

## MFD (Cont. from 18)

model at Station 2 on Roller Coaster Road (the staff and PPE equipment are exposed to diesel fumes in its current configuration). Each remodel is anticipated to cost about \$230,000. To include securing land for a potential future fire station 6 at Woodcarver and Baptist Roads. See [www.ocn.me/v22n9.htm#mfd](http://www.ocn.me/v22n9.htm#mfd).

- Capital equipment replacement of about \$215,000 for a power stretcher and loader, a Personal Protective Equipment contaminant extractor for Station 5, a cardiac monitor, bone microphones for Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA) masks and a retrofit of one engine for SCBAs.
- Fleet Capital Operations funding of about \$1.766 million to pay off two lease payments, a stock Type 1 engine, a Type 3 Wildland engine, and an ambulance.
- Fleet Capital Administration funding of about \$141,600 to replace the Emergency Medical Services (EMS) battalion chief's vehicle and purchase a light-duty utility vehicle for the proposed fire technician position. Several old vehicles will be sold.
- The Fleet and Facilities Logistics' position will be permanent, and that position will use the Dodge light pickup that is being used by the EMS battalion chief.

Kelly said he hoped that impact fees for all the development would alleviate drawing down the capital funds that will be needed for the Station 3 rebuild, the remodel for Station 2 and renovation projects for Stations 4 and 5, and eventually a sixth station. "I can look anyone in the eye and say, we are a growing district, and we need to reposition," he said.

Kovacs requested the board review the proposed 2023 budget documents and contact the staff with questions. The proposed budget will be made available for public comment and then approved at the November board meeting. For information, visit: [www.tlmdfire.org](http://www.tlmdfire.org).

### Station 2 remodel

Kovacs proposed the board approve the re-allocation of funds

originally allocated for purchasing new property for Station 2 and use those funds for a full remodel in 2023. The concrete apron for Station 2 had been replaced in lieu of purchasing land. The ambulance moved out of the station, and it is now operated by three firefighters.

Smaldino said he understood that two personnel had left Station 2 and moved to other stations within the district, but he wondered about the eight years of leach field problems that had occurred on the property.

Kovacs said the architects feel they can make improvements, and if the district decided to rebuild elsewhere, no one would buy the property.

Division Chief of Administration/Fire Marshal Jamey Bumgarner said the leach field would need to be removed before it could be sold, and it is functioning the way it should, even with five personnel on shift. The decision to leave at least a three-person engine crew was not an easy decision, but it is right for now, he said.

The board approved the re-allocation of funds, 6-0.

### Firefighter/paramedics take the oath

Kovacs administered the oath of office to recently graduated Firefighter/Paramedics AJ Armstrong and Matt Godson. Kovacs also pinned on the badges and announced that Godson had been awarded class valedictorian, receiving the "Gerald S. Gordan, MD and Gerald J Estep, MD Award for Academic Achievement" at the Paramedic Health School in Denver.

### Fall firefighter recruitment

Division Chief of Operations Jonathan Bradley said the district had interviewed seven final candidates and identified a backup candidate in case one decides on another department. The candidates are also considering three other districts within state. If the district cannot recruit enough candidates to fill the vacant positions, other options will be explored, but the district might have to wait to fill the positions later this year or during winter training next year. Applications this year are down considerably from previous years, and the district is proposing additional funds for 2023 to market the district in the

next recruitment drive.

Kovacs said the district can train firefighters, but it wants candidates with good moral character. The district is planning a summer Empowerment Camp to market fire service careers, reaching out to young adults.

Hildebrandt requested the board approve the proposed hiring of the six firefighters and an additional candidate to fill the vacant position and said nothing in the budget is going to change, and it would be useful for Bradley to know the positions are approved and speed up the hiring process. See [www.ocn.me/v22n10.htm#dwfpd](http://www.ocn.me/v22n10.htm#dwfpd). The board approved extending offers of employment to the candidates, 5-0.

### American Medical Response requests

At the September meeting, Smaldino said American Medical Response (AMR) had requested the district respond 18 times into Colorado Springs, and it is an unnecessary strain on the agency.

Kovacs said the district is billing, and it is lucrative. AMR is still low on staffing, and it hopes to have the staffing problem addressed in January 2023. The battalion chiefs on shift still has the discretion to decline requests. Decisions are managed daily on whether to send an ambulance when requested, but if it is the board's desire to reduce the calls, he would discuss the situation at the next Monday morning staff meeting, said Kovacs.

Smaldino noted the district was still responding to a high number of AMR calls into Colorado Springs and said he does not care about the district providing EMS services into Black Forest, that is the whole point of mutual aid, but he objects to providing assistance to a for-profit commercial company when they choose not to staff appropriately. AMR has not assisted the district since February, said Smaldino. See [www.ocn.me/v22n3.htm#tlmfd](http://www.ocn.me/v22n3.htm#tlmfd).

DWFPD board Secretary Larry Schwarz concurred with Smaldino and thanked the district and said, "everyone is doing an incredible job."

The Sept. 28 meeting adjourned at 9:02 p.m.

At the October meeting, Bradley said the following:

- The district had been requested by AMR 20 times in September, and the district



**Above:** From left, Division Chief of Administration/Fire Marshal Jamey Bumgarner, Mrs. Golden Rains, Engineer Golden Rains, Fire Chief Andy Kovacs, and Deputy Chief of Operations Jonathan Bradley are pictured at Station 1 on Sept. 28. Rains was promoted from firefighter to engineer in a ceremony at the MFD board meeting. Kovacs administered the oath of office in the swearing-in ceremony and presented Rains with his helmet badge. Mrs. Rains pinned on her husband's badge. Photo by Natalie Barszcz.

accepted 14 of those calls.

