

zoned RR-5 (residential rural) in Black Forest. The property is about one mile east of Highway 83 just to the north of Walker Road. The subdivision would create two lots of just over five acres and a third of 28.52 acres and would include 1.81 acres of right-of-way.

The application was treated as a consent item, meaning there was no discussion. It was scheduled to be heard at the BOCC meeting on Jan. 28.

County master plan update

Mark Gebhardt, deputy director, Planning and Community Development, gave an update on the master plan process at the end of the Jan. 7 meeting, telling the commissioners that the two-year project was ap-

proximately on schedule and currently at 25% of budget but with more detailed reports and information to come.

Earlier in the meeting, Judy van Ahlefeldt, a Black Forest resident, had addressed the commissioners with concerns she had about the process. She said, "I would like to see more direct Planning Commission involvement in the master plan in terms of oversight and with the website and public outreach, participation and visioning, and overall direction. Most of what I've seen has been reports to you by PCD [Planning and Community Development]. I know four of you are on MPSC [Master Plan Steering Committee] and

that's good but with regard to that, I think it would be good to have an agenda item on each agenda the rest of the year for the Planning Commission to hear what the people who have attended the MPSC that are on the Planning Commission have to say and I think that would improve the communication and make things a little better."

Information about the master plan project can be found on county's website: <https://elpaso-hlplanning.hub.arcgis.com/>

Helen Walklett can be reached at helenwalklett@ocn.me.

Northern El Paso County Coalition of Community Associations Inc., Jan. 11

NEPCO has plans for 2020 presentations

By Marlene Brown

The Northern El Paso County Coalition of Community Associations Inc. (NEPCO) held its bi-monthly meeting Jan. 11 at the Monument Town Hall. Attendees included governing members of northern El Paso County homeowners associations and concerned citizens. NEPCO President Greg Lynd discussed plans for 2020 presentations regarding issues pertaining to subdivision homeowners such as transportation, road construction and maintenance, water, fire protection, property taxes, and high growth in the area.

Paul Pirog, vice chairman of the Transportation and Land Use Committee, said NEPCO continues to offer input to local governments, such as the Town of Monument, and outlying new subdivisions. As a volunteer organization, NEPCO is able review applications, preliminary plans, final plats, and permits to build and give recommendations to the county Planning Commission and the Board of County Commissioners. Some of the high-density subdivisions being reviewed are Sanctuary Point Filing 3, Rollin Ridge, the business park at Highway 83 and Hodgen Road, Grandwood on Higby Road (151 homes on 2½- to 5-acre lots), Willow Springs Ranch (396 lots annexed to Monument on 219 acres), The Village rezone (84



Above: Paul Pirog, vice chairman of the NEPCO Transportation and Land Use Committee, described some of the numerous proposed new housing developments in the area. *Photo by Marlene Brown.*

acres of townhomes, multi-family homes, commercial and single-family homes), and Monument Ridge Filing 2 at Baptist and Struthers Roads. There were 23 new subdivision reviews in 2018 and 43 reviews for new subdivisions in 2019.

Wildfire Preparedness Committee

Matthew Nelson, Woodmoor Improvement Association Covenants/Forestry administrator, and Beth Lonnquist, Red Rock Ranch Homeowners Associa-

tion (HOA) president, reported on wildfire preparedness. Red Rock Ranch HOA received recognition as a Firewise USA Site of Excellence through training and planning to help homeowners form mitigation plans. Creating a Community Wildfire Preparedness Plan begins with local resources. Andre Mouton of Tri-Lakes United Methodist Church Emergency Preparedness Group offers emergency training along with teaching the protocols for mitigation, slash removal, and chipping coordination for each of the lots in a subdivision. Neighbors help neighbors, so the workload for each house and lot is not all on the individual owner.

The Wildfire Preparedness Committee meets on the first Tuesday of month at 10 a.m. at the Woodmoor Barn, 1691 Woodmoor Dr., and is open to the public to discuss resources available to individuals and other homeowners associations to be involved in mitigating wildfires.

NEPCO meets 10 a.m. to noon every other month on the second Saturday at the Monument Town Hall. The next general meeting will be on March 14.

Marlene Brown can be reached at marlenebrown@ocn.me.

January Weather Wrap

By Bill Kappel

After a snowy start to the season, conditions really quieted down starting in December and continuing in January. In fact, January 2020 was one of the driest on record, which is saying something when you consider January is already one of our driest months of the year. Up until the last few days of the month, almost no measurable precipitation fell across the Front Range.

