

risk for wildfire, and that allowed the individual forest districts to access funds for mitigation projects.

The plan was to masticate areas and then conduct a controlled burn, far more effective than one without the other. The complexity of burning an area surrounded by homes on three sides was challenging, but burning fuels in the winter months would not have been as effective, and windy, dry conditions throughout the spring would have had a greater impact on the residents. Fifty members of Team Rubicon mitigated the undergrowth in the area adjacent to Shiloh Pines and Forest View Acres; the district assisted with two chipping crews. The weather and fuel moistures dictated the time of the burn, combined with when the leaf-out period began.

The initial plan was pushed back by a day and began on June 12 and ended June 13. Two sections did get hotter than planned and some trees were burnt, but it opened up the canopy a little bit, the insects and woodpeckers are taking advantage of the dead trees, and the scorched trees will recover. The 600-acre burn went as planned, and the U.S. Forest Service met many of its objectives despite not burning the third day. The 300 acres in the third area may be burned in 2025 or 2026, said Bradley.

Division Chief of Administration Jamey Bumgarner said the Interlaken Fire began on the same day the prescribed burn commenced, and that fire was contained due to previous forest mitigation efforts.

Fire Chief Andy Kovacs said a good working relationship has been established with the U.S. Forest Service and the district ranger. The district had units assigned to the area to assist, and it was a great success, he said. See the On the Trail column on page 19.

**Station 3 rebuild design**

The board held a workshop on May 29 to discuss the Station 3 design. The presentation detailed four options for the rebuild of Station 3 on about 2 acres adjacent and north of the YMCA on Jackson Creek Parkway. OZ Architects gave a two-hour presentation with board discussion. The general feeling of the board was to proceed with caution and remove the administrative office option to reduce costs.

At the June 26 meeting, Bumgarner requested the board approve one of four design options to allow the design concept to be submitted to the town for approval. The design concept is required during the land approval process, he said.

Treasurer Tom Kelly said he favored the phased approach, which will jack up the cost in the long run by adding administrative offices at a later date, but it will meet the immediate need with room for growth and is the optimum design, he said.

Kovacs requested the fourth option Kelly suggested for about \$18 million to construct a two-story, 17,000-square-foot fire station with 10 dormitories (allows option to add additional firefighters), four bays, and space to allow the addition of administrative offices. The design adds \$1 million to the cost but allows enough space to grow and was the staff's selection.

The administrative office space at Old Forest Point meets the current staffing needs, but property tax revenue changes could affect special districts. The budget coordinators are working on requests that are due in August in preparation for the 2025 budget. This year, the district took on the largest one-time hiring of nine firefighters and may not hire any more in 2025 or add any additional administrative staff. The district will make do with the existing space, but it would be preferable to have a secure facility, Kovacs said. Note: Removing the administration offices saved about \$4 million.

Kevin Schaffer of OZ Architects said if the planning approval phase is shortened, the district could expect a 10- to 14-month construction phase, and assuming the project takes 12 months the rebuild could be complete around February 2026.

Kovacs said the district is taking a responsible approach, building with quality materials to last 75 years, a balanced approach sensitive to the conservative nature of Monument, he said.

The board approved the design, 4-0.

**Station 6 land purchase**

Bumgarner said the QuikTrip property of about 4.7 acres at Baptist Road and Squadron Drive is available for the district to purchase, in total or just the 2 acres facing Baptist Road. Another property owner had offered the district a 2-acre parcel off Old Denver Road for the same price as the 2-acre QuikTrip property.

Kovacs said Battalion Chief Scott Ridings mapped the QuikTrip parcel and found that a future Station 6 on the QuikTrip site would serve Struthers Road better than existing stations. The land price and timing are right, as the real estate is being bought up, but when the decision to build arrives the district will have land available to house a single engine company staffed with four personnel. Had the board pursued 4 acres at the QuikTrip property, funding for other capital improvements would be deferred. Ultimately future boards and staff could decide to sell the 2 acres, he said.

