

MONUMENT (Cont. from 14)

lishing and writing information without all the facts.

"It is the responsibility of this board to protect the citizens of Monument against these types of disturbing behaviors that cause unease in our community," said Elliott. She motioned to censure Clark for false information dissemination, noting, "Any of us on the board for the town must provide accurate information to our citizens."

Clark made a motion to table the vote to censure saying she had the right to answer this accusation and wanted to do so at a future meeting. "I'm not guilty of what I've been censured for, and I will bring an attorney to bear on this matter."

Mayor Don Wilson clarified that this was not a formal censure but a simple motion disapproving of her behavior. Therefore, the vote could occur at this meeting.

The motion to censure passed 5-2 with Clark and Trustee Jamy Unruh voting against.

New audit accounting firm approved

Finance Director Rosa Ooms asked the board to approve Hinkle and Company to perform the 2019 audit of the town's financial records as required by law.

Ooms said she sent out requests for proposal for an auditor. During the Oct. 7 budget workshop, the board discussed with Foreman about looking for a new auditor. According to Foreman, Kyle Logan has been with every firm the town has used to perform audits for at least the last seven years. The town received two quotes as a result of the request.

In its proposal, Hinkle notes it audits for over 25 cities and towns within Colorado.

The audit cost is \$15,000, which was included in this year's budget.

A committee composed of Ooms, Human Resources Director Robert Bishop, and Foreman read through the proposals and selected Hinkle because it was the least expensive and could perform the audit in the time required by the town.

Ooms said the audit consists of Finance Department policy reviews. Also, the auditors will take samples of transactions, review internal and external processes, and ensure accounts are balanced and substantiated. They will also write the notes and financial statement presentation to the board.

Clark pushed for a more comprehensive audit that would check for embezzlement.

Clark said, "Based on my interactions with the FBI forensic auditor concerning the past 15 years of embezzlement they are investigating, he indicated that the best way to be proactive in catching that early

enough next time is to make sure our next auditor give a comprehensive audit."

"We don't have that information as public information," retorted Romanello. "It is just hearsay." Elliott noted there has been no formal finding of embezzlement within the town.

Background: Clark was referring to an announcement from Foreman during the March 18 meeting that the FBI and IRS are reviewing the town's finances. No further information has been made public. See www.ocn.me/v19n4.htm#mbot0318 and <https://www.ocn.me/v19n4.htm#mbot>.

Ooms noted the audit is only for 2019 financial records, and if an auditor found something amiss, they would dive deeper to investigate irrespective of the type of audit they were performing.

Clark seemed to not be satisfied with this explanation, saying, "from the information I have received from the FBI forensic auditor, I wanted to change to a comprehensive audit from 2019 forward."

LaKind said, "In order to make an educated decision, on this discussion, the information Clark has from FBI, could that be shared (here with the board) before we amend the resolution?" Clark said, "I can't disclose or comment on active investigation, but I can ask for this to be amended to include a comprehensive audit."

Following up, Clark said, "I'm not saying the FBI said to do this," rather she was asking for the resolution to be amended based on the information she received and on her own knowledge. Unruh seconded the amendment motion Clark made, but it failed in a 2-5 vote.

The initial resolution to hire Hinkle to perform an audit passed 6-1 with Clark voting against it.

Community development block grant approved

Madeline VanDenHoek, community relations specialist, brought a resolution to the board requesting an intergovernmental agreement between the town and the El Paso County Department of Economic Development in order to apply for community development block grants (CDBG).

In a letter to the town, El Paso County Economic Development Executive Director Crystal LaTier said, "We are pleased to inform you that the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has notified El Paso County that it may re-qualify for designation as an Urban County.... El Paso County intends to seek that re-designation and, if successful, will be eligible to receive an allocation of Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds for federal fiscal years 2021-2023."

A county is considered urban under HUD requirements if it meets certain criteria including a population that exceeds 200,000.

If the county receives HOME or Emergency Shelter Grants (ESG) funding, it can be offered to Monument if it elects to sign the intergovernmental agreement (IGA). HOME is a federally financed grant program intended to assist low- and very low-income participants in owning a home. ESG funds local emergency shelters and homeless prevention services.