At the official observing site in Denver, only a trace of snow had been recorded through Jan. 26th, and if it weren't for a couple quick-moving storms, one on the 27th and one on the 29th, that would have tied 1934 as the least snowy January on record. Not surprisingly, temperatures were also well above normal for the month, especially the low temperatures. We didn't drop below zero during the month, which is highly unusual for January.

Not surprisingly, the month started off mild, with highs reaching 50°F on the 1st, about 15 degrees warmer than normal. Temperatures "cooled" back down to normal levels on the 2nd and 3rd before warming back up to the mid-50s on the 4th. The roller coaster ride in temperatures between average and above average continued during the first week of the month.

One of the few storms that brought moisture be-

gan to affect the area late on the 9th, with some flurries developing that evening. More flurries and snow showers developed on the 10th and on the morning of the 11th. Those resulted in only about a half-inch of snowfall and barely a measurable amount of liquid equivalent.

Dry weather again took hold through the middle to end of the month, with temperatures again holding right around average to a little above. The dry period was interrupted by a quick snow shower just before noon on the 17th and other than that, no snow fell from the 12th through the 26th.

Finally, slightly more active weather conditions moved into the region over the last couple days of the month. The first system produced some light snow and blowing snow from late afternoon through mid-evening on the 27th. This produced 1-2 inches of new snow, normally not a noteworthy storm, but given how dry this January has been, it was a "big" storm. A couple quick moving systems moved through with light snow during the morning and early afternoon of the 29th and again during the late afternoon and evening of the 30th.

A look ahead

February is often a dry and cold month for the region as we move toward the snowy and unsettled conditions of March and April. Precipitation averages less

than an inch, with average high temperatures in the 30s. It can get very cold in February, with Arctic air making brief pushes into the region. However, days begin to get a little longer, which leads to some nice, sunny days and the snow that does fall begins to melt faster.

January 2020 Weather Statistics

Average High	41.7° (+1.6°)
100-year return frequency value max	48.4° min 30.8°
Average Low	17.7° (+5.1°)
100-year return frequency value max	26.6° min 6.6°
Highest Temperature	55° on the 4th
Lowest Temperature	7° on the 10th, 11th
Monthly Precipitation	0.22"
	(-0.49" 65% below normal)
100-year return frequency value max	1.56" min 0.01"
Monthly Snowfall	3.5"
	(-9.8", 70% below normal)
Season to Date Snow	67.2"
	(+14.4", 20% above normal)
Season to Date Precip.	4.11"
	(+0.03", 1% above normal)
Heating Degree Days	1093 (-4)
Cooling Degree Days	0

Bill Kappel is a meteorologist and Tri-Lakes resident. He can be reached at billkappel@ocn.me.

Letters to Our Community

Guidelines for letters are on page 31.

Disclaimer: The information and opinions expressed in Letters to Our Community are the responsibility of the letter writers and should not be interpreted as the views of OCN even if the letter writer is an OCN volunteer.

Note: The letters this month are arranged in alphabetical order by the submitter's last name.

Good news regarding property tax rates

Last year, most homeowners saw property values increase. The El Paso County Assessor's Notice of Valuation (NOV) last May caused some to claim, "My taxes went up!" That's possible, but by early February residents will receive property tax bills with the rest of the story.

When you get that bill, compare your rates to last year's (<https://treasurer.elpasoco.com/mill-levies/>). The January OCN reported about local taxing entity rates to be paid in 2020. Most rates will decrease or remain the same.

Lewis-Palmer School District 38 decreased to 41.43 from 44.068 mills, keeping the Tri-Lakes education tax rate well below comparable districts. Triview Metropolitan District reduced to 32 from 35, described as a temporary reduction.

OCN reported no changes for Palmer Lake (21.238), Donald Wescott Fire Protection District overall (7.0) and the northern subdistrict (14.9), Tri-Lakes Monument Fire Protection District(18.4), and Donala Water and Sanitation District A (21.296) and B (10.648). OCN reported only one rate increase: Forest

Lakes (Pinon Pines Metropolitan District 1) to 55.664 (from 55.278).

From other news sources, the county rate will decrease to 7.552 (from 8.068), the Pikes Peak Library

Val Ross-Coy

Broker Associate

(719) 237-8787

val.erashields.com

vcoy@erashields.com