.org/volunteering-and-donations](http://www.elpasocountyhealth.org/volunteering-and-donations), for groups like Care and Share, Cross-fire 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/>
- **El Paso County volunteer-based and nonprofit organizations** are committed to building healthy, caring communities and 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>.

Why advertise in OCN?

- OCN is mailed FREE to every resident and business in the Tri-Lakes area. We mail more than 22,700 copies every month and put another 700 copies in stacks throughout the area. OCN has the one of the largest mailed circulations among local newspapers in Colorado. 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 \$111,000!
- 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](http://www.ocn.me/advertise.htm) or contact John Heiser at (719) 488-3455 or [ads@ocn.me](mailto:ads@ocn.me).*



# 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](mailto:calendar@ocn.me) with changes and additions.

## GOVERNMENTAL BODIES

- Forest Lakes Metropolitan District, Pinon Pines Metropolitan District 1, 2 & 3 board typically meets quarterly on the first Mon. Meetings are held via teleconference. For virtual joining instructions and updates see [www.forestlakes-metrodistrict.com](http://www.forestlakes-metrodistrict.com).
- Academy Water and Sanitation District board meeting, Wed., Jan. 17, 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. 17, 7 pm, Station 1, 11445 Teachout Road, Colorado Springs. Find updates and Zoom meeting joining instructions at [www.bffire.org](http://www.bffire.org) or contact Administrative Officer Rachel Dunn at 719-495-4300. Meetings are usually held on the third Wednesday.
- Donald Wescott Fire Protection District board meeting, meetings are scheduled to be held every month through May 2024 in person at Station 1, 18650 Highway 105, Monument and via Zoom at 4 p.m. on the fourth Wednesday of the month. A special meeting via Zoom will be scheduled to certify the district mill levy in early January. The next regular meeting is scheduled for Wed., Jan. 24, 4 pm. For Zoom meeting instructions, agendas, minutes, and updates, visit <http://www.monumentfire.org> or contact Director of Administration Jennifer Martin at 719-484-9011.
- Donala Water & Sanitation District board meeting, Thu., Jan. 18, 1:30 pm, 15850 Holbein Dr. In 2023, meets third Thu., Check the website for the access code for the electronic meeting. Info: 719-488-3603, [www.donalawater.org](http://www.donalawater.org).
- El Paso Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) regular meeting, usually every Tue., 9 am. The first meeting of 2024 is Jan. 9. View agendas and meetings at [www.agendasuite.org/iip/elpaso](http://www.agendasuite.org/iip/elpaso). Meetings are held at Centennial Hall, 200 S. Cascade Ave., Suite 150, Colo. Springs. Info: 719-520-643. BOCC land use meetings are held the second and fourth Thursdays of the month (as needed) at 1pm Centennial Hall.
- El Paso County Planning Commission meeting, Thu., Jan. 4 & 18; 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://planning-development.elpasoco.com/2023-meetings/>
- El Paso County Regional Loop Water Authority meeting, Tue., Jan. 18, 9 am Monument Town Hall Boardroom, 645 Beacon Lite Rd. Normally meets third Thu. Info: 719-488-3603. [www.loop-water.org](http://www.loop-water.org).
- Lewis-Palmer School District 38 Parent and Community Advisory Committee (formerly DAAC), Tue., Jan. 9, 6-10 pm, Lewis-Palmer High School, 1300 Higby Road, Meets six times a year. Usually meets monthly, second Tue. Contact info: [tmckee@lewispalmer.org](mailto:tmckee@lewispalmer.org).
- Lewis-Palmer School District 38 board meeting, Mon., Jan. 22, 6-10 pm. 146 N Jefferson St, Monument. The Board of Education meeting will be live-streamed on the district's YouTube channel: [www.youtube.com/user/LPSDCcommunity](http://www.youtube.com/user/LPSDCcommunity), agenda, and supporting documents at <https://go.boarddocs.com/co/lewispalmer/Board.nsf/vpublic>. Contact Vicki Wood. Phone: 719.481.9546 Email: [vwood@lewispalmer.org](mailto:vwood@lewispalmer.org) Website: <https://www.lewispalmer.org>.

