

the level of service options for the future and to make recommendations to the board about what amount of mill levy increase residents might vote on in November. **Note:** Colorado Springs annexed the area from Interquest Parkway to Old Northgate Road in 2003. By 2019, Wescott's total revenue will be reduced by 66 percent. For background, see www.ocn.me/v16n12.htm#dwfpd1115.

March steering committee meetings:

- March 8, 7 p.m., Station 1, 15415 Gleneagle Dr.—special meeting for district homeowners' associations (HOAs) that were not represented at earlier steering committee meetings and need to be caught up.
- March 15, 7 p.m., possible location Antelope Trails Elementary School—regular steering committee.

Later in the meeting, resident and past board Treasurer Dennis Feltz asked why all the board members did not attend the steering committee meetings and how all the homeowners' associations (HOAs) in the district had been notified about them, since many HOAs did not send representatives. Gent said he had attended the steering committee meetings to answer questions about the board matters, while letting Ridings answer questions about staffing and operations.

Gleneagle North Homeowners' Association representative Gary Rusnak, who is former board president, said he had shared with Assistant Chief Scott Ridings the idea of using Northern El Paso Coalition of Community Associations (NEPCO) as a resource.

Note: A first batch of steering committee meetings was held last June. See www.ocn.me/v16n6.htm#dwfpd0517.

Election and financial consulting group hired

Ridings explained that Pinnacle Consulting Group Inc. could do a financial assessment of the district to confirm its current situation and outline the needs that could be met with a mill levy increase. It could also handle the entire election, ensuring that statutes and other legal requirements would be met. Ridings said both he and Chief Vinny Burns recommended engaging this support. The directors voted unanimously to sign the \$13,600 contract with Pinnacle Consulting.

During public comments at the end of the meeting, residents including Rusnak and Louise Link questioned this decision, saying it did not go out for a competitive bid. Gleneagle Civic Association representative Bill Lowes, who is a past Wescott board president, asked Gent to verify that between this contract and the up-to-\$15,000 contract signed last month with public education consultant Webb Strategic Communications, up to \$28,600 has already been committed. Resident Jim Nelson mentioned that the district has \$50,000 allocated for the mill levy election. See www.ocn.me/v17n2.htm#dwfpd.

The January and February financial report was postponed until the March meeting since Executive Administrator Stacey Popovich was excused. Residents should be able to see the 2016 year-end financial summary then.

Director's position in search of applicants

Gent said that Director John Fredell had resigned from the board, effective immediately, due to a new job that

required a lot of travel.

Gent said that any district resident who was interested in applying for this vacant board position should submit a letter of intent to the district before the March 21 meeting. Director Bo McAllister said that the vacancy "shall be filled by appointment of the remaining directors within 60 days" and that Fredell's term would have expired in 2020, so the new board member would serve until that time.

Note: The regularly scheduled Special District Election is held every two years in May in even numbered years, so this pending director appointment should end in May 2018. However, the appointee could run for election for two years in May 2018 to be in office through May 2020 or for four years to be in office through May 2022.

Gent said this appointment information would also be posted in all the official district posting locations as well as on the district's Facebook page.

TLMFPD options, social gathering questioned

Rusnak asked if the board planned to give a report on the options that Tri-Lakes Monument Fire Protection District (TLMFPD) had outlined at its Jan. 25 regular board meeting regarding DWFPD's request for payment for certain automatic aid calls that Wescott provides to TLMFPD, since there is an imbalance in call volume between the two districts. See related TLMFPD article on page 19.

Ridings said he is waiting for a response from TLMFPD Chief Chris Truty to set up a meeting at the end of February to discuss the options, which Ridings had not seen until they were printed in Our Community News on Feb. 4. See www.ocn.me/v17n2.htm#tlmfpd.

Feltz asked, as he had last month, why the special dinner meeting between DWFPD and TLMFPD board members and staff in January had not been officially posted by Wescott, since it had been posted by TLMFPD.

