

statements regarding the stewardship of the 7 mills levied in the district over the past several years.

Board Chairman Greg Gent concluded by praising the deep and caring commitment exhibited by Wescott firefighters and stated that their connection to the community is essentially irreplaceable. He compared the difficulty of increasing the mill levy to the resistance one feels when having to pay full price once a discount ends.

Mill levy proposal initiated

Gent called for a motion to direct Chief Burns and the district's consultants to prepare a proposed resolution and related documents, which includes the special sub-district that was formed last year, for a tax increase election to increase the mill levy from the current 7.0 mills to 14.9 mills to be held in November 2017. This proposed resolution should be ready for board consideration and possible action at the July board meeting. The motion was approved unanimously.

Public comments

The meeting agenda limited comments to a total of 12 minutes (three minutes

per person) at the beginning of the meeting and another 12 minutes (also three minutes per person) at the end of the meeting.

Resident Gary Rusnak noted that he requested that the taxpayers' forum be placed on the June 20 meeting agenda, but his request was denied. Rusnak objected that DWFPD's April meeting minutes inaccurately reflected the anonymous steering committee vote as 2 to 1 in favor of fully funding the 14.9 mill levy increase. Using information obtained under the Colorado Open Records Act, Rusnak calculated that of the 30 votes, there were 14 "no" and 16 "yes," but three "yes" votes were qualified. He requested that the May meeting minutes correct the vote to read 50 percent in favor and 50 percent against the increase.

Addressing the April vote for a new board member, Rusnak requested that the minutes confirm that four individuals submitted letters of interest and that when the vote was taken, only board Gent made a recommendation. The two other board members voted based on Gent's recommendation and without comment.

Directing his attention to the Pinnacle Consulting Group Inc. financial information posted on DWFPD's website (<http://wescottfire.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Wescott-Fire-Financial-.pdf>), Rusnak referred to paragraphs three and four under "Findings" that discuss his analysis. Paragraph four begins, "Finally, this solution is dependent upon the sale of Station 2." Rusnak stated that he never recommended selling Station 2 and requested that the statement and related commentary be removed. Rusnak concluded by expressing concern over the district's communications regarding ISO ratings which, according to his research, are considered proprietary information. See related story at http://www.ocn.me/v17n4.htm?zoom_highlight=vol+17+no+3#nepco.

Gent read a letter submitted by Kenneth Judd who was unable to provide his comments in person. Judd, a board member of the Gleneagle Civic

Association (GCA), denounced the efforts of a homeowners' association (HOA) member to represent the GCA. Judd stated, "Nobody within GCA—no individual member, nor any member of the GCA board, including myself—has been empowered to speak for our property owners on the subject of the proposed mill levy increase that is under consideration by Wescott. It is not a legitimate function of an HOA board to become activist or to represent its constituents on any matter on which they have individual voting rights, as is the case with the mill levy." He added, "Therefore, the GCA Board of Directors does not take a position on the mill levy but will instead depend on our individual residents to speak for themselves through their ballot. We have informed and will continue to inform objectively but will not attempt to influence votes."

Tom Nettles, who's not a district resident, cautioned that the mill levy must be supported by a cost-reduction plan or it is likely to fail.

Resident, and former Wescott board treasurer and volunteer firefighter, Dennis Feltz expressed admiration for DWFPD firefighters and especially the volunteers, but added his disappointment in the board's communication. He declared a lack of support for the proposed increase of 14.9 mills, stating that it was simply too high.

Regular board business

DWFPD Administrative Assistant Stacey Popovich reported on bank balances and financials. Total cash held as of May 31 equaled \$1.661 million, an increase of \$203,369 from April. The board voted to accept the May financials and, after a brief review, voted to approve the May meeting minutes.

Chiefs' reports

Burns said that at the Gleneagle Clubhouse training conducted on June 8, DWFPD firefighters gained experience with a rapid fire spreading in a large building, as well as building compo-

nent failure. The clubhouse suffered structural collapse within 20 minutes of ignition and total collapse about 30 minutes later. Burns thanked Capt. Sean Pearson and Assistant Chief Ridings for coordinating the event and ensuring the safety of all involved. Burns also recognized the appreciation by Colorado Springs School District 11 (D-11) for Pearson's fire safety presentation to a D-11 class and for DWFPD's participation in and support of Antelope Trail Elementary School's Bike Safety Rodeo.

Recognizing additional good deeds, Burns noted that Lt. Curt Leonhardt, Driver Roger Lance, Firefighter Eric Bogenrief, and Paramedics Dennis Wesselink and Doug MacIntyre built a handicap-access ramp onto the home of an elderly couple in the district. The men were featured in a story in The Gazette on June 18. DWFPD volunteers showcased the fire station and sold hot dogs during the recent Gleneagle HOA garage sale.

Burns reported that he, Dunn, Ridings, and Popovich attended a Special District Association presentation on legal and legislative updates and items concerning special district boards. All attendees found the class informative and helpful.

In Ridings' absence, Burns reported on the May call volume comparison. There were 207 total calls in May 2016 and 251 in May 2017, an increase of 21 percent. DWFPD responded to two fires in May. Both were mutual aid.

The board adjourned at 8:25.

The next Donald Wescott Fire Protection District Board of Directors meeting is scheduled for 7 p.m. on July 18 at Station 1, 15415 Gleneagle Drive. Please call (719) 488-8680, a non-emergency number, for more information, or visit www.wescottfire.org. The district is also on Facebook and Twitter.

Jennifer Kaylor can be reached at jenniferkaylor@ocn.me.

Firefighters battle structure fire

By Lisa Hatfield
Tri-Lakes Monument Fire Protection District (TLMFPD) sent out a press release on June 14 saying that on June 13, it had responded to "a report of an outside fire" in the area of Lockridge and Roaming Drives in the Wissler Ranch subdivision off of Palmer Divide Avenue/County Line Road.

"Originally dispatched as a small outside fire, firefighters arrived on scene to find a three-car attached garage completely engulfed in flames with fire already extending into the living spaces. Firefighters quickly attacked the fire but were limited in their progress due to available water. The fire was declared under control at 1:43 a.m.

"Damage to the home was extensive with the home not safe for occupancy. Residents had evacuated prior to the Fire Department's arrival, however one family dog perished. Damage to the home is estimated at \$400,000. The cause of the fire is under investigation.

"TLMFPD firefighters were assisted at the scene by the

Wescott, Black Forest, Larkspur, Falcon, and Peyton Fire Districts, along with Air Force Academy Fire Department and Colorado Springs Fire Department providing district coverage. The Red Cross was available at the scene to assist the residents."

See <http://tlmfire.org/> to read the June 14 press release and the June 22 "Lockridge Fire Follow-up" memo with more details about the battle, or call TLMFPD Battalion Chief Jamey Bumgarner at 719-484-0911 with questions.

Fire Chief Chris Truty told OCN that TLMFPD had scheduled a Wissler Ranch community meeting for June 30 at the site of the structure fire on Lockridge Drive and that the district would be sending out notifications of that meeting using NextDoor.com to three neighborhoods in the vicinity. The goal of that meeting was to answer residents' questions.

Note: Because of timing to get the newspaper to the printer, the June 28 TLMFPD board meeting article will be included in the Aug. 5 issue of OCN.

Lisa Hatfield can be reached at lishatfield@ocn.me



Noel Martinez
(719)460-1538

rebynoel@gmail.com

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