- Monument Academy School Board, Thu., Jan. 11, 6:30 pm, East Campus gym, 4303 Pinehurst Circle. Usually meets the second Thu. Info: 719-431-8001, [www.monumentacademy.net/school-board](http://www.monumentacademy.net/school-board).
- Monument Fire District board meeting, in person or via Zoom, Wed., Jan. 24, 6:30 pm., Station 1, 18650 Highway 105, Monument. Meetings are usually held on the fourth Wednesday. Find updates and Zoom meeting joining instructions at <http://www.monumentfire.org>, or contact Director of Administration Jennifer Martin, at 719-484-0911.
- Monument Planning Commission meeting, Wed., Jan. 10, 6 pm Town Hall Board Room, 645 Beacon Lite Rd., Monument. Usually meets the second Wed. To see the options for remote public participation in each meeting, visit [www.townofmonument.org/263/Planning-Commission-Board-of-Adjustment](http://www.townofmonument.org/263/Planning-Commission-Board-of-Adjustment). Info: 719-884-8028. [www.townofmonument.org](http://www.townofmonument.org).
- Monument Sanitation District board meeting, Wed., Jan. 17, 9 am, 130 Second St. Zoom meeting. Find joining instructions on the website. Meets third Wed. Info: 719-481-4886, [www.colorado.gov/msd](http://www.colorado.gov/msd).
- Monument Town Council meeting, Mon., Jan. 15, 18 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](http://www.townofmonument.org/260/Board-of-Trustees-for-remote-attendance-links).
- Palmer Lake Board of Trustees meeting, Thu., Jan. 11 & 25, 5 pm, Palmer Lake Town Hall, 28 Valley Crescent. Usually meets second and fourth Thu. Info: 719-481-2953. [www.townofpalmerlake.com](http://www.townofpalmerlake.com).
- Palmer Lake Board of Adjustments, Tue., Jan. 2, 5 pm, 28 Valley Crescent St., Palmer Lake. Normally meets first Tues., as needed.
- Palmer Lake Sanitation District board meeting, Wed., Jan. 17, 9 am, call-in only: 650-479-3208, Access Code 76439078, 120 Middle Glenway. Meets second Wed. Info: 719-481-2732. [www.plsd.org](http://www.plsd.org).
- Palmer Lake Town Planning Commission meeting, Wed., Jan. 17, 6 pm, Palmer Lake Town Hall, 28 Valley Crescent. Meets third Wed. Info: 719-481-2953, [www.townofpalmerlake.com](http://www.townofpalmerlake.com).
- Tri-Lakes Wastewater Facility Joint Use Committee meeting, Tue., Jan. 9 , 10 am, 16510 Mitchell Ave. Meets second Tue. Info: See <https://tlwastewater.com/index.html> Bill Burks, 719-481-4053.
- Triview Metropolitan District board meeting, Thu., Jan. , 18, 5:30 pm, 16055 Old Forest Point, Suite 302, Monument. Normally meets third Thu. Info: 719-488-6868, [www.triviewmetro.com](http://www.triviewmetro.com).
- Woodmoor Improvement Association Board Meeting, Wed., Jan. 24, 7 pm, Woodmoor Barn, 1691 Woodmoor Dr. The WIA Board usually meets fourth Wed. Info: 719-488-2693, [www.woodmoor.org](http://www.woodmoor.org).
- Woodmoor Water & Sanitation District board meeting, Mon., Jan. 8, 1 pm, 1845 Woodmoor Dr., Monument. Normally meets second Mon. Info: 719-488-2525, [www.woodmoorwater.com](http://www.woodmoorwater.com).

