

# Our Community News

Volunteers reporting on community issues in Monument, Palmer Lake, and the surrounding Tri-Lakes area



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## Local Events

See pages 28-31 for details of these and many other local events.

- **Tri-Lakes Land Use Committee Meeting**, Mon., Mar. 5, 6:30-8:30 p.m.
- **Tri-Lakes Chamber Monthly Education Series: Developing Your Online Marketing Strategy**, Tue., Mar. 6, 9-11 a.m.
- **NEPCO Meeting**, Sat., Mar. 10, 10 a.m.-noon. Trails and open space.
- **Random Acts of Kindness**, Sat., Mar. 10, 1-4 p.m.
- **Candidate Forum for the Town of Monument**, Mon., Mar. 12, 6-8 p.m.
- **Palmer Divide Photographers Group: Steve Weed--My Art Life from Photos to Paintings**, Mon., Mar. 12, 7 p.m.
- **WMMI Speakers' Bureau Lecture**, Tue., Mar. 13, 7-8 p.m.
- **Water-Wise Gardening**, Wed., Mar. 14, 5-6:30 p.m.
- **Palmer Lake Historical Society: History of the Mt. Manitou & Incline Railway**, Thu., Mar. 15, 7 p.m.
- **Rocky Mountain Music Alliance Piano Trio**, Fri., Mar. 16, 7 p.m.
- **Tri-Lakes Community/Centura Blood Drive**, Tue., Mar. 20, 3-7 p.m.
- **Bill Nance Memorial Blood Drive**, Thu., Mar. 29, 1-6 p.m.
- **Seniors Craft Group Planning Meeting**, Fri., Mar. 30, 11:30 a.m.
- **Palmer Lake Volunteer Fire Department Pancake Breakfast**, Sun., Apr. 1, 7-11 a.m.
- **Palmer Lake Easter Egg Hunt**, Sat., Apr. 1, 10 a.m.
- **Tri-Lakes Land Use Committee Meeting**, Mon., Apr. 2, 6:30-8:30 p.m.
- **42nd Annual Pine Forest Spring Show & Sale**, Sat.-Sun., Apr. 7-8, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Saturday; 11 a.m.-3 p.m. Sunday ■

## In this issue

I-25 News 1-3  
 Monument News 1, 3-10  
 Monument Candidate Statements 10  
 Palmer Lake News 11  
 D38 School District News 1, 12-17  
 Water & San District News 17-21  
 Fire District News 21-22  
 WIA News 22-23  
 Weather 23  
 Letters 23-24  
 Columns and Snapshots 24-28  
 Notices and Calendar 28-31  
 OCN Information 31

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**Above:** This photo, taken from the video recording of the Feb. 5 Monument Board of Trustees meeting, shows attorney Erin Jensen asking the trustees to hold an executive session, at which the Police Department could be present, to discuss a personnel issue involving Town Manager Chris Lowe. To watch "live" meeting streaming, go to <http://bit.ly/2uZxjfa>. Photo courtesy of The Town of Monument at <https://monumenttownco.documents-on-demand.com/>.

Monument Board of Trustees, Feb. 5

## Town manager and police chief on administrative leave; investigation initiated

By Allison Robenstein and Lisa Hatfield

During the Feb. 5 meeting, the Monument Board of Trustees (BOT) listened to public comments in support of the police chief and department and voted to place both Town Manager Chris Lowe and Police Chief Jake Shirk on administrative leave, pending an investigation into the town manager.

The trustees also approved three planning ordinances and agreed to set a public hearing on the continuing Village Center Metropolitan District financial situation.

Mayor Jeffrey Kaiser was absent.

### Town manager leave and investigation

At the beginning of the meeting, Trustee Kelly Elliott made a motion to amend the agenda to include an executive session at the end of the meeting

to discuss a personnel issue involving the town manager. This was approved unanimously, without discussion, by the trustees.

During the public comments portion near the end of the meeting, attorney Erin Jensen stepped forward to speak on behalf of all except one of the officers in Monument Police Department, as well as all the other town employees (except two that he had not met with). He asked the board to approve an additional executive session to discuss a "very sensitive" human resource and personnel issue from Shirk's Feb. 1 memo to Lowe that was copied to the board. He asked that the police officers be allowed to participate in that executive session, since they were "unable to do their jobs effectively because of fear of retaliation" by the town manager.

MON (cont. on page 3)

Lewis-Palmer D-38 Board of Education work session, Jan. 30

## Board prepares for public deliberation session

By Harriet Halbig

A work session by the Board of Education was convened Jan. 30 to pose last-minute questions to the Long Term Facilities Planning Committee (LTFPC) and receive input from an alternative architectural firm before a public deliberation event scheduled the following week.

During its January meeting, the board addressed the use of Grace Best Education Center with options including reconfiguring it to an elementary, selling it, or demolishing it. At that time, board Treasurer Chris Taylor proposed seeking a second opinion

on the potential cost of the alternatives and the cost of building a new elementary on the campus of Bear Creek Elementary.

Taylor proposed consulting the architect of Bear Creek to see if there was a variance of opinion on advisability and cost. Taylor said that Brian Risley of CPR architects essentially agreed with the original firm RTA on basic questions of feasibility.

About a dozen members of the LTFPC present initially explained how they reduced the number of proposed actions from more than 30 down to

D38 (cont. on page 12)

## CDOT Listening Session receives strong opposition to I-25 express lane

By Jennifer Kaylor

Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) representatives met an overflowing crowd—four times the typical response—and strong opposition to the proposed I-25 express lane option at the Feb. 8 Listening Session held at Monument Library. The Listening Session was one of many in-person and telephone opportunities for residents to comment regarding CDOT's plans to address traffic congestion along the Gap—the 18-mile length of I-25 extending from Monument to southern Castle Rock. Regional Communications Manager Tamara Rollison and Resident Engineer John Hall provided statistical information to explain CDOT's promotion of the express lane, whose use would require a fee.

Rollison explained that CDOT's Planning and Environmental Linkages study provided preliminary public input regarding the project. Hall described the Gap as being fraught with accidents and subsequent congestion. From 2011 to 2015, 1,800 accidents occurred along the Gap and one-third of the accidents involved injury or fatality. The current proposal would add a third lane and widen shoulders to significantly decrease the cost impact of collisions, prevent travel delays, and protect emergency responders.

Although CDOT includes a third general purpose lane as an option, Hall showed that express lanes encourage carpooling since High Occupancy Vehicles (HOV)—vehicles with three or more people—would not incur a fee, and express lanes provide reliable, manageable travel. With express lane entry and exit points limited to one in Larkspur and one in Castle Rock, CDOT anticipates capturing Denver-bound traffic which, Hall explained, improves traffic flow for commuters who are headed to the same basic location. He demonstrated an example of a Denver widening project from about 10 years ago where congestion is now common because the design did not provide a reliable means of escape from accidents and peak travel times.

Hall enumerated successful express lane projects throughout Colorado that included US-36, I-25 from central Colorado to the north, C-470 south of Denver, I-70 from I-25 to I-225, and the I-70 mountain corridor. Not making any promises regarding express lane fees, Hall estimated a cap of \$6 for peak time use and possibly \$3 for average time use.

Rollison described the numerous funding sources and their respective financial commitments for the \$350 mil-

I-25 (cont. on page 2)