

# Our Community

NEWS

Reporting on community issues in Monument, Palmer Lake, and the surrounding Tri-Lakes area.

October 5, 2001

Volume 1 Number 7

## Interview with Chief Kissell

by George Barnes

When Monument Chief of Police Joe Kissell was officially sworn in last July, there was doubt by some that he would be able to fill the shoes of his popular but controversial predecessor. Now, almost three months later, those doubts have vanished. Due especially to his strong work ethic, personal initiatives, and an extensive law enforcement background, he has won the trust of skeptic and friend alike. His secret is simple: "Cooperation. I've received this not only from the police officers here, but also from the many townspeople who have come forward and given their support. We have been through some changes, but the morale of the officers is good. They want to do the best job they can for the people, and they are dedicated to this Town."

Undoubtedly, the catalyst for the Chief's quick acceptance was the immediate attention he devoted to persistent complaints about possible prostitution at Suki's Therapy near the 7-11. Rumors of ongoing impropriety at this establishment were already a couple of years old, but it took the initiative of the new Chief to get action. He requested assistance from friends at the Metro Vice Narcotics and Intelligence Unit in Colorado Springs, and on August 2nd an agent was dispatched to investigate the business. To no one's surprise, an arrest for prostitution was made that night. This single event showed the community that despite the circumstances surrounding his appointment, Chief Kissell is an officer who is capable of upholding the law and intent on doing so. As to comments made by a recently resigned Monument Police detective that an anonymous federal agency had previously circumvented action by the Town's policemen against Suki's, the Chief emphatically stated that no such agency or agencies were ever involved.

The new Chief is concerned with the way the community addresses the issues associated with area growth. He believes that an increase in population will require

the Police Department to anticipate problems that currently don't exist. "Of course we have to stay in step with present requests, but equally important is that we need to grow in knowledge and abilities as well. It's an old cliché, but very true - we all need to learn to work smarter."

To better handle the future challenges within the Monument community, the Town Trustees have given support to the possible construction of a new Police Department facility. This is a goal that reflects a basic tenet of the new Chief's long service within the law enforcement community: "When you have a professional organization, then there must be a professional environment to work out of. The modular facility that is presently being used has served its purpose, but we really

have size and space issues to address, particularly regarding the storage of evidence." Accordingly, potential new building locations, projected construction costs, and design requirements are now being examined, and the results of these preliminary studies should be completed by early 2002. Although he is not revealing the locations that are being considered, the Chief does

favor keeping a possible new Police Department building in the "Old Town" area.

Another concern that is attracting the attention of the Chief involves the Town's patrol cars. Previously, used police vehicles were purchased from an out-of-state agency. This method had the initial advantage of saving money, but has meant that maintenance costs were often significantly increased and only minimal warranties were available. Chief Kissell believes that buying two completely new vehicles will mitigate these worries, but he notes that such a purchase is necessarily tied into the Town's budgetary process.

When the results of an independent review of the Town's Police Department were released in July, a glaring area of deficiency was the lack of a single, up-to-date "Policy and Procedures" (P-&-P) manual. The review panel recommended that the completion of a new

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## Interview with Chief Kissell

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manual be given high priority, and within two months Chief Kissell had such a document finished and in place. "I had a lot of the framework already," he said, "and when you are able to talk with other agencies, you get their information too. There are many professional people out there who have done a great deal of work in the P-&P area, so you take their expertise and combine it with your own. I took their knowledge and my knowledge, and adapted both to make it work here for the Monument Police Department."

A further indication of the wide scope of his ability and leadership is the fact that Chief Kissell was recently unanimously elected to be the President of the Rocky Mountain Chapter of the FBI National Academy Associates. This organization consists of representatives from law enforcement agencies throughout Colorado and Wyoming that closely work with the FBI. Every year twenty candidates from these two states are selected to attend the prestigious FBI National Academy in Quantico, Virginia. Competition for these vacancies is extremely keen, and it should be obvious to anyone who knows Chief Kissell that the only candidates he chooses will be those who fully merit the honor. He has stated that it is his goal to nominate someone from this area to attend the academy.

As a young man growing up in Watertown, New York, Chief Kissell was profoundly influenced by his grandfather, a man who served with distinction in that city's police department. Reflecting on the recent tragic events in New York City and the District of Columbia, the Chief noted that he was deeply moved by the selfless heroism of his fellow police officers and firefighters. Many of those public servants lost their lives. Expressing the thoughts of so many others in so many places around this great country, Chief Kissell concluded this interview by quietly noting, "...now is the time for all of us to stand together." The Town of Monument is well served by such professionalism and commitment.

## Letter of Appreciation

Many Thanks to the Former Monument Council,

I wish to acknowledge and voice appreciation for each one of you. You brought a tireless spirit and devoted countless hours on behalf of the Town of Monument.