## WEEKLY & MONTHLY EVENTS

- AARP Black Forest #1100, second Wed., noon. In-person Black Forest Lutheran Church, 12455 Black Forest Rd. All ages welcome. Info: [www.aarpchapter1100blackforest.weekly.com](http://www.aarpchapter1100blackforest.weekly.com).
- AARP Local Senior Social, fourth Wed. In-person Black Forest Lutheran Church, 12455 Black Forest Rd. Info: [www.aarpchapter1100blackfor-](http://www.aarpchapter1100blackforest.weekly.com)
- 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#.
- Alcoholics Anonymous, every Tue. & Thu., 7:30 p.m. Black Forest Lutheran Church, 12455 Black Forest Road, Colorado Springs, Colorado 80908. AA is a fellowship of people who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. Join us with your questions. Info: [bflc@bflchurch.org](mailto:bflc@bflchurch.org),
- Al-Anon for family and friends of alcoholics, every Tue. & Thu., 7:30 p.m. Black Forest Lutheran Church, 12455 Black Forest Road, Colorado Springs, Colorado 80908. Al-Anon members are people, just like you, who are worried about someone with a drinking problem. Join us with your questions. Info: [bflc@bflchurch.org](mailto:bflc@bflchurch.org)
- Al-Anon Zoom Meeting, Just for Today Online, every Mon., 9-10 am Zoom Meeting ID: 889 4142 7446, Password 349309.
- Al-anon Meeting: Monument, every Thu., 7-8 pm, Ascent Church (formerly the Tri-Lakes Chapel), 1750 Deer Creek Rd., Monument. Info: [MonumentSerenity@gmail.com](mailto:MonumentSerenity@gmail.com).
- 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](http://www.al-anon-co.org).
- Amateur ham radio WØTLM (Tri-Lakes Monument ham radio Association), third Mon. All amateur ham radio operators or those interested in becoming one are welcome. Info: [www.WOTLM.com](http://www.WOTLM.com).
- Benet Hill Monastery, Let us pray with you, walk in the forest, come up and visit prayer sites, every Sun. worship is 10:15 am, 3190 Benet Lane, 80921. See ad on page 3.

- Benet Hill Monastery, Half Day Prayer Group, 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](mailto:stherese@benethillmonastery.org). See ad on page 3.
- Benet Hill Monastery, Centering Prayer Group, 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](mailto:stherese@benethillmonastery.org). See ad on page 3.
- Black Forest Community Church, Centering Prayer Group, 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, at 719-433-3135, for information.
- 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](http://www.childrensliteracycenter.org) or contact Rachel Morin, Tri-Lakes Senior Center Coordinator, CLC 610-246-1047 (cell).
- Colorado Springs Philharmonic Guild Listening Club, third Wed. Free virtual event. Maestro Wilson will conduct monthly hour-long programs. RSVP at [www.cspguild.org](http://www.cspguild.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](http://www.trilakesseniors.org).
