

- Several residents said they felt the future of the department should be decided by the voters and that time should be taken to develop the right plan.
- Residents argued TLMFPD would necessarily take longer to respond to medical emergency

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- calls and saw this as a reason not to merge.
- Several commenters said tax revenue that should go to the Fire Department was not properly allocated in the budget.
- Mike Bromfield asked the council to let the town make the decision and to schedule workshops on the topic.
- Meredith Bromfield said she felt a tax increase was necessary, although no one wants that. She recalled working on the issue in 2014 as a part of a committee that recommended an increase of 16.2 mills. A proposal for 10 mills went on the ballot.
- Bonnie Gray called for Cressman to be recalled. Other residents expressed anger that the Town Council would consider merging with another district.
- Greg Coopman, who said he grew up in Palmer Lake, argued the town code does not give the Town Council the authority to disband the Fire Department. Coopman now is a Monument resident and serves on its Board of Trustees.
- Former Mayor Nikki McDonald recalled talking to TLMFPD about a possible merger in the late '90s with no success. She said changes were needed and that the residents should decide.
- Several residents said the Fire Department was a part of the town's traditions that it would be a mistake to abandon.
- Trish Flake argued that the Fire Department was not getting revenue that it was supposed to get, and that Town Attorney Maureen Juran had a conflict of interest because she works with the Town of Palmer Lake and also with TLMFPD.
- Ann Forsyth pointed out that the town was not

large enough to provide enough medical calls for the EMTs to keep their skills current.

Council members, others express support for mayor, council, town

In response to a number of hostile remarks directed at Cressman, several of the council members spoke out to support him.

Trustee Mark Schuler said that while he some-time disagreed with Cressman, he was proud to serve with him.

Trustee Robert Mutu said of the council, "We are your neighbors; we are not your enemies." Mutu said the council was there to address serious problems that were created by the previous management of the town. He said he was committed to fixing the town's problems.

Trustee Gary Faust said he had believed merging was the best strategy, that he might disagree with others on the council, but he respected them, adding, "I'm tired of being shamed for my service. ... I'm tired of being told we should recall the mayor and everyone on this board, of being told we shirked our fiduciary duties ... that criminal charges should be brought ... this has got to end."

Kuehster pointed out that every department in town government is short of money, that the town should work together, and there was no point in attacking the council over past mistakes.

Ball got to the heart of the matter by saying to the attendees: "We get that you love our Fire Department ... the real question is what are you willing to pay to keep them?"

Time is short to develop ballot language

Board members will work with the Fire Committee to build a plan and confirm the mill levy increase required. Juran told the council they have about five weeks to develop language for the ballot. The deadline is in early September, she said. Once language is voted on, fair campaign practice laws take effect and a citizen-run issue committee will be needed to run the campaign and track expenditures.

At the end of the meeting, the council voted to participate in the El Paso County coordinated election in November and to begin holding meetings to work on the ballot language.

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