

Changes coming soon to Fox Run Park

By Susan Hindman

If all goes as planned, by the end of the summer, Fox Run Park will be showing off some new features, according to county officials who displayed the plans at an open house at the Wescott Fire Station on March 5. More than two dozen people perused the posters detailing the improvements, which are being paid for with regional park fees.

Here is what park-goers can look forward to:

- A 5-acre off-leash dog park at the southeast end of the park, off Stella Drive. It will be surrounded by a 6-foot fence, with a 250-foot buffer between the fence and the road. Pet owners will be expected to pick up after their pets; though bag dispensers will be provided, the bags will not, so donations of bags

will be encouraged. Park staff will empty the waste receptacles as part of their routine maintenance.

- Improvements to two bathrooms. These include stainless steel toilets, automatic faucets, composite countertops, energy-efficient lighting and ventilation, and metal roofs, as well as upgrades to the septic system's leach field.
- Two road paving projects: the first 85 feet of the park entrance off Stella, including making it more accessible to larger vehicles such as school buses; and paving the Roller Coaster Road entrance just north of Stella.
- Improvements to a 2,700-foot section of the trail that starts at the Roller Coaster parking lot.

In addition, a Fox Run Regional Park Friends Group is being formed to gather residents interested in donating time or money to improve the park. The first meeting is planned for June 13 at 6:30 p.m. at a home in Monument. Dana Nordstrom, community outreach coordinator with the Parks Division, said she hopes the group "will create stewardship, volunteerism, and donations for the projects and maintenance" for the park. For more information about the meeting, and to RSVP, e-mail her at dananordstrom@elpasoco.com.

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WIA forestry activity increases with the season

By Harriet Halbig

During the March 28 meeting of the Woodmoor Improvement Association (WIA) board, Director of Forestry Eric Gross reported on increased tree-related planning and activity.

Gross reported that residents are beginning to request lot evaluations for evidence of mountain pine beetle activity and with an eye toward fire prevention. Trees in the area have been stressed by the dry weather in March, and next year may prove to be a year of high beetle activity if the dry spell continues.

Another pest, the red turpentine beetle, which strikes near ground level on trees, is also in evidence this year.

Gross reported that he had spoken with his counterpart in the Black Forest area and can supply literature about evidence of beetle activity and schedules for chipping services to all residents. WIA's Chipping Day will be on May 19, and all arrangements have been made for that event.

President Jim Hale reported that the association hopes to improve its web page to offer more up-to-date information on meeting dates and other matters. He also

reported that he was concerned about dry conditions and confirmed with Woodmoor Public Safety (WPS) Chief Kevin Nielsen that the association receives emails about changes in fire danger ratings for the area.

Treasurer Nick Oakley reported that the association's expenditures were 2.1 percent below budget.

Director of Woodmoor Public Safety Paul Lambert said that the replacement of many original cedar roofs mitigates fire danger to an extent, but expressed concern about vacant houses and construction materials around sites where home improvements are under way. Homeowners are also warned against an accumulation of slash and dry grass near homes.

Nielsen reported that vandalism has increased during spring break and that there has been a report of fireworks activity. He stressed that there is a zero-tolerance policy on fireworks in Woodmoor. He also reported that WPS is monitoring speeding on the neighborhood roads.

Director of Architectural Control Anne Stevens-Gountanis reported that there were 17 building projects during February and that there were an increasing number of proposals for mother-in-law suites added to homes.

The committee is proposing a limit of 1,200 square feet for such an addition. Hale responded that a homeowner should be limited only by whether he is within county determined limits.

Director of Common Areas W. Lee Murray reported on continued improvements to the barn and the scheduling of the Great American Clean Up for May 12.

Director of Covenant Control Darren Rouse said there were 59 reported violations during April, largely involving parking and dogs. He said that he will address the rules on these two issues in the next newsletter.

Vice President Kirstin Reimann and Association Manager Matt Beseau were absent and excused from the meeting.

The Board of the Woodmoor Improvement Association meets at 7 p.m. on the fourth Wednesday of the month at the association's Barn, 1691 Woodmoor Drive, Monument. The next meeting will be held on April 25.

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

Nonprofit groups can benefit from unpaid interns

By Harriet Halbig

The Non-Profit Council, an arm of the Tri-Lakes Chamber of Commerce, held a meeting March 5 on guidelines for hiring unpaid interns. Attending this meeting were representatives from a museum, a bank, churches, a

health advocacy partnership, a women's organization, and a consultant. All were seeking ways to utilize volunteer help to make their businesses and organizations more effective.

The council was established in 2008 to aid nonprofit groups in organization and operation. Since that time, it has hosted several general-interest programs.

Thomas Conter of Business Improvement Consulting was the presenter at the March 5 meeting. He said that now is a good time to hire interns for a number of reasons:

- Jobs are scarce for recent college graduates. Internships offer them experience that can help in their future employment.
- Many colleges in Colorado offer an abundant supply of accounting, business, IT, and marketing students.
- Today's students grew up with computers, mobile phones, and social media. They are able and eager to utilize this knowledge for an organization.
- Studies show that 35 percent of employers' full time entry-level college hires came from their internship programs.
- Hiring an intern can allow a nonprofit to work on initiatives that have been put on the back burner.

Conter explained the steps needed in creating an internship program. The first of these is drafting the job description. During this process the nonprofit can determine the focus of the job. Among the aspects of the description are a reimbursement plan (students may appreciate being reimbursed for their mileage), scheduling and daily responsibilities, evaluation procedures, provisions for phone use and email, and orientation.

Some tasks may be done outside of the office setting. These include web page design and grant research. Interns should be scheduled to check in with their supervisors on a regular basis. In some cases, more than one intern may share a project.

Conter stressed that organizations must be aware of legal requirements. Among these are stipulations that the students do not displace regular employees, they are not entitled to wages, and they are not guaranteed employment as a result of the internship. Training must be similar to that received in a vocational school (interns should not be answering phones or doing other menial tasks), and workers' compensation insurance is not required.

Conter enumerated colleges in the area and the expertise offered by their students, websites on which a nonprofit could post positions, and how to screen applications before interviewing candidates.

At the end of the internship period, Conter recommends doing an exit interview with the intern, asking for a testimonial to be used in finding a future intern, and providing a letter of recommendation as appropriate.

The next program to be sponsored by the council, featuring Carrie Cramm, the vice president of Community Impact for Pikes Peak United Way, will be held Wednesday, April 18, at 2:30 p.m. in the Lewis-Palmer School District administration building. The topic is quality-of-life indicators for the Pikes Peak region. At that time elected officials, business people and other interested parties will learn of the state of the community.

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