

To view the presentation, please go to lewisipalmer.org, family resources, committees, and meeting content.

Ascent Church report

Jonathan Martin from Ascent Church reported on its partnership with the district to support student mental health.

The church sponsors a 5k race in September called the Run 4 Hope. This year's race raised \$25,000, which will be distributed to School Districts 20 and 38 to support anti-suicide and other mental health initiatives.

Adult training in mental health was also offered last summer.

Committee Co-chair Holly Rollins commented that there seems to be an increase in perpetual anxiety among students and advised that parents learn to listen to their students and not assume that they know the source. Be willing to chat to uncover information without judging or advising solutions.

Board of Education Liaison Tiffiny Upchurch

commented that the board stresses this priority and said that the partnership between district staff and parents is critical.

Rollins said it is critical to destigmatize mental health problems.

Committee updates

The Financial Transparency Committee has met once in December. The group is discussing its priorities and learning about educational finance.

The Staff Collaboration Committee is learning about new Human Resources law.

The Wellness Committee met in the fall to make a plan for the year and will meet again in the spring to share wellness practices.

The Gifted Education Leadership Team is determining how best to communicate with parents regarding eligibility for services.

The Calendar Committee, after first creating a calendar to accommodate a four-day week, is now beginning again on the calendar for 2024-25. They want to explore creating board policy regarding the calendar,

such as designating certain school holidays and the start and end dates of each year.

The Special Education Advisory Committee, which allows parents to provide input regarding practices and procedures for students with disabilities and advocates for students, sponsors an annual parent questionnaire and the Aliorum Dei award to honor those who make a difference in the lives of students with disabilities. Nomination applications are available from Feb. 14 through March 13 with the ceremony to take place on April 24.

The Parent and Community Advisory Committee meets six times a year. Locations vary. The next meeting will be from 6 to 8 p.m. Feb. 13 at Prairie Winds Elementary School, 790 Kings Deer Point E. For information, please contact tmckee@lewisipalmer.org.

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

Black Forest Fire/Rescue Protection District, Jan. 17

Work session scheduled for April; financial plan on hold

By Janet Sellers

This reporter was unable to make a recording and attend in person. This article was based on the agenda available online at BFFire.org and notes from the meeting provided by Donna Arkowski.

At the Black Forest Fire/Rescue Protection District (BFFRPD) meeting on Jan. 17, the financial management plan was discussed as well as the 2024 fee schedule and 2024 board meeting schedule.

Work session for district operation policies and meeting dates approved

A work session will be scheduled for a Saturday in April regarding all the relevant policies for district operation. The BFFRPD board meetings will be on the third Wednesday of each month through 2024, except

for December which will potentially be a week earlier.

Financial management plan on hold

The BFFRPD financial management plan is on hold and being studied. A discussion was held on how to handle and arrange for a professional engineer to review the issues regarding plan reviews that come from the El Paso County Planning Department to the fire district for comment.

Policy package requested

Chief Langmaid was requested to provide a complete package of all policies of the district to all board members and have a book with this information in place at the station for anyone who wishes to review it.

Fee schedule updated

The 2024 fee schedule was updated and is available

online at bffire.org. Fee schedules include services such as research and retrieval, medical reports, property inclusion, commercial inspections, file permits, subdivision plan reviews, and others.

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 Feb. 21 at 7 p.m. For joining instructions, updates, agendas, minutes, and reports, visit www.bffire.org or contact Director of Public Relations Brooke Reid at Admin@bffire.org or call 719-495-4300.

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Donald Wescott Fire Protection District, Jan. 4 and 24

2024 mill levy certified; tight timeline to complete merger

By Natalie Barszcz

The Donald Wescott Fire Protection District (DWFPD) board met on Jan. 4 to certify the 2024 mill levy and hear about the subdistrict dissolution and to discuss meeting date changes needed to complete the district merger by the end of 2024. The board discussed a pre-inclusion intergovernmental agreement (IGA) with the Tri-Lakes Monument Fire Protection District dba Monument Fire District (MFD). On Jan. 24, the board accepted the pre-inclusion IGA, decided the future board members, and accepted a revised 2024 board meeting schedule.

Director Mike Forsythe was excused on Jan. 4, and Secretary Charles Fleece was excused on Jan. 24.

2024 mill levy certification

Fire Chief Andy Kovacs said the expected loss of property tax revenue for 2024 will be about \$228,000 for the district (based on 21.4 mills), and about \$747,000 for MFD (based on 18.4 mills), for a total of about \$975,000. The El Paso County Assessor's Office does not have the software to differentiate between the loss of revenue from the Residential Assessment Rate (RAR) and the \$55,000 rooftop adjustment, so the district cannot backfill by adjusting the mill levy to compensate for the \$55,000 per rooftop loss. Assurance from the state that 100% of the lost revenue will be received by the district in March or April, he said. See www.ocn.me/v24n1.htm#dwfpd.

Background: In 2024, the RAR dropped to 6.7% and the amount of redemption on property tax value increased from \$15,000 to \$55,000.

District attorney Emily Powell of Ireland Stapleton Pryor Pascoe PC law firm, attending via Zoom, said for 2024 the state will need to pick up 100% of the revenue loss as a result of the adjusted RAR and the \$55,000 reduction to the assessed valuation for each property.

In a 3-0 vote, the board certified the general operating mill levy at 21.4 mills for 2024.