You worked to have uniform standards in place requiring accountability in areas of finance, management, development and infrastructure. We have knowledgeable and responsible Town staff in place. This really shows

up in Town meetings. I have attended numerous Town meetings over the past five years in particular. It has been great this past year to leave a Town meeting being more informed, rather than more confused. Clarity is key to having citizen involvement. And last, but not least, when you were elected you generated public interest and involvement in updating the Monument Comprehensive Plan, to be completed this year. This had been a critical need for over a decade.

Each of you stayed true to your commitment to the Town, in the midst of rumors and accusations, and made some tough decisions that few might have the courage to make. May you continue to be visible and involved. You know the challenges our Town continues to meet.

We now have different faces on the Council, at least until April 2002. We welcome Mayor Betty Konarski and Trustee Byron Glenn, with two more trustee positions yet to be filled. We thank Trustee Delaney, Trustee Smith, Trustee Elbaum, and the Town staff for their continuing dedication. None of this, without remembering and acknowledging the good works of Leon Tenney, Skip Morgan, Steve Wilcox, and Kristi Schutz.

As we move forward in the spirit of community, may we all find renewed interest, cooperation and commitment, for the sake of this place we all call home. As residents, we need to be involved: Go to Town meetings, volunteer, be of service. We haven't been a "sleepy little town" since Safeway came in about eight years ago.

Our defining moments are now.

*Katy Page*

## Letter: Development Update

As most have heard, Transit Mix withdrew its application to build a concrete batch plant in Palmer Lake off County Line Rd. on the north side of Ben Lomond Mountain. The action came after the Planning Commission, at an August 15th hearing, unanimously voted to recommend denial. Concerns with the project included truck traffic, water usage, and environmental damage. The same concerns led to an April 2000 decision by the Town of Monument to deny a similar request by Transit Mix to build a plant on North Washington St. near Highway 105, not far from Safeway. Transit Mix is reportedly now considering sites on Old Denver Highway or in the Delacrosse Ranch off Baptist Road west of I-25.

The Schuck Corporation has submitted to the County Planning Department an application for the Forest Lakes Residential Project. The proposal, based on a sketch plan approved about 15 years ago, calls for 467 dwelling units on approximately 1,000 acres. The land off Baptist Road and Hay Creek Road west of I-25, is currently

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zoned for five acre parcels. The plan calls for a clustered design with areas of urban density coupled with open space and recreational use of two lakes.

Goldberg Properties, the Wal-Mart developer, has not yet submitted an application to the County for rezoning and site plan approval needed to build a 24 hour/day Supercenter on Baptist Road across from King Soopers (approximately nine miles from the Chapel Hills Supercenter). Goldberg has said they intend to go ahead with the project. The latest plan calls for a 4.3 acre store with grocery, garden shop, and auto center; 18.3 acres of parking lot; and two 1.3 acre satellite businesses including a filling station. Goldberg submitted a similar application for a Supercenter on the same parcel to the Town of Monument in 1999. They put that request for annexation, zoning, and site plan approval on hold after the Public Works Committee asked that Baptist Road improvements be built prior to opening the Supercenter. The Monument Planning Commission and Board of Trustees never held hearings on the project.

For the latest on these and many other projects, visit [www.CoalitionTLC.org](http://www.CoalitionTLC.org) or call me at 488-9031.

**John Heiser**

## Property Taxes

*First in a Series, by Joe Beggs*

We all seem to understand sales and income taxes pretty well, but what about Property Taxes? Special Districts? Mill Levies?

You, sitting there in your home, are paying a good chunk of your hard-earned cash in property taxes each year. But I'll bet a dollar to a donut, you don't know where it's going, or how the amount you pay is figured, or even what you get for it. And I'll bet even more on this one: You probably think you couldn't do much about it even if you knew!

Well, let's do a quick Q&A and see if you can make me lose my bet...

### **Q: What in the heck ARE property taxes?**

**A:** If you own a house or acreage or personal property in El Paso County, you must pay a tax on that property each year to the County, usually somewhere between \$1200 and \$2000. Some people pay this directly to the County, but most have it taken out of their mortgage payment each month, and the mortgage company pays that sum out of escrow.

### **Q: How is my Property Tax figured?**

**A:** Let's say you own a home in Woodmoor, and the *actual value* of the home, the property it sits on, and other personal property is \$300,000. The State Legislature has set residential assessment at about 9.5% of this

actual value, so its *assessed value* becomes \$28,500. Then the County has to find out how many mills will be applied to that \$28,500, and that's how much tax you pay.

### **Q: OK, wise guy...what's a mill?**

**A:** Shouldn't have left you hanging like that...Sorry! A *mill* is one/one-thousandth of a dollar; or, one dollar for each thousand dollars. If only one mill was applied to the above \$28,500 assessed value (in other words, a *mill levy* of one), then the tax would be \$28.50 per year.

