

time 350 acres were rezoned from RR-5 (residential rural) to RR-2.5 (residential rural). A separate portion was rezoned to the CC (commercial community) zoning district. See [www.ocn.me/v19n8.htm#epbocc](http://www.ocn.me/v19n8.htm#epbocc).

The application was approved as a consent item, although Commissioner Tim Trowbridge did ask for a summary of the road access onto Hodgen Road before the vote. The application is now due to

be heard at the BOCC meeting on Jan. 26.

#### EPC Community Engage

Craig Dossey, executive director, Planning and Community Development, took the opportunity at the Dec. 17 meeting to announce the launch in 2021 of EPC Community Engage, a series of community-focused workshops aimed at giving the public more information on the land use and planning process. The first workshop, "Understanding

the County Masterplan" will be held virtually in February. More information is available on county's website. See <https://planningdevelopment.elpasoco.com/epccommunityengage/>.

A series of industry-focused workshops is also planned.

*Helen Walklett can be reached at [helenwalklett@ocn.me](mailto:helenwalklett@ocn.me).*

## December Weather Wrap

*By Bill Kappel*

December was drier and warmer than normal across the region, continuing the trend we've seen since July, with every month during the second half of the year receiving below normal precipitation. Along with the continued dry conditions, temperatures were again above normal as well.

However, the first couple days of the month saw temperatures a little below average with some light snow. The high temperature on the 1st was reached just after midnight, with temperatures falling through the day and staying cold on the 2nd. The high temperature on the 2nd only reached the upper teens even with partly cloudy skies.

Clear, dry, and mild conditions then returned from the 3rd through the 9th. Temperatures warmed through the period, topping out in the upper 50s to low 60s on the 7th, 8th, and 9th. A quick return to winter conditions moved in behind an initial cold front that began to affect the region around 6 a.m. on the 10th. Clouds and cooler air continued to work in through the day, with light snow finally developing by mid-evening.

This was the start of a prolonged period of cool conditions, with several rounds of generally light snow. Most areas received 2-4 inches of snow from the 10th through the 13th. Temperatures stayed below freezing from the mid-afternoon of the 10th through mid-morning on the 14th. But we only managed to jump above freezing for a few hours on the

14th when another surge of cold air moved in and dropped temperatures back below freezing before 1 p.m. that afternoon. The second surge was associated with our heaviest snow of the month, with several inches of wind-blown snow accumulating on the 14th and 15th.

Dry conditions with seasonal temperatures moved in during the next couple of days before another quick-moving system brought about a half-inch of new snow on the 18th. Behind this quick shot of cool air, mild and dry conditions returned. These brought temperatures back above normal from the 19th through the 22nd. This dry and mild weather continued through Christmas and the following few days, only interrupted by a brief snow squall around 7:30 p.m. on the 22nd and windy, cold conditions on the 23rd.

The mild, dry conditions were finally interrupted at the end of the month, as a more unsettled pattern moved in starting late on the 27th and continuing through New Year's Day. Unfortunately for the Front Range, the series of storm systems moved through quickly, never allowing winds to move upslope and tap into significant moisture. The mountains were able to pick up some good snowfall during the period, and the general northwesterly flow kept temperatures at or below normal for the last few days of the month. After a second half of 2020 that produced mild and very dry conditions, let's hope the new year brings plentiful moisture as we head through winter and into

spring.

#### A look ahead

January can see the coldest temperatures of the year, but there is often a proverbial "January thaw" where mild temperatures make brief appearances. Precipitation is on the low side, with amounts generally less than an inch. The month offers numerous sunny and windy days with quick shots of snow in between.

#### December 2020 Weather Statistics

Average High	<b>40.6°</b> (+2.3°)
100-year return frequency value max	<b>50.5°</b> min <b>32.6°</b>
Average Low	<b>16.3°</b> (+3.0°)
100-year return frequency value max	<b>22.4°</b> min <b>5.4°</b>
Monthly Precipitation	<b>0.66"</b> (-0.55", 47% below normal)
100-year return frequency value max	<b>2.82"</b> min <b>0.00"</b>
Monthly Snowfall	<b>14.6"</b> (-3.1", 18% below normal)
Highest Temperature	<b>60° on the 8th</b>
Lowest Temperature	<b>3° on the 15th</b>
Season to Date Snow	<b>25.0"</b> (-14.5", 42% below normal)
	<i>(the snow season is from Oct 1 to Sept 30)</i>
Season to Date Precip.	<b>1.09"</b> (-2.34", 69% below normal)
	<i>(the snow season is from Oct 1 to Sept 30)</i>
Heating Degree Days	<b>1134</b> (-93)
Cooling Degree Days	<b>0</b> (0)

*Bill Kappel is a meteorologist and Tri-Lakes resident. He can be reached at [billkappel@ocn.me](mailto: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. The letters this month are arranged in alphabetical order based on the letter-writer's last name.*

#### There's no substitute for community helpers

I would like to give a shout-out to all the community helpers who have done and are doing everything they can to help us all get through this pandemic. From offers to pick up groceries and shovel driveways to setting up Nextdoor groups to trade and barter needed items to combining Christmas displays and food drives, community members have shown a willingness to help others.

