

At a meeting of the Planning Commission, McCarthy had recommended a 96-foot diameter cul de sac abutting an existing hydrant. Collins said the ordinance would create a total of three lots.

The board voted unanimously to approve the ordinance.

#### Minor subdivision approved

Collins also told the board the background of Resolution 8-2021, which would create one lot from lots 12, 13 and 14 on the property owned by Tyler and Sara Woodward at 205 South Valley Road. The resolution would move the property line to create the required 7.5-foot setback from an existing structure, Collins said.

The board voted unanimously to approve the resolution.

#### Green & Associates continues as town auditor

The board voted unanimously at the Jan. 14 board meeting to approve Resolution 7-2021, which authorizes the mayor to sign a letter of understanding with Green & Associates LLC to establish audit services for an amount not to exceed \$14,600. Green and Associates has served as the town's auditor for several years.

#### New business license granted

Rich Caldwell told the board at the Jan. 14 meeting he had purchased the property at 201 Pinecrest Way, which had previously been the Pinecrest Lodge, intending to open a group home for intellectually or developmentally disabled adults. Caldwell said the nonprofit group home would be called Hilltop Ranch.

The board voted unanimously to approve Caldwell's request for a business license.

#### Consultant reviews water wells, supply, rights, and taps

At the Jan. 28 workshop, David Frisch, of GMS, gave the board an overview of sev-

eral water-related issues affecting Palmer Lake.

Frisch began with his history with Palmer Lake, saying GMS provided the town with engineering services in the 1980s through 1991. In 1989, GMS resurfaced the dam at one of the town's reservoirs. Frisch lives in Palmer Lake and has a vested interest in the town's well-being, he told the board.

Frisch reviewed a large map GMS had done of the town's water infrastructure that documented the water transmission lines. He explained the town uses two types of water—surface and ground—and pointed out that 60% of the town's water is surface water, with the remainder provided by wells that draw from the Denver Basin aquifer.

Frisch said a 1985 ordinance defines the town's boundaries, and the town owns all the water rights within those boundaries. Residential wells within the town limits typically draw from the Dawson aquifer, he said. Frisch told the board the town had "a lot of water rights."

Trustee Karen Stuth asked Frisch if the town had enough drinking water and how long the supply could be expected to last. Frisch said he believed the town had adequate water at present, but an accounting by a water rights engineer would be needed to estimate how long the supply might last. Frisch declined to give an estimate about where the town's water supply might be in five years, saying that depended on the economy and the rate of building.

Frisch told the board that while the town had plenty of water rights, the water infrastructure was minimal, consisting of wells, a treatment plant, storage tanks, and transmission lines.

Trustee Sam Padgett mentioned she had found information indicating the town had 790 water taps in use in 2007.

Frisch wrapped up his presentation

by recommending that the town focus on reducing water loss and improving treatment technology. Town leadership should decide how to handle future requests to subdivide lots, he said.

#### Well and water tap policies discussed

Collins summed up for the current board some issues left unresolved by the previous board. She said the previous board felt it did not have "a good handle" on how water was managed and on how water taps were being provided to property owners requesting them. Collins pointed out that Water Supervisor Steve Orcutt had minimized lost water previously, but water loss was slowly increasing. She said planned development was good news but also a stressor on the water system. As new staff joined the town's administrative team, they became aware of some aspects of water management that needed a closer look. Collins mentioned conservation as an issue the board should consider.

Collins said the town had an ordinance requiring the town to approve wells for residents to whom the town cannot provide water service. She did not believe the process to bring those issues to the board was adequately defined and that the town's ordinances did not clearly define the fees to drill a well.

Collins confirmed Stuth's comment that the town currently had 1,023 water taps in place. Collins said town staff had three applications for water taps in hand and there are another six or seven more that they are aware of. Frisch said that based on previous studies, the estimate was the town had 37 taps available. Collins went on to say taps should be issued for a particular address and that the town's code said any tap not used within 12 months would be deemed abandoned. Collins said that policy had not been followed, perhaps for years, and recommended amending the code or start following it in all cases. She said she was aware of eight taps that had been sold but were not tied to a property or specific plat.

The issue of abandoned taps received further discussion at the regular board meeting that followed the workshop.

#### Planned water rate increases only partially implemented

Collins told the board that a resolu-

tion passed in 2019 had established annual increases in tap fees, monthly base rates, and unit charges that had not been completely implemented. She explained that the money the town had borrowed to build a second storage tank required rate increases totaling 10% overall to be in place. To avoid an uproar, Collins told town staff to hold off on implementing all the rate increases in the 2019 resolution until the new board had a chance to discuss them.

Collins said most water taps were for ¾-inch pipes. One-inch, 1.5-inch, and 2-inch taps should have a higher base charge, but those higher rates were not consistently charged, Collins said.

Paul Banta, who served on the previous board, reminded those present that the town had hired a rate consultant who said the town needed to raise residential rates annually by 3% to 5% to remain in the black. Collins said she would review the consultant's report.

Marc Schuler, who also served on the previous board, said his understanding was the town relied on ground water and the aquifer the town's wells pumped from was dropping 20 feet a year on average. He asked how many years the town's wells would be viable; Orcutt said he could not answer that question.

#### Water tap applicant in limbo

Mike Nelson told the board that he and his wife bought land in the town in 2020 and were assured at the time that water and sewer taps would be available for the home they planned to build. Then he learned there was a moratorium in place, which has been a financial hardship for his family.

"We've been in limbo," Nelson said. He asked the board for consideration for everyone in his position. Bass advised Nelson to complete his application for a water tap. Bass said he was sympathetic to Nelson's dilemma and the town would look for a solution.

Following Nelson's comments, the workshop on water issues was adjourned and the regular board meeting was convened.

#### Exceptions to water tap moratorium considered

At the Jan. 28 regular meeting, Collins asked the board for direction on how to handle water tap requests that had come in while the water tap moratorium is in

*PALMER LAKE (Cont. on 16)*

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