- Fellowship of Christ Church, every Sun., 9 am. Monument Academy East Campus, 4303 Pinehurst Circle 80908. See ad on page 6.
- Friends of Fox Run Park, Zoom meeting, fourth Thu., 7 pm, email [friendsoffoxrunpark@gmail.com](mailto: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, special events, and more. Info: [friendsoffoxrunpark@gmail.com](mailto:friendsoffoxrunpark@gmail.com).
- Friends of Monument Preserve (FOMP) Trail Repair monthly Work Days, second Tue. Apr.-Oct. 5 pm. Meet at Mt Herman Trailhead at the corner of Mt Herman Rd and Nursery Rd, bring gloves. FOMP needs volunteers to help repair the trails in the National Forest Open Space surrounding the Monument Fire Center. The Forest Service recently completed the second phase of Fire Mitigation work and many of the social trails have been damaged. The Forest Service relies on FOMP to maintain these trails. Tools will be provided.
- Fuel Church GriefShare, every Thu., 5:30-7:30 pm, 643 State Highway 105, Palmer Lake. Email [info@fuel.org](mailto:info@fuel.org). 643 Hwy 105, Palmer Lake.
- Fuel Church Sunday Service, every Sun. Service times, 11:00 am Live service streaming at [www.fuelchurch.org](http://www.fuelchurch.org) at 11:40 am on [www.fuelchurch.org](http://www.fuelchurch.org). Mountain Community Mennonite Church, 643 Hwy 105, Palmer Lake. Nursery and kids' service. Non-denominational, spirit-filled. Need prayer? Email us at [info@fuel.org](mailto:info@fuel.org). See ad on page 5.
- German Conversation Group, every Mon., 1:30 pm, Monument Library, 1706 Woodmoor Drive. Public welcome with Intermediate to Advanced German speaking skills.
- 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. Info: Duane Gritzmaker, [dwgritz@gmail.com](mailto:dwgritz@gmail.com) or 719-649-9220.
- Gleneagle Women's Club, membership luncheon, third Fri., Sep.-June, various venues, 12 activity groups, i.e., hiking, bridge, etc. Guests welcome. For information contact Susan Owen, 719-886-7110.
- GriefShare Support Group, last Tue., 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.
- La Leche League breastfeeding support group, second Thu., 12:30 pm. Partners and helpers welcome (and babies and kids, too) so we can meet our breastfeeding goals together. Homestead Direct Primary Care Clinic, 15455 Gleneagle Drive, Colorado Springs, CO 80921. For more information, contact [RachelKLangley@gmail.com](mailto:RachelKLangley@gmail.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](http://www.trilakeslionsclub.org).
- 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](mailto:khare@alz.org) to register.
- Monument Hill Kiwanis Club meeting, every Sat., 8 am. [www.MHKiwanis.org](http://www.MHKiwanis.org), Monument-HillKiwanis@gmail.com for details, guests are

