

ule that did not exist before so that the district could hire paramedics and then train them to be firefighters by sending them to 16-week training academies, which are only offered intermittently. This was instead of hiring trained firefighters and then getting them trained as paramedics, which had been the past practice.

On Aug. 24, Chief Chris Truty and the directors spent an hour reviewing the situation. Truty said right now there is no excess staffing on any of the three shifts. He said this year, if there was an absence dropping a shift to 13 people, first they would ask for volunteers to fill the position ("hire backs"), but if no one stepped up, one firefighter would be forced to take the overtime for that slot on a rotating basis ("force back"), so that there would still be 13 employees on the shift.

When the strain that was creating became obvious, Truty decided to allow a shift complement to drop to 12 before doing a "force back." He said this would happen for around 60 days until new employees could be hired and trained.

Truty outlined some short-term and long-term ideas that could help the district with staffing, which included:

- Bring back some part-time employees, if they can find people with the right credentials.
- Lateral hires from other organizations, if correct allowances for their experience could be worked into the wage scale.
- Raise our pay. We made a small dent (in August 2015) with the 7.5 percent base pay increase, but need to do more to get them back up to comparable wages in other districts. The November 2017 mill levy increase would be vital. See www.ocn.me/v15n9.htm#tlfmfpd0826.
- Make the hiring process perpetual somehow.
- Require a new employee to sign an agreement at hiring that states if the new employee leaves the job before completing a designated time period, the new employee would have to pay back the training expenses incurred by the district.

Shirk asked for those five ideas to be put into writing for the board and assign time frames to them. He had board consensus on this direction to Truty.

Deputy Chief Randy Trost said having two- versus three-man crews boiled down to a service level question for residents. With so many different tasks to do on a call, crews have to prioritize. "If it's life (in danger), that may be the priority, but then we lose more property."

New impact fee schedule approved

The board had voted in December to stop assessing impact

fees until the fate of Colorado House Bill 16-1088, Fire Protection District Impact Fee on New Development, was determined. It was signed into law in May, making it clear that fire districts could charge impact fees on new development as other municipal services do, said Adam Orens of Denver-based BBC Research & Consulting.

TLMFPD encompasses the area roughly outlined by Baptist Road, Black Forest Road, County Line Road, and the Pike National Forest, and it anticipates noticeable growth within that area in the next five years.

The district hired consultant BBC Research to do an analysis of the right impact fees to charge new residential and commercial customers. Orens said the one-time fee is usually collected with the building permit and is intended to recover the costs of expanding the district's capital portfolio to serve new development that places new demand on a district.

After asking Orens about how to develop a solid rationale for using the money generated by the fees, the directors approved the resolution. The next step is that the district must develop intergovernmental agreements with the Town of Monument and El Paso County.

2015 audit accepted

Hillary Carlson of Osborne, Parson, & Rosacker presented the 2015 auditor's report and gave the district an "unmodified," or clean, opinion.

However, in 2015, the district paid off two vehicles, financed two new vehicles, refinanced a fire station, tower ladder, and engine, changed how it does calculations for contributions to the Fire & Police Pension Association of Colorado (FPPA - www.fppaco.org), dealt with a possible change in healthcare reimbursement because of the Affordable Care Act, and experienced a turnover in accountants that created inconsistencies in recording methods. Carlson said this contributed to a higher number of adjustments than is preferred, and she noted four areas of internal controls that needed improvement.

The directors asked several clarifying questions of Carlson and then unanimously accepted the 2015 audit as presented.

Concerns about addiction center in private residence

Truty said the Red Rock Ranch Homeowners Association has asked the district for specific fire prevention measures for an addiction recovery center located in a single-family home in the neighborhood on Spruce Road. However, since the county has identified this as a residential building, the fire district does not have special access to the site

any more than it would to any other residence, and it does not have any authority over how the house is being used. "One of our crews had an adversarial encounter with some of the people up there recently," Truty said. See related Board of County Commissioners article on page 17 for information about a similar issue in a different neighborhood.

Directors' comments

Treasurer John Hildebrandt said he was appalled at the news this week that the Arlington Fire District in Poughkeepsie, N.Y. had ordered the removal of American flags displayed on three of its fire trucks.

Director Terri Hayes, who is also the president and CEO of the Tri-Lakes Chamber of Commerce, asked everyone in the Tri-Lakes area to participate in a community survey sponsored by the Town of Monument. See www.townofmonument.org, and click "Comprehensive Plan Survey."

The meeting adjourned at 9:07 p.m.

Meetings are usually held the fourth Wednesday of each month. The next meeting is scheduled for 6:30 p.m. Sept. 28 in the Monument Town Hall at 645 Beacon Lite Road. For information, contact Jennifer Martin at 719-484-0911. For upcoming agendas, see <http://tlfmfire.org/board-agendas-minutes>.

Lisa Hatfield can be reached at lisahatfield@ocn.me.

El Paso Board of County Commissioners, Aug 9, 16, and 23

Jackson Ranch rezone continued; internet ballot question approved

By Lisa Hatfield

The El Paso Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) considered multiple items of interest to residents of the Tri-Lakes area in August, including Sanctuary Pointe, Jackson Ranch, ballot wording regarding the provision of high-speed internet to rural areas, and information on where all El Paso County residents could verify that they will receive a mail-in ballot for the November coordinated election.

Tri-Lakes area now covered by BOCC Districts 1 and 3

The commissioners also voted unanimously on Aug. 9 to modify current appointments for the BOCC. District 3 Commissioner Sallie Clark will be chair, District 1 Commissioner Darryl Glenn will continue as vice chair, and District 5 Commissioner Peggy Littleton will be third

commissioner.

Note: Did you miss this? As of 2015, Commissioner District 3 includes the Town of Palmer Lake and unincorporated western areas of the county to the Douglas County line. Those areas used to be in District 1, and the rest of the OCN coverage area is in District 1. To find out if you live in District 1 or District 3, see the map at www.elpasoelections.com/GIS/Commissioner/Comm3.pdf.

Make sure you receive a mail-in ballot

The commissioners encouraged all county residents to be sure they have registered to vote and that the county has their current address so that it can send them a mail-in ballot for the November election.

People can get information at www.GoVoteColorado.com.

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