

join the board after the election date of May 3, said Kovacs.

The board unanimously approved the candidates and cancelled the election.

Rebranding—doing business as (DBA)

Kovacs said that during the unification process with TLMFPD, the hot button topics have been the station assignments and the unanimous desire across both organizations to solidify their identities and rebrand the organization. And he said:

- Both districts' legal counsels Powell and Maureen Juran had discussed keeping both names during the unification process and then adopt a new name when the merger is complete.
- In the interim, the legal names would remain but the district would be doing business as (DBA) with a selected name that is representative of both districts and the region.
- The rebranding would include a new mission, vision, and values statement.
- The district has met with a Colorado Springs public relations firm to discuss how the combined district could develop a focus group and poll the community for input.
- The cost of new uniforms, patches and badges and decaling of the apparatus will be incurred by both boards.

Kovacs requested the DWFPD board allow the combined district staff to proceed with the rebranding discussion and discuss the pursuit of DBA with the TLMFPD board.

Powell said the following:

- DWFPD will keep its name and become a tax passing entity to TLMFPD when the inter-governmental agreement (IGA) full contract for the provision of emergency services is approved in 60 days.
- TLMFPD will need to establish a DBA name for itself, and the impact on DWFPD would be the hard cost of uniforms, badges etc., needed for the personnel it is leasing to TLMFPD.
- When the final merger by inclusion could happen in about a couple of years, and the time comes to dissolve DWFPD, the new legal name would be part of the final IGA, along with the transfer of the Volunteer Firefighters Pension Fund to TLMFPD for management.
- The transfer of DWFPD personnel will happen on Jan. 1, 2023, and at that time, DWFPD will no longer have property, apparatus, or equipment, and will exist as a taxing entity.

Secretary Larry Schwarz said unity is what we set out to strive for, and now it is kind of scary as we go forward, but I am glad to hear the enthusiasm from the firefighters. This whole adventure has been about providing a better service to our neighbors by creating a stronger, more efficient emergency services team, said Schwarz.

Director Charles Fleece said it is good to seek out professional advice during the search for a new name and make it a community decision.

Kovacs said it is palpable when you walk into any of the stations that the rebranding is the last hurdle to the unity of the district staff, but we don't want to forget the foundations of both departments.

Treasurer Duane Garrett requested the board receive rough numbers for the cost for rebranding in April.

"The chosen name will reflect the northern El Paso County area for 50 to 100 years, and should another entity decide to join the district in the future the name will not need to be changed," said Kovacs.

Emergency Medical Services update

Kovacs said the combined district's requests for Emergency Medical Services (EMS) in February were 206 calls, with 122 Advanced Life Support ambulance transports being the "lion's share" of the calls. American Medical Response (AMR) requested about 31 transports in February, and the district accepted about 15 of those calls in Colorado Springs. The hope is that the January "spike" in calls will level off, but the combined district is still a little busier than normal. See www.ocn.me/v22n3.htm#dwfpd and www.ocn.me.v22n3.htm#tlmfpd.

Chief's report

Kovacs said the following:

- Kudos to EMS coordinator Paramedic Stephanie Soll and Firefighter/Paramedic Jay Bruchis for providing a cardiopulmonary resus-

citation (CPR) class for the Tri-Lakes Women's Club during the American Heart Association's Heart Month in February.

- As an ambulance provider, TLMFPD works with the State of Colorado, through the Public EMS supplemental payment, to get refunded for Medicaid patients, and that process has begun again. In 2021, Medicaid reimbursements generated about \$250,000 in revenue, and although the billing process is time consuming, it is beneficial and will likely generate more revenue in 2022. See <https://hcpf.colorado.gov>.
- Division Chief of Community Risk/Fire Marshal Jamey Bumgarner and myself met with local developer Matt Dunston to discuss a land purchase opportunity around Highways 105 and 83 for the potential move of Station 2 on Roller Coaster Road.
- The TLMFPD stations are currently all aligned in the northern end of the district and, potentially, Station 3 could move farther south to support increased development, and the administrative offices could be consolidated there, with a community room and multiple training classrooms. See the TLMFPD 2019 master plan at www.tlmfire.org.
- Division Chief of Operations Johnathan Bradley and Battalion Chief Scott Ridings presented a plan to the Pikes Peak Fire Chief's Council that proposes changes to unit and personnel identifiers in Computer-aided Dispatch to accommodate agency growth. Both are appointed to chair a working group that aims to continue adding details to the plan.
- He attended the Tri-Lakes State of the Region at the Great Wolf Lodge on Feb. 18 and heard from a lot of great speakers about what is going on locally and in the El Paso County region.
- Several members of the executive staff team attended the Air Force Academy National Character and Leadership Symposium in late February, and the district staff will continue to attend the symposium on an annual basis.
- Due to supply issues, Station 4 (formerly Station 1 on Gleneagle Drive) is still awaiting parts for the broken bay door.

Further education encouraged

Kovacs said he is strongly in favor of investing in the employees, and the district had conducted a survey of both districts and received 61 responses, with about 12 personnel not participating, and he said:

- Surveying the combined district's personnel, 26 percent have a high school diploma/GED, 20 percent have an associate's degree, 44 percent have a bachelor's degree, and 10 percent hold a master's degree.
- TLMFPD allocated money in the 2022 budget for tuition reimbursement for a passing grade, up to \$1,500 per year per employee for further education at an approved or accredited college.
- The employees are more than "blue collar" employees, responsible for a lot of information and technical expertise, and their education needs to be commensurate to the level of pay and benefits they receive as firefighters.
- About 12 employees are currently pursuing their next education goal, and at a minimum battalion chiefs are required to have an associate's degree, division chiefs require a bachelor's degree, and the fire chief position requires a master's degree.
- A lifelong learning process is important, and although most firefighters may have hundreds and hundreds of college credits, they just do not have a piece of paper that states they possess a degree, and the district is trying to change that and encourage education.
- The survey will be repeated next year to see how the education levels have changed.

Executive session

The board moved into executive session pursuant to Colorado Revised Statute 24-6-402(4)(b) and (e) to receive advice from legal counsel and to consider matters subject to negotiation and instruct negotiators regarding the draft IGA for the full contract for provision of emergency services with TLMFPD. **Note:** Upon request, Kovacs confirmed to OCN that no decisions were made or approved after the

board returned to the regular board meeting. The regular session adjourned at 4:52 p.m.

Meetings are held on the third Tuesday of every month at the TLMFPD Station 1, 18650 Highway 105, at 4 p.m. The next regular board meeting is scheduled for April 19 at 4 p.m. The meetings are open to the public in person, and for Zoom meeting joining instructions, agendas, minutes, and updates, visit www.wescottfire.org or contact the Administrative Assistant Stacey Popovich at 719-488-8680.

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