

Town of Monument, Aug. 29

Gleneagle residents voice concerns about potential annexation



Above: Above: From left, Monument Police Chief Patrick Regan, Town Manager Mike Foreman, Mayor Mitch LaKind, Fire Chief Andy Kovacs and Assistant Public Works Director Jeremiah Reichert present information and answer questions to a crowd of Gleneagle residents on Aug. 29 at the Family of Christ Lutheran Church on Baptist Road, Monument. *Photo by Natalie Barszcz.*

By Natalie Barszcz
Town of Monument (TOM) officials held a town hall meeting with residents of adjacent Gleneagle on Aug. 29 to gauge their interest in being annexed into the town.

The public was invited to participate in a question-and-answer session and was encouraged to attend online because of limited space at the Family of Christ Lutheran Church.

The Gleneagle residents in attendance were largely opposed to an annexation.

The church was at about half capacity with 100 residents attending in person after some heard about the meeting via social media sites and some via a local news media station just an hour before. The meeting was also announced on the TOM website a few days prior. This reporter received notification via Monument Fire District (MFD).

Town Manager Mike Foreman addressed the audience, saying the meeting was purely to garner the thoughts from the Gleneagle residents regarding a potential annexation into the TOM. Moving forward the decision would be entirely upon the will of the residents, at their request with voter approval, he said. Gleneagle had a population of 6,649 in 2020.

Mayor Mitch LaKind said he appreciated the turnout and would love to hear the residents' thoughts. During the July Fourth Street Fair, several residents approached him saying, "We can't wait to annex into the town," he said. He wished he had taken the names of the residents, but the subject of annexation had not been discussed with the Monument Town Council, only with Foreman. The town does have a state-mandated 3-mile potential annexation plan but cannot implement any plan until the residents agree, he said.

Fire Chief Andy Kovacs explained the merger process between MFD and Donald Wescott Fire Protection District (DWFPD) and said a consolidation discussion between the fire districts had been coming together over the last two years. He also said that before the merger began, DWFPD had a contract with American Medical Rescue ambulance, but 80% of the time it was responding

to calls in Colorado Springs and not in Gleneagle. The combined district now has Advance Life Support ambulances at Station 4 and 5 and another at Station 1 on Highway 105, reducing response times to service Gleneagle.

DWFPD will have a ballot measure in November seeking to equalize the two-mill levy the Gleneagle residents are being assessed, and at the completion of the merger next year the residents will receive a reduction from 21.9 mills to 18.4 mills. Residents can read what has been going on over the past two years by examining the MFD Feasibility Study, the 2021-22 annual reports, and the Joint Factual Summary at www.monumentfire.org. MFD is a special district and not affiliated with the TOM, he said.

Note: Most of the DWFPD and MFD boards of directors attended the meeting. See <https://www.ocn.me/v23n8.htm#dwfpd> and www.ocn.me/v23n9.htm#mfd.

Monument Police Chief Patrick Regan said when the idea was brought to his attention, he was asked about the benefits to providing service to Gleneagle. Monument Police Department (MPD) has a budget for 27 officers and is one of only a few fully staffed departments, with a retired military corporal providing training. A dedicated tax revenue supports the Police Department, and in the future the headquarters may move away from the Town Hall to a central location, closer to Gleneagle.

The biggest benefit to Gleneagle residents would be an increased patrol presence, including drive throughs, responding to requests for investigation, and code enforcement issues. MPD has already been assisting in Gleneagle, providing backup for the El Paso County Sheriff's Office. The department would assist either way, but annexation would require hiring about 15 officers, costing about \$2 million (including equipment) in the first year and would not be lucrative, he said.

Foreman said policing is provided from the general fund, about \$2.6 million from property taxes and sales taxes, and a dedicated 0.5 cent sales tax is collected throughout Monument, generating about \$1.7 million for MPD.

Assistant Public Works Director Jeremiah Reichert said the Public

Works Department had no interest in promoting annexation and it was a trickle-down decision. Public works departments across the nation are operating underneath what they receive, and adding more infrastructure would not be lucrative. He talked about the lifespan of roads, typically 25-30 years, for sewer, sanitary and storm structures, about 40-50 years, and water main infrastructure lasts about 75-100 years. For maintenance and replace-

ment costs, there is always a greater need than funds provide.

Annexation would not be a "cash cow for the Public Works Department with every dollar coming in trickling down to just a dime." The TOM has about 29 miles of roadway responsibility, and Gleneagle has 18 miles, and about \$25 million likely would be needed for the additional infrastructure and some additional maintenance staff, he said.



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