

# Donald Wescott Fire Protection District candidate statements

On May 8, the Donald Wescott Fire Protection District will hold a polling place election. Wescott's polling place is Station 1, 15415 Gleneagle Drive, Colorado Springs, CO 90821. The hours are 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. You must go to the polling place to cast your vote in person. This is not a mailed ballot.

Three directors will be elected to serve a term of four years, and one director will be elected to serve for a term of two years.

**Question: In no more than 150 words, describe the specific skills, knowledge, and perspective that qualify you to make informed decisions for the future of the fire district.**

**Rachel Dunn  
(two-year term)**

My name is Rachel Dunn and I am currently serving as a director for the Wescott Fire Protection District. Before joining the board, I served as the director of girls' soccer for the North Olmsted Soccer Organization and registrar for the Tri-Lakes Little League. I spend numerous hours volunteering at Antelope Trails both in the classroom and with the PTO. During the past year, I have taken part in Special District Associations trainings and attending classes through the Colorado Wildland Academy.

As directors, we have a fiduciary responsibility to the community with the money you have entrusted with us. We need to plan for the financial future of the district and ensure our community maintains a superior level of service. I am running for re-election because I firmly be-

lieve you should be active in the community and give back in whatever way you can.

**Duane Garrett  
(four-year term)**

Having served over 24 years of active duty service to our nation, I have had the distinct honor of leading and managing small and large organizations of our nation's finest professionals. Now, as an aspiring leader for this community, I feel that my experience can provide the leadership and fiduciary prowess required to be an effective member of the Donald Wescott Fire District Board of Directors. Having been a part of a firefighter family for over 22 years, I understand the challenges that communities and fire departments face, and the budgetary constraints that force them to make difficult decisions. As a strong supporter of the recent mill levy referendum, I feel a real sense of obligation to meet the needs of both firefighters and the community to which they serve. With your support, I hope to live up to that challenge through thoughtful consideration and sound budgetary decision-making. Thank you.

**Greg Gent  
(four-year term)**

During my time on the Donald Wescott Fire Board, we have made great progress towards making the district stronger and better equipped to handle the changing needs of our district. When I came to Wescott, there was no long-term planning strategy to negotiate with Colorado Springs. Firefighters were underpaid and benefits were sparse, the volunteer

pension fund was under funded, Station 3 (which was built by previous boards without permits) was unsafe, budget process was unorganized, and the district was underserved. Since I have been on the board, we have negotiated the exit from the City of Colorado Springs in a gradual process so we could plan for a smooth transition that would keep our district viable. We built Station 2 so we could better serve our east half of the district. The firefighters are better paid and have a future at a fire district that they love serving.

**Mark R. Gunderman  
(four-year term)**

I relocated to Gleneagle from California in 2009. In California I was a level 1 reserve deputy sheriff for 20 years and also an instructor at the police academy. I have worked for AAA Insurance for 24 years and I am currently a senior manager leading a department of 130 people. My background gives me a unique perspective on the public safety profession. While I have a tremendous amount of respect for our first responders, I know the board has an obligation to the taxpayers to make sure the department is run with the financial oversight and efficiency seen in the private sector.

Our community deserves the very best in public safety, and that starts with an efficiently run Fire Department that has the people, equipment, and training needed to keep us safe.

**Joyce Hartung  
(four-year term)**

Prior to serving on the Wescott

Board, I was a director on several other boards for many years and acquired skills to focus on specific issues without distractions. This was important as Wescott first faced challenges to expand to meet rapid growth in the district, which included construction of a second fire station, acquiring an additional truck, and other essential resources.

These efforts were subsequently impacted by a takeover of a major portion of the district by the City of Colorado Springs with an associated loss of tax revenue. Significant downsizing was required. We put into place actions to accommodate the changes including a successful bid for a mill increase. I believe continuity on the board is essential to meet additional challenges the district faces. My continued participation on the board would contribute to such continuity. This is essential to maintain an excellent firehouse with exceptional firefighters and staff.

**Gary Rusnak  
(four-year term)**

I've been a resident of the community for over 20 years. I have over 40 years' experience in financial management in and for the Air Force. I've served as the treasurer of the Gleneagle North HOA for 15 years. I've established a partnership with county government agencies, directly resulting in numerous projects that have minimized the financial burden to our residents and enhanced our property values.

I provided oversight and sound, factual financial analysis attempting to limit the 200

percent tax increase proposed in the 2017 election. Today, the 2018 budget Wescott budget recently approved by the current BOD contained over \$1.500 million in unallocated funds, and did not include an additional \$400,000 of revenue inadvertently missing.

My financial management expertise, building partnerships with local governing officials, makes me uniquely qualified to move the Wescott Fire Protection Distrust into the future while serving the citizens and keeping an open line of communication.

**Larry Schwarz  
(two-year term)**

My name is Larry Schwarz and I am a retired battalion chief from the Colorado Springs Fire Department. I have lived in Gleneagle for over 18 years. My daughter and son-in-law are raising their family in this community as well.

I have worked side by side with members of Wescott Fire and our regional fire departments. My 30 years' fire experience and 19 years of leadership have provided me with a valuable perspective of what is needed in emergency services. As a board member, I will listen and consider ideas from both residents and our firefighters to ensure fiscal responsibility while maintaining a high standard of emergency services. I am convinced that together we have an opportunity to enhance the emergency services for our community and northern El Paso County. I am asking for your support as a board member for the Donald Wescott Fire Protection District. ■

**Tri-Lakes Monument Fire Protection District, Feb. 28 and March 28**

## Wildfire risk reduction advocated; collective bargaining idea introduced

By Natalie Barszcz

At the Feb. 28 and March 28 Tri-Lakes Monument Fire Protection District (TLMFPD) board meetings, the directors approved a plan to work on a "collaborative working agreement" with the local firefighters' union, heard concerns about future funding and forecasts for the 2018 wildfire season, and talked about the May 8 TLMFPD polling place election.

**Collective bargaining discussion**

Chief Chris Truty said the Local 4319 of the International Association of Firefighters (IAFF) inquired about the possibility of creating a formal collective bargaining agreement. TLMFPD would be the first fire district in El Paso County to have a collective bargaining agreement if the board approves it. He wished to know if the board agreed in general principal to the idea before

he spent a lot of time coming up with a document for its consideration. "We have never done this before, and we don't know what the content is going to be," he said. See [www.colorado.gov/pacific/cdle/LaborRelations](http://www.colorado.gov/pacific/cdle/LaborRelations)

Lt. Franz Hankins, president of Monument Professional Firefighters Association, presented the union's perspective to the board on the possibility of creating a "collaborative working agreement" to maintain the status

quo within TLMFPD. In effect, it would serve to "solidify current practices we have worked so hard to create," even if there are changes to the board or if the chief retires. He referred to SB 13-025, the Colorado Firefighter Safety Act. See <http://>

[extras.denverpost.com/app/bill-tracker/bills/2013a/sb\\_13-025/](http://extras.denverpost.com/app/bill-tracker/bills/2013a/sb_13-025/)

After much deliberation about the potential content of the draft agreement and its timeline, the board approved this motion by a 6-0 vote: to



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