District merger process update

Powell said the first phase of the merger was complete after her office received the official election results from El Paso County in December. A request to

the district court to issue an order of dissolution for the sub-district was then filed. As of Dec. 27, the order of dissolution was filed with the county Clerk and Recorder Office and DWFPD is one district with one mill levy.

The second phase of the process has begun and will involve legally merging the boundaries of DWFPD and MFD. The merging of the boundaries will be done by utilizing the property inclusion and exclusion processes set forth in Parts 4 and 5 of the Special District Act. The transfer is allowed without an election because DWFPD is moving to a lower taxing district and property owners will save money when the merger is complete. The process will be intense, and the merger is expected to be complete by the end of 2024.

The goal is to complete 99.9% of the property transfer by April 30 to ensure the process will not bleed into early 2025. The Assessor's Office will backdate the property transfer on the tax rolls to Jan. 1, 2024 and MFD will begin receiving the property tax revenue Jan. 1, 2025. If the deadline is not met, the board will continue meeting to transfer revenue to MFD for another year, until MFD can begin receiving the revenue via the Assessor's Office on Jan. 1, 2026.

Powell presented the board members with a document laying out the timeline of the projects and a document proposing a pre-inclusion IGA with MFD, and she requested two or three board members be identified to remain on the board to assist with the final dissolution of DWFPD. The personal residences of the remaining two board members would be the final 0.1% of the property remaining in the district, to be transferred at the end of 2024. The Sun Hills Fire Station is expected to be transferred to MFD, because a dissolved district cannot keep it, but a discussion should ensue if there are concerns, she said.

President Mark Gunderman and Treasurer Duane Garrett elected to move onto the MFD board in May to replace directors Roger Lance and Tom Tharnish. Both MFD board directors had previously requested retiring from the board in 2024. Fleece and Forsythe remain Wescott board members to assist

with the completion of the merger.

Powell said the property owners of the district will receive a mailer in early February explaining the process of the merger, the benefits to the property owners, and the resulting drop in mills after the merger is completed. The mailer will include an invitation for property owners to attend a public hearing at Station 1, 18650 Highway 105, Monument on March 6 at 4 p.m.

The board adopted the pre-inclusion IGA with Tri-Lakes Monument Protection District dba Monument Fire District, 3-0 on Jan. 24.

Powell requested the following revised meeting dates be approved to align with the merger process schedule:

- March 6
- April 24
- June 12
- June 26 (includes Volunteer Pension Board meeting)
- July 24
- Sept. 25
- Nov. 20

In a 3-0 vote, the board adopted the revised board meeting schedule on Jan. 24.

For more information on the combined district activity, see the MFD article below and the Snapshots section on page 15.

The Jan. 4 meeting adjourned at 12:58 p.m. The Jan. 24 meeting adjourned at 5:13 p.m.

Meetings are typically held on the fourth Wednesday at Station 1, 18650 Highway 105. The next regular meeting will be held on Wednesday, March 6 at 4:30 p.m., preceded by a public hearing at 4 p.m. For Zoom meetings instructions, agendas, minutes, and updates, visit www.monumentfire.org or contact Director of Administration Jennifer Martin at 719-484-9011.

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

Monument Fire District, Jan. 24

Property inclusions approved; three promoted to lieutenant

By Natalie Barszcz

At the Tri-Lakes Monument Fire Protection District dba Monument Fire District (MFD) meeting on Jan. 24, the board held a public meeting before approving five property inclusions, accepted two petitions for future inclusion, and approved a pre-inclusion intergovernmental agreement (IGA) with Donald Wescott Fire Protection District (DWFPD). The board received multiple updates on facilities, apparatus, communications and personnel, and an overview of the recently compiled community risk assessments and standards of coverage document.

Between the DWFPD and MFD board meetings, a ceremony was held to promote engineers Brian Kirkpatrick, Adam Wakefield, and Charles Ragland to lieutenants. Ragland was unavailable to attend the ceremony. See photos on page 12.

Director Tom Tharnish attended via Zoom.

Property inclusions

Fire Chief Andy Kovacs said the district received a list a couple of months ago from the El Paso County Sher-

iff's Office (EPCSO) identifying properties within the greater district boundaries but not officially within the district. The district informed each of the property owners via letter, asking if they would like to be included into the fire district. See www.ocn.me/v24n1.htm#mfd.

The board held a public hearing before approving the following five property inclusion resolutions:

- 2024-1 Parr property.
- 2024-2 Swenson property.
- 2024-3 Meisinger property.
- 2024-4 Baker property.
- 2024-5 Sperando property.

The board unanimously accepted the inclusions of property.

The board accepted petitions for inclusion of real property:

- Petitioner Gould—738 Forest View Way.
- Petitioner Thulin—4035 Deer Creek Valley Court.

The board is scheduled to hold a public hearing on these petitions on Feb. 28 at its regular meeting.

The board unanimously approved the petitions.

Pre-inclusion

intergovernmental agreement

The board unanimously approved a pre-inclusion IGA with the DWFPD. See DWFPD article above.

Community risk assessments and standards of coverage

Kovacs introduced a presentation on the completed 120-page document on community risk assessments and standards of coverage compiled by the district Accreditation Manager Battalion Chief Scott Ridings. In the absence of Ridings, Division Chief of Community Risk and Reduction Jonathan Bradley presented an overview highlighting:

- A description of the community served and the fire and emergency services provided.
- A deployment and coverage area showing four basic planning zones, the sub-divisions contained within each, and the different fire

MFD (Cont. on 12)