

Our Community News

Volunteers reporting on community issues in Monument, Palmer Lake, and the surrounding Tri-Lakes area



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We now have
audio posted
for many of the
recent articles
and videos for some events.



Local Events

Readers should assume that event information published in this issue is subject to change and information should be confirmed a day or two before the event by calling the information number or checking the organization's website.

See pages 18-19 for event locations and other details of these and many other local events.

- OCN mailing days, Thu., Feb. 29 & Apr. 4, approx. 7-8:30 am.
- Knights of Columbus at St. Peter Catholic Church Fish Fry Fridays during Lent, Fridays, Mar. 1-22.
- Monument Library Chess Club, Sat. Mar. 2, 2-4 pm.
- Stuff the Truck Food Bank Collection, Sun., Mar. 10, 9:30-11:30 am, Benet Hill Monastery.
- The Love Shop: Restyle Your Furs, Wed.-Thu., Mar. 13-14. See ad on page 8.
- Tri-Lakes Women's Club (TLWC) monthly meeting, Fri., Mar. 15, 11:30 a.m.
- Kiwanis Stars of Tomorrow Talent Show, Sun., Mar. 17, 2-5 pm. See ad on page 5.
- 100+ women who care membership/social networking, Wed. Mar. 20, 5 p.m.
- Palmer Lake Historical Society, Thu., Mar. 21, 7 pm. History of the Monument Cemetery.
- Holy Week Services, Bennett Hill Monastery Sun.-Sun., Mar. 24-31. See ad on page 3.
- Holy Week Services, Tri-Lakes United Methodist Church. Sun.-Sun., Mar. 24-31. See ad on page 7.
- Friends of Fox Run Park, Zoom meeting, Thu., Mar. 28, 7 pm
- Little Log Church 100th Anniversary Celebration, Sat., May 11, 1-4 pm.
- Taste of Tri-Lakes Cares, Wed., May 15, 5:30-8:30 pm.
- Annual Silver Key Senior Summit – Expo of Senior Services, Thu., May 16, 9-2 pm. See ad on page 2.
- YMCA summer day camp ages 5-12 begins May 28. See ad on page 6.



Above and below: D38 17th Annual Chess Tournament, Feb. 24. See page 16. *Photos by Michael Weinfeld.*



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Planned Fox Run Nature Center raises concerns



Above: More than 100 citizens of the surrounding areas of Fox Run Regional Park met with El Paso County Park and Recreation executives and planners, along with representatives from TDG Architecture to discuss the proposed Fox Run Park Nature Center. Those living in proximity to the park have voiced concerns regarding the impact on traffic through the neighborhoods, parking, and disruption of the quiet seclusion of their homes. There are also concerns about the loss of trees due to the size of the Nature Center but also the loss of the habitat for the wildlife that live in Fox Run Regional Park, including red and black foxes that have returned to the park in the last few years. There will be another public meeting **March 14**, 6-8 p.m. at the Pikes Peak Brewing Co. in Monument. See more information at www.tdg-frnc.com. *Photo by Marlene Brown. See also the letter to the editor on page 14.*

Monument Town Council, Feb. 5 and 20

Monument discusses Loop water system, non-sanctuary status, traffic studies

By Chris Jeub

Two town hall meetings were held on Feb. 5 and 20, during which updates and discussions were provided on a range of topics. The meetings covered progress reports on various projects and initiatives, including water management, infrastructure development, sales tax solutions, and immigration policies. Tensions arose during discussions on traffic concerning development impacts of Highway 105 and Jackson Creek Parkway. No decisions were made during these meetings concerning the congestion of traffic in this area.

Progress report on the Loop water system

John Kuosman, representing the El Paso County Regional Loop Water Authority (EPCRLWA, or the Loop) provided an update on the ambitious Loop water system during the Feb. 5 meeting. The system, a rotational water distribution initiative spanning the Colorado Springs area with Monument situated at its northernmost point, aims to transform water management practices in the region.