## Support Our Community. Patronize OCN advertisers!

Did you know that our advertisers are the reason Our Community News is mailed FREE to the entire Tri-Lakes community?

Our mailed circulation each month exceeds 22,700. We also place another 600 papers each month in stacks at local businesses.

Our advertisers' willingness to advertise in OCN makes free distribution of this newspaper possible. Please let them know you saw their ad in OCN when patronizing their business!

Thank you for your support!  
Please shop Tri-Lakes and  
Black Forest businesses!



- welcome. Service leadership clubs, Key clubs, Builders Club, and K-kids at D38 schools. Memberships are open to the public. Info: RF Smith, 719-210-4987, [www.MHKiwanis.org](http://www.MHKiwanis.org).
- 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. Daycare for children under age 11. Info: 303-946-2659, [www.liferecoverygroups.com/meetings/life-recovery-group-3/](http://www.liferecoverygroups.com/meetings/life-recovery-group-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](http://www.mereowx.org/neighborhood-net) or [contactus@mereowx.org](mailto:contactus@mereowx.org).
  - Northern El Paso County Coalition of Community Associations (NEPCO) meeting, Sat., Jan. 20, 10 am-12 pm., Woodmoor Barn, 1691 Woodmoor Dr. HOA legal topics. Members of local HOAs are welcome. Usually meets bi-monthly (Jan., Mar., May, July, Sep., Nov.) on the second Sat. of the month. [www.nepco.org](http://www.nepco.org).
  - Palmer Divide Quiltmakers, first Thu., 6:30-8:30 pm at Monument Chamber of Commerce building, 166 2nd St, Monument, CO.
  - Palmer Lake Art Group, second Sat. A variety of art programs are offered after the social gathering and business meetings. Guests welcome. 300 Hwy 105, NE corner of I-25 and 105. 9:30 am. Info: 719-460-4179, [www.palmerlakeartgroup.com](http://www.palmerlakeartgroup.com).
  - Palmer Lake Historical Society, Thu., Jan. 18, 6 pm; (doors open at 5:30 pm), Palmer Lake Town Hall, 28 Valley Crescent St. Annual Potluck Supper and Membership Meeting. Usually meets third Thu., 7 pm. Contact: [Kokesdm@yahoo.com](mailto:Kokesdm@yahoo.com), <https://palmerdividehistory.org>.
  - Pikes Peak Genealogical Society meeting, Wed., Jan. 10, 7 pm, guest speaker Judy G. Russell is a genealogist with a law degree. She writes, teaches, and lectures on a wide variety of genealogical topics. Meets monthly, second Wed. Members can log in and get the monthly meeting Zoom link. Guests are welcome to attend, please request an invitation from the PPGS president at [www.PPGS.org](http://www.PPGS.org).
  - 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](http://www.ridgeviewcolorado.org). See ad on page 6.
  - 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](mailto:sue@monumentalfitness).
  - Senior Book Club, second Fri., 11 am-noon, Silver Alliance Senior Center, all are welcome. Coffee & snacks. RSVP & info: Sue, 719-330-0241.
  - 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.
  - Tri-Lakes United Methodist Church, every Sun., Contemporary 9 am; Traditional 10:30 am. A live stream is available at [www.tlumc.org/live](http://www.tlumc.org/live). Watch live or replay: [www.facebook.com/tlumc](https://www.facebook.com/tlumc), [www.youtube.com/tlumc.org](https://www.youtube.com/tlumc.org). Info: 719-488-1365, [www.tlumc.org](http://www.tlumc.org). 20256 Hunting Downs Way, Monument.
  - 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, [gregsmith@trilakeschurch.org](mailto:gregsmith@trilakeschurch.org), [www.trilakechurch.org](http://www.trilakechurch.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>.
  - Tri-Lakes Chamber of Commerce Networking breakfast, first and third Thu., in person or via Zoom 166 2nd Street Monument 7:30-9 am free registration at [www.TriLakeschamber.com](http://www.TriLakeschamber.com).
  - Tri-Lakes Women's Club (TLWC) monthly meeting, Tue., Jan. 8, 11:30 a.m. Program: Holiday performance by the Knotty Pines singers, Eisenhower Golf Club, USAFA. Usually meets monthly on the third Fri. To become a member, or learn about the club, visit our website at [www.tlwc.net](http://www.tlwc.net) Contact Info: Tri-Lakes Women's Club membership@tlwc.net.
  - Walk with a Doc walking group: safe, fun, and free community event where you can learn about health topics and meet new people. Every Tue., beginning Jan. 2, 2024. 12:30 p.m. at the Baptist Trailhead of Santa Fe Trail 1916 Baptist Rd, hosted by Homestead Direct Primary Care. Learn more at <https://Walkwithadoc.org>. Dr. Langley is the contact person.
  - 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 the 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
  - 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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto:carlsonmkc@aol.com).