Kelly said the district is going high on expenditure with the Station 3 rebuild and is 214% over budget on the Station 4 remodel. The district needs to stick to what is required and within the budget for the land purchase. Funding to cover the over-budget Station 4 remodel still needs to be found; "it's requirements not

desiresments," said Kelly.

Kovacs said the district budgeted \$500,000 in 2024 for the Station 6 land purchase and will use \$500,000 from collected impact fees. The land is expected to cost about \$1.2 million for the 2 acres.

The board approved pursuit of the 2-acre land purchase from QuikTrip.

**Overtime savings**

Kelly requested the board consider changing the meeting times to earlier in the day in an effort to prevent overtime costs when staff must stay for meetings. The goal is to continue fiscal responsibility with the capital investments and remain prudent with the district funds, just as the residents requested during the meeting on the proposed Station 1 training center in April, said Kelly. See [www.ocn.me/v24n5.htm#mf](http://www.ocn.me/v24n5.htm#mf). The meeting time change will be discussed at the July meeting.

**Facility remodel updates**

Bumgarner gave an update on the ongoing station remodels and said:

- Station 4 had some minor delays, and the move back into the station will occur around mid-September. The north side of the station is operational with an added shower to allow operations to continue with Engine 514 crews. The bid at about \$900,000 includes fire sprinklers, dampers, heaters in the bay, a concrete pad that was additional to the contract for about \$60,000, and an increase to the water line was necessary. Donala Water and Sanitation District had originally advised against replacement, but it was deemed necessary during construction. The remodel is about 50%-70% done, and the final cost will be known closer to September. The ambulance is located at Station 3 on Woodmoor Drive.
- The remodel of "Shamrock" Station 5 (Highway 83) cost just under \$500,000.
- The Station 2 remodel plans have been submitted to the Monument Planning Department and once approved the district will have a year to commence the construction process. Crews will likely move to Station 5 during the five-month remodel.
- After attending a station design conference with Lt. Curt Leonhardt, the district is looking at replacing bay doors when funds permit with a transition to bi-fold doors to reduce maintenance.
- The Station 1 Training Center plat has been submitted to the town and will include Front Range Fire Apparatus. The maintenance facility location in Fredrick Firestone is used by the district for apparatus repairs, and the additional location in Monument will save additional overtime, manpower, time out of district, and fuel costs.

**2023 audit gets unmodified opinion**

Mitchell Downs of CBIZ said he had been working on fire district audits in El Paso and Teller counties for about 25 years. Five adjustments were made, including one Martin requested, and they mostly involved the DWFPD VFPE, due to actuarial liability and a lag in asset reporting and based on the 2022 numbers. There were no big internal control problems, and the district received a clean or unmodified opinion. In the future the audit will be performed with a few different procedures due to CBIZ owning the company, said Downs. See DWFPD article on page 12.

The board accepted the presentation of the audit.

**Wescott merger transfers**

Kovacs said before the meeting the Wescott board approved the transfer, along with a quit claim deed for the Sun Hills property, an exclusion of two properties, and the substantial transfer of funds to MFD. He requested the board approve the transfer of the Wescott VFPE to MFD for future administration and said Wescott had a number of volunteer firefighters coming in and out of the district over the years, but the program was discontinued at the beginning of the merger.

The fund had about 20 volunteers and about \$930,000 at the end of the first quarter. Volunteers receive a monthly stipend based on the number of years served. The account is well funded and growing, although the FPPA always recommends adding funds. Ultimately, the Board of Trustees decides if the fund needs additional funding. One volunteer has yet to receive funds, and one passed away last year.

Director Mark Gunderman said the board did increase the stipend by \$50 a few years ago to allow a full pension of \$450, but a lot of the volunteers were hired full-time before qualifying for the volunteer pension at five years' service. The volunteers are eligible to receive a pension at age 55, and the amount is based on time served, he said.

District Administrative Officer Jennifer Martin said that adding funds to the plan is based on the actuarial study.

