

was presented to the board and to the public at a workshop meeting. The board voted on eight resolutions and granted two special event permits.

Water Fund scrutinized

In a public comment at the Oct. 13 board meeting, resident Martha Brodzik drew attention to the town's Water Fund. She said residents had been misled by the discussion of the town's ballot initiatives because the town's largest financial problem is its Water Fund, which should be self-sustaining but is not. She argued the fund is over \$2 million in debt, is not properly managed, is behind in implementing rate increases, and that neither of the proposed ballot measures would solve these problems. She repeated her concerns at the budget workshop meeting that followed the board meeting.

At the Oct. 27 board meeting, in response to Brodzik's assessment and questions from other residents, Town Administrator Dawn Collins and Deputy Town Clerk Julia Stambaugh presented the history of the increases to the town's water rates and the current state of the loan obligations incurred by upgrades to its water infrastructure.

Collins said her investigation showed there were no concerns about the Water Fund. She pointed out that incorrect water billing and water rates came before the board at three board meetings in January and February of 2021. At a board meeting on Feb. 25, 2021, staff told the board that loan payments were on track at that time but funding for loan payments would be

short by 2024 without implementing rate increases that were approved by a previous board in 2019. At that meeting, the board approved increased tap fees and increasing the base water rate and usage tier rates by 3% annually.

On April 11, 2019 a previous board approved rate increases recommended by Carl Brown of Getting Great Rates LLC. Details on Brown's presentation to the board can be found here: <https://www.ocn.me/v19n4.htm#pltc> and Resolution 4-2019, which put those rates into effect, can be found here: <https://www.townofpalmerlake.com/resolutions?page=5>.

Collins detailed the fee increases that were missed:

- Larger tap sizes were charged at the same rates as quarter-inch taps until March 2021. The accounts undercharged have been corrected.
- The usage rate increase approved in April 2021 was implemented 14 months late.
- Because of the delay in increasing the usage rate, water revenue has a deficit to recover.
- An additional two-month delay in raising rates resulted from changing billing providers.

Collins said that a 7 percent increase in water rates in 2023 is needed to recover the revenue lost due to the delays.

Collins stressed the new billing system provided more accurate and detailed data about water usage. She also told the board the Rural Community Assistance Corp. will analyze the current water rates and do a

five-year forecast that will cover the Water Fund including equipment and asset replacement schedules at no charge to the town.

Stambaugh said she had asked the Colorado Water Resources and Power Development Authority, from which Palmer Lake borrowed money to build a second water storage tank, to audit the town's loan. A quick review on the loan was done and the loan is "in great shape," according to the authority.

Trustee Darin Dawson emphasized that water rates will need to increase "for a very long time."

Recodification effort stalls again

Collins provided a brief history of the effort to recodify the town's municipal code. Previous boards and staff have been working since 2016 to update the town's municipal code with all newly passed ordinances. The original municipal code is in one document, and subsequent ordinances are in a separate document. Recodification involves integrating all adopted ordinances into the municipal code and then reviewing the result for legal accuracy and consistency.

Collins emphasized that at present the town staff was hindered in their duties because understanding the current code requires them first to review the municipal code and then to comb through the ordinances to find any that update the code on the issue they are trying to understand. As a result, residents can't always get a timely answer to their questions or concerns.

Collins said the board had directed

staff to hire Municode in March 2021 to integrate the existing municipal code with new ordinances into one easily searchable document and host that document on their website. That has been done, but the result is not official until the board votes to adopt it. Collins emphasized that the board is responsible for the municipal code.

A first reading of the updated code was on the agenda at the Oct. 13 meeting. Trustees Grant Havenar and Karen Stuth said they were unwilling to adopt the revised code until they had time to review the updated code and understand the history of changes made by Municode. They also asked that the residents have a chance to review the updated code. Collins suggested that the board approve the version produced by Municode, which could be amended later by the board. Attorney Matt Krob advised that until a version of the code is adopted, the town would have a shaky foundation on which to adopt new ordinances.

Havenar, Stuth, and residents Brodzik and Nikki McDonald expressed concerns about the absence of the role of commissioners in the updated code. They felt that earlier versions of the code defined a commissioner role that required individual board members to act as liaisons with departments such as the Police and Fire Departments. Other residents mentioned other concerns. Havenar moved to hold a workshop on Monday, Nov. 10 at 4 p.m. to compare the updated code with a red-line version documenting changes, and to schedule a public hearing and first reading of the code at the Nov. 10 meeting. The motion passed with Trustees Nicole Currier, Jessica Farr, Havenar, and Stuth voting in favor. Mayor Bill Bass and Trustees Samantha Padgett and Darin Dawson were not present.

The recodification discussion continued at the Oct. 27 meeting, and occasionally became heated.

Bass said the recodification effort was a work in progress and questioned the need for a workshop.

In regard to concerns about the elimination of the commissioner role, Collins said she believed previous administrations sometimes removed rules from the code when those rules were not being followed. She repeated the need to have one document from which to work.

McDonald, who previously served as mayor, said she believed the commissioner role was removed when John Cressman was mayor because the town staff did not want commissioners. In response to this, Krob said that the board was responsible for the code, the staff took direction from the board, and the staff did not make decisions as McDonald suggested.

Bass suggested that the issue of commissioners be put on the agenda at a future meeting.

Collins expressed her frustration with a lack of direction from the board.

Bass said he did not feel a workshop was feasible. He suggested adopting the code produced by Municode and discussing needed changes at future meetings. Farr and Currier agreed.

The board voted not to hold a workshop and to put a first reading of an ordinance to adopt the update code on the agenda at a meeting in December.

Board recognizes police officers, Town Hall team

At the Oct. 13 meeting, Police Chief Jason Vanderpool administered the oath of office to Officers Ramirez, Olson, and Perry. In addition, Lieutenant Adam Lundy presented the Life Saving Award to Officer James Bentley for his courageous actions in dealing with a home invasion and attack in Palmer Lake.

At the Oct. 27 meeting, Bass awarded the HPA Civic Restoration Award for the Town Hall Project to Mark Horton and Ryan Cramer of GMS Consulting Engineers Inc. and Neal Parker of TN Parker.

Draft of 2023 budget presented

The board received the 2023 draft budget at the Oct. 13 meeting. A workshop was held following the board meeting to present the draft budget to the public and hear their comments.

Stambaugh and Fire Chief John Vincent said they had reduced the Fire Department budget by \$232,000. Vincent commented that three-quarters of the ambulance trips



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