

are reappointed prior to that election. Because the April election was canceled, the positions will be filled by appointment.

Cressman said he "brought this problem to light through interviews with *The Gazette* and Channel 5." He said he "hoped citizens would harken the call and volunteer for these positions. It is a big issue, with a multitude of reasons why interest has not surfaced." He added that serving on the council "takes a lot of time and people are working."

Cressman said he "hopes it is the time commitment and not apathy" contributing to the lack of interested candidates. He requested that council members solicit interest from Palmer Lake residents.

The lone visitor at the meeting was Gerilyn McGaughran, who spoke about her interest in becoming a council member. She said she did not know about the election, was intrigued by the article in *The Gazette*, and is very interested and would like to pursue it. McGaughran has a background in project management and "loves this town," having lived in Palmer Lake since 2006.

Committee reports

Water Trustee Max Stafford said the town used 3.7 million gallons of water in February, with only 99,000 gallons from the wells. The total amounted to 800,000 gallons less than was used last February. He attributed this reduction to improved water plant efficiency such as not having to rinse the filters as often and fixing leaks.

Stafford said 11.1 acre-feet of renewable surface water came through the plant. Treatment expenses for this surface water are expected to be cheaper by "a factor of 10" than the treatment of the well water that was used while surface water treatment was unavailable. Town Clerk Tara Berreth said the plant has not been online a full month, so electricity use cannot be assessed yet. Cressman said he signed the final payment for the water plant upgrades. Stafford encouraged council members to have a water ordinance in place before the irrigation season begins.

Police Trustee Nikki McDonald said the Palmer Lake Police Department had 19 case reports in February. One case included a juvenile girl who was reported missing and feared to have committed suicide. She was eventually found at a friend's house in Colorado Springs. Sixty-six incidents were considered high risk. Overall, the department responded to 173 calls for the month.

Park Trustee Gary Coleman said Jack Anthony, in association with Palmer Lake Historical Society, wants to place the Palmer Lake Star on the list of historical places and state historical properties. Coleman said Anthony is communicating with the state to get this listing process completed.

Fire Trustee Kuehster reported that the Palmer Lake Volunteer Fire Department (PLVFD) had 18 calls in February and has had 56 calls for the year. The volunteer hours for the

month were 2,536 with a total of 5,477 volunteer hours for the year. Kuehster said it "is a pretty active fire department." The PLVFD participated in training for ice rescues with the Larkspur Fire Department.

Kuehster invited everyone to the April 8 pancake breakfast. It will be held at Town Hall from 7 to 10 a.m. McDonald said the Easter Egg Hunt is scheduled for April 7 with a tentative start time of 10 a.m. The time might change to avoid conflict with another egg hunt in the area.

Public comments

During public comments, the town's accountant, Linda Ousnamer of Pencil Pusher Inc., said that all town departments, with one exception, were under budget. She said this was a positive sign, given that insurance and memberships are paid in January. However, the town needs to monitor the police budget, she said, and offered to meet with McDonald, Chief Kieth Moreland, and Berreth to assist in increasing an understanding of the department's budget. Ousnamer said the department's vehicle repair, gas, and payroll costs have increased.

The meeting adjourned at 6:56 p.m.

The next meeting will be held at 6:30 p.m. April 5 in Town Hall, 42 Valley Crescent. Meetings are normally on the second Thursday of the month. Information: 481-2953.

David Futey can be reached at dfutey@ocn.me.

Community shows support for ranch open space plan

By Candice Hitt

At a meeting March 15 at Monument Town Hall, residents expressed support for an El Paso County plan to preserve Willow Springs Ranch as open space. The 260-acre ranch is south of Monument and west of I-25. The property is owned by Hillcrest Bank in Kansas City, which foreclosed on the property in 2010. In 2011, the county expressed interest in the ranch for open space. El Paso County Parks and other community partners have been researching ways to conserve all or part of the ranch for open space or community recreation.

A Zoning Concept Plan including development of 450 residential lots has been approved for the property. The county wants community input on how to move forward with the ranch property considering these two options.

Discussions with Colorado Springs have been ongoing over the past year, and County Commissioner Darryl Glenn said, "We are serious about working regional partnerships." Glenn also said he wants the community to be involved in creating a solution.

Potential stakeholders include El Paso County, Great Outdoors Colorado, the Town of Monument, the City of Colorado Springs, the Palmer Land Trust, Tri-Lakes Youth Sports, Lewis-Palmer School District-38, Synthes Inc., and the Trails and Open Space Coalition.

Benefits cited

Tim Wolken, director of county Community Services, said the community has shown interest in the benefits of preserving the ranch to provide visual relief for the I-25 corridor, provide connections to the Pike National Forest and Santa Fe Trail system, protect water, preserve the riparian habitat, preserve wetlands, and provide opportunities for community recreation.

Purchase options discussed

Several purchase options were discussed:

- Purchase the entire parcel for multi-use.
- Purchase the southwest portion of 50 acres for multi-use.
- Purchase the northern 66 acres plus the protected

mouse habitat of 117 acres for open space.

- Purchase the northern 66 acres plus the mouse habitat for multi-use and open space.

If the open space and park proposal moves forward, Wolken said, the money to purchase the land would not come from taxpayers. Funds from regional park fees paid by developers, lottery funds, and donations would be used to buy the land.

Community comments

Several residents stated that this is a chance to preserve the open space and that the county should not allow the land to be sold to another entity. Others said this is a unique opportunity for the future of the community to preserve open space, vista, wildlife, and recreation. The majority of community members were in favor of purchasing all the land and to be prompt in reaching a decision.

For further information, please contact Wolken at timwolken@elpasoco.com or 719-520-6981.

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