- The current guidelines provided to the battalion chiefs to manage the requests recommend a general geographic area, taking into account the status of the district ambulances.
- There is leeway to extend beyond the boundaries in an extreme emergency, but the boundary is now reduced from Woodmen Road and Powers Boulevard to not beyond Briargate Parkway and east of Highway 83.
- There will be no response if the district is down to one ambulance.
- If the new parameters had been in place last month, the district would have reduced the calls in September from 14 to 5.

Kovacs said the district will host a meeting on Oct. 31 with the other county transport agencies, Security, Fountain, Falcon, Cimarron, Manitou Fire Departments, to address how the district will be responding to AMR.

Bradley said some of the south county agencies had already informed AMR that they will not respond, and Black Forest Fire/Rescue Protection District does not receive AMR requests because it doesn't provide advanced life support.

**Wildland fire responses**  
Kovacs said the district responded to a brush fire caused by five downed power lines on Oct. 23 in the Red Rocks Ranch area off Highway 105, and a vegetation fire on the east side of Highway 83 that

day. The Highway 83 fire should have moved toward Black Forest due to the wind, but a north wind directed the fire east and burned about three-quarters of an acre. As bad as the winds were that day, it was lucky the fires were extinguished as quickly as they were, he said. The Larkspur Fire Department also responded to the Red Rocks Ranch area fire with a brush truck.

Hildebrandt said, "It was a commendable response."

### Candidate mailer disclaimer

Kovacs said a mailer had been sent to every resident in the district by a Town of Monument candidate for election, depicting himself with trustees and prominently displaying the district name on a fire truck. Kovacs said he reached out to remind the candidate that the district remains apolitical and does not support any particular candidate. Prior permission had not been obtained and it would not have been granted, said Kovacs.

Oct. 26 meeting adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

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Meetings are usually held on the fourth Wednesday of the month. The next regular board meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, Nov. 16 at 6:30 p.m. at MFD Station 1, 18650 Highway 105. For Zoom meeting instruction, agendas, minutes, and updates, visit [www.tlmdfire.org](http://www.tlmdfire.org) or contact Director of Administration Jennifer Martin at 719-484-9011.

Natalie Barszcz can be reached at [nataliebarszcz@ocn.me](mailto:nataliebarszcz@ocn.me).

## El Paso Board of County Commissioners, Sept. 27, Oct. 4, 11, and 25

# County presents 2023 preliminary balanced budget; renews Black Forest Section 16 lease

By Helen Walklett

During October, the El Paso Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) heard proposals for the 2023 county budget. The commissioners also approved the new lease for Black Forest Section 16.

### Preliminary balanced budget

The county Financial Services Department presented the preliminary balanced budget at the Oct. 4 meeting. The approximate \$473 million budget for 2023 includes \$200 million in unrestricted general fund expenditures, \$38 million for the Department of Public Works, and \$84 million for Human Services. It prioritizes investment in roads, public safety, veteran services, park maintenance, improving facilities, and addressing homeless camp cleanups.

An additional \$11.9 million is allocated for road improvements, \$10 million of which is a one-time allocation to address high-priority

projects possibly by using some as matching funds to draw federal funding. The remaining \$1.9 million goes to fund gravel road maintenance. The budget also includes a 5% cost of living pay increase for county employees.

Nikki Simmons, chief financial officer, said: "El Paso County is the most populous county in the state, yet the county continues to have the lowest property tax burden and the lowest cost per citizen for delivering high-impact services out of the 10 largest counties in the state. We are committed to investing in high-quality services and infrastructure that will positively impact our community."

As part of the budget-setting process, county departments and offices presented their critical needs to the commissioners at the Oct. 18 and 20 meetings. A further budget hearing is scheduled for Nov. 15 when the BOCC will give final direction on budget allocations.

The public is encouraged to participate in the budget-setting process. The preliminary balanced budget and all supporting documents can be viewed on the county website at: <https://admin.elpasoco.com/financial-services/budget-finance/county-budget/>. Paper copies are available for inspection in the commissioners' office at Centennial Hall, 200 S. Cascade Ave., Colorado Springs 80903.

The final budget vote will be held at the BOCC meeting on Dec. 6.

### Black Forest Section 16 lease renewal

At the Sept. 27 BOCC meeting, the commissioners voted unanimously to approve the lease with the State Land Board for Black Forest Section 16. The original 25-year lease for the approximate 91 acres off Burgess Road expires this December. The area of open space includes a multi-use perimeter

trail system and is the home of the well-used Black Forest Slash/Mulch Program. Todd Marts, director of community services, County Community Services Department, told the commissioners, "This land is not publicly accessible without this lease."

Marts explained that the new lease took over a year to negotiate and is a little different than the old one. It has a 10-year term, and the county will pay 2.5% of fair market value. Describing it as a good deal, he said it was better than the board's standard terms, which require public open spaces to be leased for at least 5% of their fair market value. Under the new lease, the first year's rent is \$21,825. For subsequent years, the rent will be the previous year's rent plus 2.5%. This is a substantial increase in the amount paid under the first lease and is due to the board's fair market value requirement.

Marts said the next step fol-

lowing the lease's renewal would be for the county to start to look at long-term solutions for the area. This would begin in January with stakeholder meetings and would include Academy School District 20, which also leases land in Section 16 for its School in the Woods.

### Fox Run Nature Center

Progress on the planned Nature Center at Fox Run Regional Park was made at the Sept. 27 BOCC meeting when the commissioners approved the award of a contract and purchase order to TDG Architecture Inc. for design and construction plans for the project at a total cost not to exceed \$469,029.

### Winsome Way and Hodgen Road intersection

At the Sept. 27 meeting, the commissioners approved a settlement agreement between the county and Winsome LLC, the owner of the 767-acre Winsome development at the intersection