**Q: Well yeah, but I don't pay \$28.50! I pay a heck of a lot more than that! So, how many mills are applied to me?**

**A:** Obviously, there are quite a few more mills involved. If you live in Woodmoor, you would have about 79 mills applied to your property's assessed value. If you live in the Town of Palmer Lake, it's about 83 mills. If you live in downtown Monument, your levy would be about 79 mills.

### **Q: That's a lotta mills! Why so many?**

**A:** Let's go back to our \$300,000 house in Woodmoor. The owner of this house pays 79 mills at \$28.50 per mill. He sends 48 mills to Lewis Palmer School District (that's \$1368 for educating the youth of District 38), 9.5 mills to Woodmoor Water and Sanitation (\$270), 3.5 mills to the Regional Library District (\$99), 8.3 mills to El Paso County (\$236), and 9.5 mills to the Woodmoor/Monument Fire Protection District (\$270). Total: Around \$2250. The owner of this house pays all this just in property taxes each year!

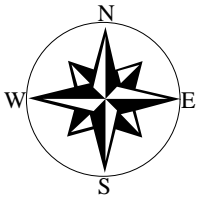
**Q: So they pay some pretty big bucks. What do they get for their money?**

**A:** Well, with the Schools, Fire District, Library, Water and Sanitation, and El Paso County, the owner of the house gets his kids educated from K-12, his house is protected from devastation by fire, emergency services are pretty well covered, the roads are plowed, he can check out books for free, and his water and sanitation needs are met. Aside from the property taxes, there are basically no other direct fees for these services.

**Q: What are you talking about? How about his water bill?**

**A:** Sorry, I forgot. Water is particularly sensitive to cost per amount used, so there is a balance between *property tax fees* and *user fees*, which are based on water meter readings. Another thing I forgot: Most of these districts get some money from your sales taxes, especially the County...but that may be in another article someday...

**NEXT TIME: What exactly are these "Districts" that are getting all this money? Stay tuned!**



## Our Community News

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**Look for our next issue Friday, November 2nd**

October 5, 2001

*Our Community News*

## Our Community Views

*by Roth Hyland, Publisher*

Despite our disappointment with the recall of Monument Mayor Tenney and Trustees Morgan, Schutz, and Wilcox, we are carefully watching to see how new Mayor Konarski and Trustee Glenn approach their service to the Town and its residents. So far, it appears that instead of listening to the concerns of residents, these two seem determined to serve the needs of those whose primary goal is financial gain. We encourage all to attend Town meetings, observe closely, and form their own opinions as to motives and intentions.

Meanwhile, we here at Our Community News are weighing a variety of alternatives for the future of this newsletter. With the rapidly changing political environment and tremendous growth pressures, we see an ongoing need for publication of Tri-Lakes area news and views. We are working to find practical ways to provide information to all who are interested.

For the moment, we plan to continue monthly publication and starting immediately, will supplement with e-mail. Request to be added to our e-mail list by sending a message to [our\\_community\\_news@hotmail.com](mailto:our_community_news@hotmail.com).

Please let us know what you think. We welcome your comments and suggestions.

## Calendar of public meetings

- **Monument Planning Commission**, Wed., Oct. 10, 6:30 pm, Monument Town Hall, 166 2nd St. Info: 481-2954.
- **Palmer Lake Planning Commission Workshop**, Wed., Oct. 10, 7 pm, Palmer Lake Town Hall, 54 Valley Crescent. Info: 481-2953.
- **Palmer Lake Town Council**, Thu., Oct. 11, 7 pm, Palmer Lake Town Hall, 54 Valley Crescent. Info: 481-2953.
- **Baptist Road Rural Transportation Authority**, Fri., Oct. 12, 1:30 pm, Monument Town Hall, 166 2nd St. Info: 303-779-4525.
- **Monument Board of Trustees**, Mon., Oct. 15, 6:30 pm, Monument Town Hall, 166 2nd St. Info: 481-2954.
- **Palmer Lake Planning Commission**, Wed., Oct. 17, 7 pm, Palmer Lake Town Hall, 54 Valley Crescent. Info: 481-2953.
- **Triview Metro District**, Thu., Oct. 25, 8:30 am, District Office 174 Washington, Monument. Info: 488-6868.
- **Friends of Ben Lomond Mountain**, Thu., Oct. 25, 7 pm, Palmer Lake Town Hall, 54 Valley Crescent, Info: 481-2474.
- **Palmer Lake Town Council Workshop**, Thu., Nov. 1, 7 pm, Palmer Lake Town Hall, 54 Valley Crescent. Info: 481-2953.

*If you have questions or comments regarding this newsletter, please contact us at [our\\_community\\_news@hotmail.com](mailto:our_community_news@hotmail.com) or P.O. Box 1742, Monument, Colorado 80132. © Copyright 2001, Our Community News. All rights reserved.*