The board approved the fund transfer to MFD, 4-0.

**Sun Hills former Wescott Station 3**

Kovacs requested the board approve the quit claim deed transferring the Sun Hills (former Wescott Station 3) property that is being used for storage by the district and two nonprofit groups. The property was sub-divided by a former Wescott fire chief and can only be used as a fire station, the property is tired and

packed to the gills, but it is serving a practical purpose, he said.

Gunderman said the property can be sold, despite rumors it could not, but the Homeowners Association (HOA) raised concerns other property owners would seek to sub-divide. The district agreed to consult the HOA before selling the property to find a mutual agreement. The property could be returned to the original property, but that owner would be responsible for demolishing the building, he said.

The board approved the quit claim deed for the former station, 4-0.

**Colorado Open Records Act**

Martin requested the board approve the Revised Standard Operating Procedures, with the Colorado Open Records Act (CORA) retrieval fee change from \$30 after the first hour to \$41.37 as of July 1.

The board accepted the CORA policy fee change.

**Fire technician hired**

Bumgarner said the district hired Joseph Valdez for the fire technician position about two weeks earlier. Valdez is studying to be an EMT.

Note: The chief's report and the financial report can be found at [www.monumentfire.org](http://www.monumentfire.org).

The meeting adjourned at 8:53 p.m.

\*\*\*\*\*

Meetings are usually held on the fourth Wednesday every month. The next regular meeting is scheduled for July 24 at 6:30 p.m. at Station 1, 18650 Highway 105. For virtual joining 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).

**Color, Cuts, Perms for the whole family**  
**Your Hair is Our Business**  
**The Beauty Studio**  
*Gift certificates available*  
**Rita, Stephanie, and Alyssa**  
**719-221-1750**  
 153 N. Washington St. #101, Monument  
**Booth Rental Available**



**Paul's Asphalt Service**  
*Top-quality asphalt paving and maintenance*  
**A+ rated by the BBB and great on-line reviews!**  
 Hot mix asphalt paving • 5 types of asphalt sealcoating  
 Hot rubber crack sealant/asphalt patch • Recycled asphalt paving  
**Paul Williams, Jr.**  
**719-453-4477 Monument**  
**AsphaltServiceonline.com**




BBB Rating: A+

*Lightning Electric*  
**For ALL Your Electrical Needs**  
 Residential • Commercial • Industrial  
 Service Calls • Reasonable Rates • Free Estimates  
 Fully Insured & Licensed  
 Master Electricians  
**Craig Mull (719) 243-2257**

**Specializing in Residential Cleaning** *A Gift of Time*  
 Overwhelmed?  
 Want your home spic and span?  
**Call Stacy today!**  
**(719) 930-2178**  
**www.agiftotime.us**  
 Weekly • Bi-weekly • Monthly • Move-outs • Move-ins.



**FACINELLI MOTORS**



**TIME FOR A ROAD TRIP CHECK?**  
**QUALITY AUTO REPAIR**  
 SUBARU • HONDA • TOYOTA  
**CALL TODAY 488-6729**  
 706 Westward Lane, Palmer Lake  
 Mon.-Fri. 7:30 am-6:00 pm  
 Call for appointment. We book up quickly.



**Forest Lakes Metropolitan District and Pinon Pines Metropolitan Districts 2 and 3, June 14 2023 budgets amended**

By Natalie Barszcz

The Forest Lakes Metropolitan District (FLMD) and Pinon Pines Metropolitan District (PPMD) 2 and 3 boards held a joint special meeting on June 14 to conduct public hearings on the amended 2023 budgets for FLMD and PPMD's 2 and 3. The boards also adopted a second amendment to the FLMD and

PPMD's 2 and 3 budgets appropriating funds for the respective districts.

Note: The joint meeting was held via teleconference, the first meeting since December 2023. See [www.ocn.me/v24n1.htm#flmd](http://www.ocn.me/v24n1.htm#flmd). A quorum could not be met for a special meeting scheduled on June 28 to approve the 2023 audits.