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access to the open space tracts and will be maintained by county. The southern tunnel will be filled in and closed by the developer.

County staff sent out 323 notification letters in relation to the five requests associated with this development. They received 72 replies in favor overall and 34 letters of opposition. At the BOCC hearing, Kevin Dear-dorff, president of the GCA, and Ken Judd, a GCA board member, spoke in favor of the application. Judd said that

negotiations with the developer had focused on minimizing the impact of the new development while maximizing the amount of open space. More than two-thirds of the Gleneagle community had voted to incorporate the new homes into the GCA and to take on the open space. No one spoke in opposition.

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DWFPD (Cont. from page 1)

been surveyed individually. Board President Greg Gent asked Ross to address Rusnak's questions. Ross stated that the citizens of the district ultimately decide if and/or when the district becomes an all-volunteer fire district and what level of services can be provided by the district. He stated, "This isn't a make-or-break situation. The sub-district has already been set up; whether the voters choose to support it this time with the mill levy or next time or the following time ... there's no all or nothing as far as that's concerned. Should the district at some point become financially unviable, which I think is where you're going.... At that point Rusnak answered, "Correct."

Ross continued, saying, "Actually, what you're saying is they'd [DWFPD] be a lower level of services, they'd be all volunteers, which you don't agree with, you don't agree with a volunteer department." Rusnak responded, "That's the alternative that we talked about ... it [DWFPD] would be financially unable to support the services without being an all-volunteer [district]." Ross reiterated, "So, the citizens will have to decide what level of services." Rusnak added, "Correct. So, if the citizens vote it [the mill levy increase] down, then it'd be a volunteer [district] effectively or no service at all.

Ross stated, "Yeah, I don't know what your service is going to be in the future if they vote it [the mill levy proposal] down and I don't know if voting it down once means they'll never support it. I mean, I've been in elections for districts that have gone 3 in a row before they passed." Rusnak responded, "I don't know all the rules ... for example, I thought a mill levy was every two years, [that] you can't do it every year." Ross replied, "Well, no, you can do it every year." Rusnak repeated, "You can't do it every year." Ross explained, "You can do it in November of the off year so it's either in November of the general elections or November of the off year."

In response to Rusnak's question regarding the timing of the board's mill levy vote and if it would be made in executive session, Gent stated that the vote would most likely be made in June and stated, "I don't think anything that has to do with voting on a mill levy should go into executive session, so myself, I wouldn't support us going into executive session. Everything should be in open session when it comes to that."

Lt. Brian Ackerman, a volunteer firefighter, addressed a question about volunteer firefighters. Ackerman explained that DWFPD currently has 12 volunteers to assist calls and provide backfill for the station during calls. The district plans to recruit a new batch of volunteers in the next few weeks. Gent added that volunteers use their training as a stepping stone to a paid position, either at DWFPD or another fire department. Chief Vinny Burns confirmed that all paid DWFPD firefighters were once volunteers.

Firefighters back board, tax increase

The board invited Luke Jones, DWFPD firefighter, to read a letter composed by the professional staff in response to questions raised at board meetings and steering committee sessions. Highlights of the letter included:

- Being a firefighter is a personally fulfilling career that provides camaraderie, a chance to help others, and pride and satisfaction in serving the community. Despite the sacrifices of sleep deprivation and missed family time over holidays, birthdays, and after-school activities, DWFPD firefighters are insanely loyal, feel honored and privileged to serve the community, and rise to the challenge to provide the highest level of emergency services.
- The DWFPD chiefs foster an environment that encourages personal and professional growth, offer insight from years of experience, and support strong bonds among the firefighters.
- The suggestion to reduce the number of firefighters, reduce benefits, reduce pay, and ignore safety standards potentially places lone firefighters in hazardous situations meant to be handled by multiple firefighters. Downsizing endangers the professional ranks unnecessarily and is unacceptable. Cost-saving measures may look good on paper, but in practice may be the difference between life and death.
- DWFPD firefighters have complete confidence in the Board of Directors and chiefs to navigate this season of adversity. The board and chiefs have been transparent and actively involved the firefighters in finding a solution.
- Because DWFPD provides a level of engagement and interaction that is unparalleled in El Paso County, the firefighters are confident that the majority of constituents understand that an investment in DWFPD pays dividends in potentially dire situations.
- The firefighters invite anyone who concludes that laying off firefighters is the solution to the current financial problem to stop by the station for a cup of coffee and talk face-to-face about the challenges confronting the district and the community, and how DWFPD can serve the community better.

Regular board business

DWFPD Administrative Assistant Stacey Popovich presented the board with the draft of the 2016 fiscal audit. The auditor will review the final report at the June board meeting. Popovich said total cash held as of April 30 was \$1.458 million, an increase of \$36,988 from March. She explained that the cash increase is largely due to wildland income. DWFPD received \$36,217 for two deployments

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