

Happy New Year! from the all-volunteer staff at

Our Community News

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

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WHERE TO FIND OFFICIAL COVID INFORMATION
<https://covid19.colorado.gov/>

Polar Express display given permanent home in Colorado Springs museum



The Pikes Peak Historical Street Railway Foundation in Colorado Springs has created a permanent display for the long-time Coleman family Polar Express model train display that was a Town of Palmer Lake Christmas tradition (see archive photo above from 2010 www.ocn.me/v11n1.htm#pe). This tradition started during the 2006 Christmas holiday. It was created by former Palmer Lake Town Councilman Gary Coleman and his son Travis.

The new home for this display is the Pikes Peak Trolley Museum at 2333 Steel Dr., Colorado Springs, CO 80907 (719-475-9508). Connie Balcerovich, Travis' sister, arranged for the donation to the museum with a formal ceremony attended by Travis on Nov. 23, 2020. Gary Coleman died in 2016 ending Palmer Lake's 10-year town tradition, but the display is now restored and available to the public year-round. "Now they can actually see it, physically. We have re-created what happens in the movie," said Balcerovich, referring to the 2004 animated film, "The Polar Express."

For more information, visit coloradospringstrolleys.com or gazette.com/life-polar-express-model-train-replica-finds-permanent-home-in-colorado-springs/video_8b2c2281-870d-55a8-8914-6d29eefd461e.html.

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Santa on Patrol



Above: Santa took time from his work at the North Pole to visit the Donald Wescott Fire Protection District on Dec. 12. Because his work on Christmas Eve is so important, he kept socially distant from families wishing to visit with him. *Photo courtesy of Donald Wescott Fire Protection District.* Fire district coverage starts on page 17.

Monument Board of Trustees, Dec. 7

Board suggests town become pandemic sanctuary city; budget approved

By Allison Robenstein

During the Dec. 7 Monument Board of Trustees (BOT) meeting, the board agreed to research creation of a resolution approving the town as a COVID-19 sanctuary city. They also approved the 2021 budget.

Trustees Laurie Clark and Jamy Unruh were noted absent. This is the third year Clark has missed the annual budget approval vote.

Possible resolution for COVID-19 sanctuary city

During board comments, Trustee Ron Stephens asked, "What would this board think of declaring Monument a COVID-19 sanctuary city?" He suggested a resolution be drawn up that would prevent local businesses from being reported for failing to follow state pandemic requirements. His question came after three board members commented on the state's pandemic response and its negative effects on local businesses and the economy.

Trustee Jim Romanello expressed concerns about the closure of local businesses and religious services. He said, "Open your businesses, go to church, go to temple, stand and if necessary, fight for what is right." Trustee Mitch LaKind said, "I call on the businesses to ignore the red [se-

vere risk level], and open and sustain their life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness."

Mayor Pro Tem Kelly Elliott appeared to break down while asking state government officials to, "allow us to use our best judgment ... so we can keep businesses open for their livelihood for the good of the country. This control is absolutely absurd." Mayor Don Wilson's main concern with the legislation is that the board's actions may cause individual businesses harm. "I'd like to hear from some of our business owners," he said.

Town Attorney Andrew Richey said the El Paso County Health Department has legal authority to enforce pandemic requirements, but he could not say for sure if Health Department officials could be removed from local businesses for doing their job. This was in response to the board wondering if local businesses could legally site local health officials for trespassing as they enforce COVID-19 restrictions.

Treasurer Rosa Ooms cautioned the board to ensure businesses would not be required to repay any of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, Economic Security Act (CARES) Act funding

Lewis-Palmer District 38 Board of Education, Dec. 14

Board discusses plans for second semester, approves contract for energy audit

By Harriet Halbig

Members of the Board of Education of Lewis-Palmer District 38 discussed reopening schools for in-person learning, approved an energy audit, and proposed implementation of Goal 3 of the strategic plan regarding professional learning at their Dec. 14 meeting.

Six community members submitted comments. All said that distance learning was not sufficient and that their students were suffering mental health effects from being isolated from their teachers and peers. They urged the district to reopen the secondary schools five days a week at the beginning of the second semester. One individual recommended increased compensation for substitute teachers, and another said the district should ask the opinions of the community.

Board Vice President Theresa Phillips said that she, board President Chris Taylor, and Superintendent KC Somers met recently with

MONUMENT (Cont. on 2)

D38 BOE (Cont. on 8)