

Our Community News

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



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Local Events

See pages 23-27 for details of these and many other local events.

- Palmer Lake Art Group Winter Art Show & Sale Opening Reception, Fri., Feb. 5, 6-8 p.m.
- Palmer Lake Cowboy Chili Cookoff, Sat., Feb. 6, 5 p.m.
- RMMA Concert, Sat., Feb. 6, 7 p.m.
- D-38 Community Coffee with the School Board, Mon., Feb. 8, 6-7:30 p.m.,
- Tri-Lakes Land Use Committee Meeting, Mon., Feb. 8, 6:30-8:30 p.m.
- Foot Care Clinic, Wed., Feb. 10
- WMMI Heritage Lecture and Exhibit Opening: *Cheyenne Mountain at 50*, Thu., Feb. 11, exhibit opens at 6, lecture begins at 7 p.m.
- Cheryl Wheeler Concert at TLCA, Fri., Feb. 12, 7 p.m.
- 10th Annual District 38 Chess Tournament, Sat., Feb. 13, 8:30 a.m.-2 p.m.
- El Paso County Hazardous Materials & Recycling Collection Facility, Sat., Feb. 13, 9 a.m.-1 p.m.
- Palmer Lake Historical Society: *Young Boys that Fought in the Civil War*, Thu., Feb. 18, 7 p.m.
- Jerry Barlow Concert at TLCA, Fri., Feb. 19, 7 p.m.
- Tri-Lakes Chamber: 2016 State of the Chamber Lunch, Wed., Feb. 24, 11 a.m.-1 p.m.
- Foot Care Clinic, Fri., Feb. 26
- Heartsaver CPR/First Aid Class, Sat., Feb. 27, 8 a.m.-4 p.m.
- *Visions of Light* Photography Exhibition Opening Reception, Fri., Mar. 4, 5:30-7:30 p.m. ■

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Above: Nurse Paula Cox and critical care technician Chris Rail attend to a volunteer "victim" of Operation "Deep Freeze 16." See additional photos on page 22. Photo by Jackie Burhans

Emergency response practiced during Operation "Deep Freeze 16" Jan. 9

By Jackie Burhans

On Jan. 9, the El Paso County Office of Emergency Management participated in Operation "Deep Freeze 16" to practice emergency response and recovery processes during a major blizzard scenario across northern El Paso County. Multiple agencies participated including local fire protection districts, El Paso County Search and Rescue, the American Red Cross, Sal-

vation Army, American Medical Response and St. Francis Medical Center. Four hundred people were involved, including 100 actors portraying stranded and/or injured motorists. Volunteers were coordinated by the South Central Region Volunteer Organizations Active in Disaster.

Jackie Burhans can be contacted at jackieburhans@ocn.me

Monument Board of Trustees, Jan. 19

Criminal marijuana production addressed; more light shed on proposed water rates increase

By Lisa Hatfield

At the Jan. 19 Monument Board of Trustees meeting, the trustees approved revisions to a town ordinance regarding the personal cultivation of marijuana. The intent of the ordinance was to "reduce the likelihood that Monument would be targeted by organized criminal organizations that are renting homes to grow large quantities of marijuana and sell it on the black market," Police Chief Jake Shirk reported.

Then, as he had at the Jan. 4 meeting, Town Manager Chris Lowe explained the need for higher water rates for Monument water customers, since the town has been selling water for less than it costs to produce. He said, "This utility is in dire need of an adjustment to its rates. The March

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Above: Monument Police Chief Jake Shirk at the Monument Board of Trustees meeting on Jan. 19. Photo by Lisa Hatfield.

Monument Board of Trustees, Jan. 4

Revised water rates increase proposal outlined

By Lisa Hatfield

The trustees heard a revised water rates increase proposal from Town Manager Chris Lowe at the Jan. 4 Monument Board of Trustees meeting. It replaced the previously proposed water rates schedule presented Oct. 5 that both the trustees and Lowe, in his first meeting with the board, asked for more time to analyze. The new Jan. 4 proposal would include a smaller but still very noticeable initial jump in base rates, higher volumetric rate increases, and higher bulk water rates than in the Oct. 5 proposal. Both plans would have increased rates by 8 percent each year, but the new plan calls for six years of increases, compared to four years in the earlier proposal.

Mayor Pro-Tem Jeff Kaiser was excused.

Water rates increase needed for solvency of water fund

Lowe, Public Works Director Tom Tharnish, and water engineer Will Koger of Forsgren Associates presented the trustees with a new proposed water rates schedule for Town of Monument residential and commercial water customers west of I-25. Note: Monument residents east of I-25 do not buy water from the town but instead from Triview Metropolitan District or Woodmoor Water and Sanitation District.

The town's water enterprise fund is losing money, Lowe, Tharnish, and Koger have explained. "We have to be an individual utility that is self-sustaining, but it is not right now; it is hemorrhaging money because of the failure to raise rates over last 15 years," Lowe said.

A substantial increase in rates is needed to cover operations and maintenance costs on aging infrastructure, build water reuse and regional water infrastructure to rely less on well water pumped from non-renewable aquifers, and save money for future emergencies, Koger said.

The current base rate for a three-quarter-inch tap, the typical size for residential use, is \$8.80/month. Larger taps tend to be for commercial businesses; for example, a 1 1/2-inch tap currently pays a \$10/month base rate. In addition, all residential and commercial customers pay for the volume of water they use, based on a tiered rate system in increments of 1,000 gallons. It now costs \$4.99/thousand gallons for the first 6,000 gallons each month. As more water is used, the price per 1,000 gallons increases in the higher tiers, so for example it costs \$7.99/1,000 gallons for any gallons over 24,000/month.

The proposed schedule presented Jan. 4 was developed after Lowe and several trustees asked for more time to consider water rates. (On Oct. 5, the board had con-

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