The Town of Monument was included in an IGA in 2014 and in 2017, so this is just a renewal of those. The board approved the request unanimously.

COVID-19 concerns relating to the 2020 budget and public places

Stephens asked for an update on revenue reduction expectations as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. He said that because sales tax is a primary revenue source, he'd like to see the numbers as soon as they are available "and make them a number one priority." If the town is "falling behind" on tax numbers, "I'd encourage you to bring it up immediately so that we can address it sooner."

Foreman reminded the board that Gov. Polis allowed businesses to defer paying sales tax for March. "I've been in contact with other municipalities and projections are from 25-50% loss" in overall municipal revenues, said Foreman, adding the town may have to furlough some workers to adjust for the lower-than-expected income. Ooms said, "We are looking at any and all ways to minimize costs" including a stoppage of most capital projects.

During public comments, resident Ann Howe protested the town's requirement to wear a face mask when entering Monument Town Hall. She said they were not mandated by the state and have "not been proven to be effective in any way shape or form. It's infringing on people's rights to require them to conduct business." Foreman said the sign is up on the facility, and they are providing masks to anyone who enters as a way to protect staff.

Checks over \$5,000

- Civic Plus, website renewal, \$5,407
- Murray, Dahl, Beery, Renaud, LLP, legal services for January and February 2020, \$7,411
- TPX Communications, managed services, \$9,306
- Jacobs Engineering, professional services paid by retainers, \$5,226

The meeting adjourned at 8:27 p.m.

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Monument Board of Trustees, May 18

Trustee censure remains in effect; treasurer appointed

By Allison Robenstein

At the May 18 meeting, the Monument Board of Trustees (BOT) heard a request to expunge the recent censure of Trustee Laurie Clark. Appointments were approved for a town treasurer and in-house attorney. And, the town will receive over a half-million dollars in funding through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act.

Clark censure holds after vote to dismiss

During the May 4 meeting, the board voted to censure Clark for comments used by a reporter in a March 23 story aired by KRDO and Clark's monthly column in the *Jackson Creek Monthly*. See related May 4 BOT article on page 14.

Clark asked for her attorney to speak during this

meeting. Initially, her attorney, Randy B. Corporon, was allowed to only make a statement during public comments, but then Mayor Don Wilson allowed him to have a discussion with the board.

"I was asked by Miss Clark to attend the meeting to ask the board to reconsider a disciplinary action" related to two allegations of misconduct regarding the *Jackson Creek Monthly* column and an allegation of giving misleading information to a KRDO television reporter.

Her attorney said Clark "was unable to gain access electronically" to the May 4 BOT meeting.

Note: Clark made comments during the board's virtual meeting on May 4 and was not noted absent in the meeting minutes. She is quoted several times in

OCN's May 4 Board of Trustees article. The recording of the May 4 meeting is available at <https://tinyurl.com/ydxs4xmt> and <https://tinyurl.com/ygqb3p3>.

Town Attorney Joseph Rivera said, "I've had previous discussions with Mr. Corporon about this, and I let him know the censure was in essence a notice of disapproval based upon the articulated conduct by the board member by the board against another member of the board. It's a procedural tool that can be used through Robert's Rules, and [the] record otherwise speaks for itself."

Corporon provided copies of text messages between KRDO reporter Scott Harrison and Clark. Corporon said the text messages show that reporter Harrison misinterpreted what Clark was saying over the course of several such messages.

Background: In the March 23 article, Harrison wrote, "So far, Colorado Springs has decided against the kind of shelter-in-place, stay at home or lockdown order that some Colorado communities have enacted in an attempt to slow or stop the spread of the coronavirus. Denver announced the start of such an order yesterday, and a member of Monument's Board of Trustees said the small town's town manager has been given the authorization to make the same move."

A correction was issued the following day: "Editor's note: Monday, we incorrectly reported that Monument would be going into lockdown after receiving erroneous information from a town board member."

Corporon said they are considering that Harrison print a retraction.

To see the text messages provided by Corporon, go to <https://tinyurl.com/y8xtzysc>.

Corporon said the text messages make Clark's message clear and unambiguous. However, Wilson said there are few date and time stamps, making it dif-



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