McAllister said it was "just dinner and talking," and that it was not intended to be a board meeting where any joint business was conducted. Ridings said, "If they post it as a meeting, we should post it as a meeting," but DWFPD had not been aware that TLMFPD was going to post their meeting. Gent said Wescott has other informal, non-business gatherings for district board members and staff that are not posted.

Lowes said the reason residents asked about this before the special meeting was "to prevent a situation occurring that would put you in jeopardy. Anytime more than two board members are present, it is considered a board meeting by statute. We are trying to look out for your best interests."

Note: The state "Sunshine" law says that any meeting between three or more directors of a special district, town, city, or county board constitutes a quorum, and such a meeting must be noticed by posting an announcement at all the district's posting locations with three days' notice. Emergency meetings require a minimum posting of notices of at least 24 hours in advance.

As a result of residents' concerns voiced Jan. 17, Wescott opted to send only two board members to the Jan. 18 dinner meeting.

Tri-Lakes Monument Fire Protection District, Feb. 22

Mill levy election consultant hired

By Lisa Hatfield

On Feb. 22, the Tri-Lakes Monument Fire Protection District (TLMFPD) Board of Directors hired a consultant to guide the district through the mill levy process and discussed progress with the Donald Wescott Fire Protection District (DWFPD) about its recent request for payments for some automatic aid calls into TLMFPD.

Fire Chief Chris Truty administered the oath of office to Engineer Mike Smith in his promotion ceremony, saying, "I am very proud of you."

November 2017 mill levy election consultant hired

In 2012, voters approved an increase from 8.5 to 11.5 mills for the district. Truty summarized that the district is "functioning at a bare-minimum financial level," as he has explained beginning in 2014, because the amount of the 2012 increase was insufficient since it was calculated without complete information. In August 2015, the district considered putting a mill levy measure on the ballot, but decided not to proceed with the vote then. See www.ocn.me/v14n9.htm#tlmfpd-0827 and www.ocn.me/v15n9.htm#tlmfpd0826.

Now, the district has decided to pursue a mill levy increase in November 2017 to deal with long-term fi-



Above: Engineer Mike Smith's wife, Brittany, pinned on his new badge on Feb. 22, while Fire Chief Chris Truty (right) looked on. "This guy is a clear example of what happens when you put your mind to it and decide what you want to accomplish in the organization," Truty said about Smith's promotion to driver/engineer. Photo by Lisa Hatfield.

Chief's report

Ridings said there was a 20 percent increase in calls from January 2016, with 216 calls, to January 2017, with 260 calls. One call was a mutual aid structure fire assisting TLMFPD. A total of 145 calls were rescue and Emergency Medical Service incidents, and 89 were dispatched and canceled en route.

Ridings' comments included:

- Fire danger is increasing due to warm, dry weather. El Paso County does not yet have fire restrictions, but five neighboring counties do. Be careful!
- Firefighter Curt Leonhardt received a Letter of Appreciation for taking his off-duty time to represent first responders and Wescott at the first Safety Fair for the Alpine Autism Center.
- Three new volunteers will start training in March.
- The district received thank-you notes from the Haunted Mines and from Boy Scout and Cub Scout troops for supporting their endeavors.

Discussion of Station 3 delayed

Gent said that the discussion about the future status of Station 3 at 15000 Sun Hills Drive would be delayed until after the mill levy vote is conducted in November. See www.ocn.me/v17n2.htm#dwfpd.

The meeting went into executive session at 7:50 p.m. to determine positions relative to matters that may be subject to negotiations, developing strategy for negotiations, and instructing negotiators. After the meeting, Ridings told OCN that no announcements were made, and no votes were taken, after the executive session.

The next Donald Wescott Fire Protection District Board of Directors meeting is scheduled for 7 p.m. March 21 at Station 1, 15415 Gleneagle Dr. Meetings are usually on the third Tuesday of each month. For information, call Executive Administrator Stacey Popovich at 488-8680 or see www.wescottfire.org. The district is also on Facebook.

Thank you to OCN volunteers Joyce Witte and Jennifer Kaylor for recording and taking notes at this meeting. Lisa Hatfield can be reached at lisahatfield@ocn.me.

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