Two groups in our community really need our help right now: small businesses and schools. Now is the time to support your local businesses by buying local including takeout from our local restaurants. And now is the time to step up support for schools in any way possible. If you have a high school graduate who is taking time off before their next step or a college student who has come back home and has time in their schedule, schools need substitute teachers to help them get and/or stay open. All you need this year is a high school diploma and the ability to pass a background check. See our local school district websites for more information.

Continue to be the light in our community, neighbors!

**Jackie Burhans**

#### Schools need to maintain COVID safety standards

Heading into a new school calendar year, we are hopefully near a turning point with COVID-19 as vaccines roll out. Our local school district has done a good job in a difficult situation—maximizing in-person teaching while prioritizing safety, but now is not the time to relax. We need to maintain these standards until community transmission is low enough, especially with an end in sight.

If you are not in health care, COVID may seem somewhat abstract—or not that much of a threat. The numbers tell a different story. Twice this week, the daily U.S. COVID deaths surpassed 3,400 deaths with-

out much fanfare. For comparison, 3,645 died in the battle of Antietam and 2,977 in the Sept. 11 attacks. COVID-19 lacks the drama and visuals of these other events, which can make it easy to ignore, but that would be a mistake.

COVID-19's asymptomatic transmission ensures that it is too late to change our behavior once we know we're infected. We've now learned that lesson many times. Instead, we must maintain our vigilance, continuing to follow CDC and public health department guidance for best practices to minimize transmission. I'm glad our school district has shown leadership in balancing safety and the best teaching possible, but now we need to maintain discipline—especially with the end in sight.

**Christopher D'Lauro, Ph.D.**

#### Thank you, Monument Academy

As many upper-grade students have been struggling with all-online learning or hybrid learning since March, I wanted to thank Monument Academy's new middle/high school for working so hard to keep these students in school and in person. My family greatly appreciates how MA surveyed parents, teachers, and students to discover our preferences for a safe return to school this year and how they took to heart our many suggestions and feedback in formulating their plan. Their focus has clearly been in the best interests of our children both academically and in their social emotional wellbeing. On behalf of my middle-schooler, thank you once more for making school as enjoyable and normal as possible in these challenging times.

**Amy McKenzie**

#### A student's perspective

As a Lewis-Palmer High School student, I have benefited from the hybrid schedule. Using cohorts allowed for effective contract tracing and minimal exposure. If I were in classes with all students, I would have been quarantined multiple times. Instead, I avoided every case at the school. I would have missed more in-person time if I had gone to school five days a week. This format allowed me to get the necessary in-person instruction while keeping me safe and healthy. I had a chance to see friends I hadn't talked to since March and catch up. We were all struggling with the isolation and missing social interaction.

I believe the hybrid schedule also has great educational benefits. Online days gave me a chance to complete assignments for my classes, gather notes from the textbook, and join Google Meet for classes that needed more time. My teachers used Canvas, which makes keeping track of assignments and classwork much easier. Some of my teachers posted online copies of class presentations so we could review them.

All the staff provided great support while I was online. My counselor was always available through email or Google Meet to fix my schedule, talk about online classes, or plan virtual college visits. My teachers helped with my first AP class, finding a math tutor, learning to navigate online tools, answering questions, and providing emotional support, making themselves available in-person and virtually. My advisor for Newspaper helped us brainstorm stories, figure out how to complete interviews, and get photos virtually. My drama teacher helped make theater possible by recording shows over Zoom.

All the staff at LPHS have done an amazing job and have our best interests at heart. I hope we continue this hybrid format to ensure the safety of both students and faculty.

**Zoe O'Donnell**

#### We expect fair and accurate reporting

I would like to say that the Monument Sanitation District board is disappointed by the recent OCN headline of the Nov. 18 district meeting. MSD deserves fair and accurate reporting and "failure" should never have been in the title. We did postpone approval of the budget until the December meeting but not at all due to any failure to follow public budget hearing requirements.

MSD's action was absolutely correct according to state law. Notice of the MSD budget hearing was published in The Gazette on 11/9/20 as required, prior to the Nov. 18 meeting as required by CRS 29-1-106(3) (a), the draft budget was available, and there is no statutory requirement to "post" the draft budget.

*Respectfully,*

*Marylee Reisig*

*Secretary, Monument Sanitation District*

**Editor's note:** OCN stands by its reporting on this public Nov. 18, 2020 MSD board meeting as published.