Kuosman expressed optimism about the project's progress, noting that while significant headway had been made, the journey to completion was ongoing. A pivotal moment came in October 2023 when an operational model was successfully executed, with the results shared among all member agencies. Central to Kuosman's presentation was the system's value proposition, emphasizing the long-term benefits of infrastructure investments. Forecasts suggested that the system could deliver water at a rate as low as \$8.35 per 1,000 gallons, positioning it as a cost-effective solution for member agencies. Monument, represented in the system's governance structure, holds a proportionate share of decision-making authority, ensuring local involvement in critical matters.

Councilmembers posed pertinent questions regarding cost comparisons, potential additions to existing fees, and the timeline for construction. Concerns were raised about the transparency of cost projections and the feasibility of delivering renewable water to all stakeholders. Kuosman addressed

these queries, acknowledging the need for further analysis while affirming the system's capability to provide renewable water upon completion.

In response to inquiries about construction timelines, Kuosman outlined a timeline aiming for the \$110 million system to be operational by 2027, demonstrating a tangible pathway toward realizing the project's goals.

Baseline Engineering steps in during moratorium

Amid Monument's moratorium on new project submissions, Baseline Engineering has assumed a pivotal role in project management. Two contracted planners, Julie Esterl and Lauren Richardson, have been brought on board to bolster the town's capabilities. Town Manager Mike Foreman highlighted the substantial workload, revealing that Baseline Engineering is currently managing 20 projects. Foreman also expressed optimism about the imminent hiring of a town planner, with strong candidates "already in the pipeline."

Hybrid sales tax solution approved

Resolution No. 06-2024 was presented and unanimously approved by the Town Council on Feb. 5. Finance Director Mona Hirjoi proposed the resolution, which outlines a hybrid solution for the self-collection of sales tax in Monument, set to commence on Oct. 1, 2024. Stemming from the council's acknowledgment of the need for improved control over revenue processes following Monument's transition to a home-rule municipality in January 2023, the decision to pursue this hybrid solution aims to enhance autonomy and efficiency. Hirjoi played a role in preparing and proposing the solution, facilitating discussions with key stakeholders such as the Colorado Department of Revenue and consulting firm CoSak to inform the decision-making process.

Monument Lake and Limbach Park improvements

The Monument Town Council passed Resolution No. 07-2024 unanimously, approving a contract with CXT for the

Monument Academy School Board, Feb. 8 and 22

Board passes parental rights policy 6-1; member resigns

By Jackie Burhans

Monument Academy (MA) held its regular meeting on Feb. 8 where it passed a parental rights policy after much discussion. It held a special meeting on Feb. 22 to reorganize after a board member's resignation.

In addition, MA reviewed its Q2 academic dashboard, approved moving forward with its homeschool program, heard administrative and committee reports, and discussed its assessment opt-out policies.

Board passes parental rights policy

Board President Ryan Graham reviewed the history of MA's parental rights policy, which describes how to handle transgender students. Based on past discussions, the current version strikes out the example of trying out for sports and the statement that parents may view their child's Fourth Amendment right to privacy as being violated by the actions of the transgender student and are encouraged to seek legal counsel. Graham read the entirety of the policy JRT Parental Rights Policy which can be found at <http://bit.ly/ma-policyJRT>.

Earlier, several public comments were made by members of the audience supporting the board, its resolution, and encouraging it to pass this policy. Commenters included former El Paso County State Rep. Tim Geitner, who is the board president for Liberty Tree Academy which is having similar conversations.

The board's legal counsel, Brad Miller, of Miller Farmer Carson Law, spoke, and while declining to give detailed legal advice in a public meeting responded to some of the concerns that were raised at the previous board meeting. He noted that there was discussion on whether student rights trumped parental rights and whether the case cited, *Troxel v. Granville*, was

MONUMENT (Cont. on 6)

MA (Cont. on 2)