SPECIAL EVENTS

- VOLUNTEER TODAY! Our Community News mailing days, Thu., Jan. 4 & Feb. 1, approx. 7-9:30 am. We are all volunteers at OCN and need YOUR help, even for an hour or two, getting the papers ready to mail. Contact [AllenAlchian@ocn.me](mailto:AllenAlchian@ocn.me) or (719) 488-3455.
- Palmer Lake Outdoor Classic Youth hockey camp, foundation game event, Sat. Jan. 6, 9-11 am. Adult Tourney Sun., Jan. 7, 3:30-7 pm, more. Fireworks, fire pits, food trucks. Event at the lake on the ice at Palmer Lake, CO. Sign up: [PalmerLakeoutdoorclassic@gmail.com](mailto:PalmerLakeoutdoorclassic@gmail.com). Info: [www.PalmerLakeOutdoorclassic.com](http://www.PalmerLakeOutdoorclassic.com) and <https://www.locallevevents.com/events/details/30916>.
- FIRST Tech Challenge (FTC) Qualifier, Sat., Jan 13, 7 am-5 pm. Bear Creek Elementary School. Help D38's 1st robotics qualifier be a success in our region! These events are ALL volunteer with opportunities for both adults and students (middle school through high school) to contribute. Training is provided if needed for a volunteer role. Email us at [volunteer@bearbotics.org](mailto:volunteer@bearbotics.org). More information: <https://monumentalmimpact.org/events/ftc-pikes-peak-qualifier-2024/>.
- The Annual Broomball Tournament will be held on frozen Palmer Lake, Sat., Jan. 20, 2-4:30 PM. Bring Your Own Broom & Your Completed Broomball Volunteer Waiver Form. Teams and individuals can register today. Info: Palmer Lake Parks Commission, [PalmerLakeParksandTrails@gmail.com](mailto:PalmerLakeParksandTrails@gmail.com). <https://www.townofpalmerlake.com/parks/page/save-date-winterfest-broomball-tournament-12024> Hosted by the Parks Commission.
- Make It Work Clinic for PCs, FREE. Donations appreciated. We are gauging interest in helping community members with their PCs, please email us if interested. [enable@monumentalmimpact.org](mailto:enable@monumentalmimpact.org). 55 Adams St in Downtown Monument. Monumental Impact info/ register: <https://monumentalmimpact.org>.
- Affordable Flooring Connection: Sales and installation. See ad on page 2.
- Cornerstone Cleaners, special offers through Jan. 31. 1030 W. Baptist Road, near King Soopers. See ad on page 4.
- Drip coffee house: special \$2 off coupon- see ad on page 3.
- Eagle Wine & Spirits, special offers through Jan. 31. Baptist Road next to King Soopers. See ad on page 3.
- Gleneagle Candle Co., special offers through Jan. 31. 13796 Gleneagle Drive 80921. See ad on page 4.
- The Love Shop: Restyle your furs, Wed.-Thu., Jan. 10-11; 251 Front St. See ad on page 10.
- 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. 88 Hwy 105. See ads on page 7.
- Mountain View Pella windows, Special offers. See ad on page 24.
- Noel Relief Centers, New patient specials. 950 Baptist Rd #130, Monument. See ad on page 7.
- Mountain View Electric Association board nominations, see ad on page 9.
- Peak View Windows, Stucco, Siding, Doors and More. Special offers through Jan. 31. See ad on page 24.
- Silver Sey senior services, companionship services and more including friendly home visits. Volunteers needed. 719-884-2300. See ad on page

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](mailto:johnheiser@ocn.me) or (719) 488-3455 with any questions.

- 2.
- St. Peter Catholic School open house, Sun., Jan. 28, 8am-3 pm, 124 First St.,monument. See ad on page 2.
- The Living Room Plants, special offers through Jan. 31. 12229 Voyager Pkwy, Suite 100. See ad on page 5.
- Tri-Lakes Collision and Auto Service Center, special offers through Jan. 31. 2101 Wolf Court, Monument. [www.trilakescollision.com](http://www.trilakescollision.com). See ad on page 5.
- YMCA Special offers. See ad on page 6.
- Ham radio license class, earn your FCC amateur radio technician license. 20 hour paced course of study, introductory session in person Sat., Feb. 17, 1-3 p.m. Woodmoor barn, Monument. Registration fee required. For more information contact Bob Witte, [bob@k0nr.com](mailto:bob@k0nr.com).

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 send the information to [calendar@ocn.me](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto: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. 3

Ad space reservations due: Fri., Jan. 12  
Finished ad artwork due: Fri., Jan. 19  
Letters to the editor due: Fri., Jan. 19  
Calendar items due: Fri., Jan. 26

Visit our website to read, download, and search all the back issues at  
**WWW.OCN.ME**



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Above: Palmer Lake welcomes you to “Believe” and brightens your holiday season with the Palmer Lake Star.  
Photo by David Futey.

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Our Community News (OCN), with a **mailed** circulation of over **22,700**, 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 and business owners.

For advertising information, contact  
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