

Cole responded, "By September 21." Kimple termed the situation "a shame" and suggested that "some folks just can't let go." Fiorito expressed concerns about the use of taxpayer funds to defend against what he perceived as frivolous complaints, stating, "This resolution sets the tone for future participants that 'we will defend you to the very end,' especially against innuendo that has no merit." Councilmember Jim Romanello, who ran against LaKind during the election, stated, "There was absolutely no influence or coercion, and there was nothing improper at all with the April 11 meeting."

Councilmember Laura Kronick expressed the hope that this resolution would bring an end to the matter, likening it to "cutting the head from the snake." Councilmember King emphasized the council's unanimous approval, with advice from the town lawyer, regarding what constituted personal expenses and what benefited the town. He stressed that the core issue revolved around whether they were coerced in their decision-making, which he saw as an attack on their integrity.

The resolution was passed with unanimous support from the council, 6-0.

2024 budget and new liquor license

The council engaged in a detailed discussion regarding the 2024 budget. Director of Finance Mona Hirjoi highlighted significant increases in workers' compensation and property and casualty expenses, with both rising by 75% and 49%, respectively, from 2023 to 2024. The primary reason cited for these increases is the growth in employment. However, the council was reassured that the general fund balance would be easily funded, with no need to tap into reserves. Mayor LaKind inquired about the delayed hiring of a tax collector position, which was approved nine months ago, expressing concern about the timeline. Hirjoi explained the complexities of the hiring process, taking about two years, but LaKind emphasized the need to fulfill promises made to voters under Home Rule.

The meeting also included a public hearing regarding a new lodging and entertainment liquor license application for Lolley's Ice Cream at 174 Washington St. The application was filed in August and was found to be in compliance with Monument's ordinances. Owners Shelley and Dustin Sapp were present to answer questions, and Mayor LaKind praised the renovation efforts of the ice cream shop. Councilmember Kimple inquired about the type of liquor and

raised questions about parking and capacity, which were satisfactorily addressed by Shelley Sapp. Terri Hayes, president and CEO of the Chamber of Commerce, testified in support of the application, emphasizing the Sapp family's dedication to renovating the corner lot where Lolley's Ice Cream sits. The application was approved unanimously, 7-0.

The Monument Council usually meets at 6:30 p.m. on the first and third Mondays of each month at Monument Town Hall, 645 Beacon Lite Road. The next two regular meetings are scheduled for Monday, Oct. 2 and Monday, Oct. 16. Call 719-884-8014 or see www.townofmonument.org for information. To see upcoming agendas and complete board packets or to download audio recordings of past meetings, see <http://monumenttownco.minutesondemand.com> and click on Town Council.

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Note: The Monument Planning Commission did not meet in September.

Palmer Lake Board of Trustees, Sept. 14 and 28

Elephant Rock property lease with option to purchase approved

By James Howald and Jackie Burhans

In September, the Palmer Lake Board of Trustees voted on a resolution authorizing a lease for a portion of the Eagle Rock property and on a resolution regulating recreational vehicle (RV) use and storage on private property. An ordinance governing signs was discussed and tabled. Palmer Lake Police Officer Eugene Ramirez was awarded Palmer Lake's Life Saving Medal. The board granted five special event permits and appointed members to the Parks Commission and to the Community Development Advisory Board (CDAB). The board addressed several land use issues and hired a new accounting service.

The board held two executive sessions: one following the regular meeting on Sept. 14 and one preceding the regular meeting on Sept. 28.

Elephant Rock property lease

At its Sept. 28 meeting, the board considered Resolution 55-2023, which authorizes Mayor Glant Havenar to sign a lease agreement with EcoSpa LLC, owned by Richard and Lindsay Willan, for 2.8 acres of the town's Elephant Rock property. The lease includes an option for the Willans to purchase the land and an acknowledgement that the Planned Unit Development for the property will need to be amended, with any amendments to be reviewed and approved by the board at a future meeting.

Attorney Matt Krob pointed out that if the town terminated the lease, the option to purchase the land would also be terminated. He explained that any request by the Willans or by future owners to change the use of the land would need to be reviewed by the Planning Commission and voted on by the board following public hearings, so the town would retain some control over the future of the property even after it was sold. The town could also use a deed restriction to prevent certain future uses, he said.

The board voted unanimously in favor of the resolution leasing the property to the Willans with an option to purchase.

RV use and storage on private property

At a workshop on Sep. 14, the board returned to its discussion of how RV use and storage should be regulated, focusing on RV use and storage on private property. At a previous meeting in August, the board passed an ordinance prohibiting RV use and storage on public property.

Havenar opened the discussion by explaining that RV use and storage had been mistakenly omitted from an update of the town's municipal code. She said she had concerns about regulating residents' use of their property.

Trustee Kevin Dreher said he had no issues with storing RVs on private property, but he favored limits and didn't want people living in them on a permanent basis. He suggested using building permits to authorize residency in an RV only on empty lots when a house was being built on the property.

Trustee Jessica Farr said she did not want RVs connected to water and sewer systems. She suggested a one-year limit on RV occupancy.

Krob raised the issue of unimproved rights of way to the lot where any RV would be located and pointed out that if the town allowed use of an unimproved right of way by an RV, there would be a risk of liability for the town. Krob also said any ordinance regulating RV use and storage should include language prohibiting RVs to be used as accessory dwelling units.

Fire Chief John Vincent pointed out that there would need to be adequate access for emergency vehicles to any private property on which an occupied RV was present.

Resident Matt Stephen argued that, if no time limit on residency in an RV was set, it would be impossible to eliminate their use as a long-term residence.

Krob said he had enough direction from the board to draft an ordinance for consideration at the next board meeting.

At the Sept. 28 meeting, the board reviewed the ordinance Krob drafted using the input from the work session. The issue of RV owners using unimproved rights of way to reach the property where they would store their RV proved to be a sticking point. Dreher asked if waivers could be used to resolve the issue of liability. Krob said waivers might reduce but would not eliminate liability for the town and suggested that the town ask the question of Colorado Intergovernmental Risk Sharing Agency, the town's insurer.

Trustees Shana Ball, Dreher, Nick Ehrhardt, Sa-

mantha Padgett and Dennis Stern, along with Havenar, voted to table the ordinance, with Trustee Jessica Farr voting not to table.

Sign code ordinance discussed, tabled

At its Sept. 14 meeting, the board made another attempt to craft an ordinance regulating signs. Havenar said she had heard from businesses who felt that the ordinance in its current form was not business friendly. The draft under discussion, for example, specifies that neon can be used only for signs indicating the business is open, but O'Malley's Steak Pub has had neon signs advertising brands of beer for several years. Krob said some signs could be considered historic signs and grandfathered in, but if they were ever changed or destroyed the new sign would need to be reviewed. He stressed that historic signs had to have been legally compliant at some point. Krob recommended a workshop on the sign ordinance.

The board voted to table further discussion of the ordinance until October.

Officer Ramirez honored

Chief of Police Jason Vanderpool presented officer Eugene Ramirez with the Palmer Lake Life Saving Medal for his response to an attempted suicide earlier in the year. Ramirez and Monument Police Department Officer Dakota Degenhart responded to a report that an autistic individual was preparing to hang himself on Mount Herman. Ramirez and Degenhart located the individual and Ramirez supported him while Degenhart cut the rope from which he was already hanging. Together they administered first aid and got the victim down the trail to help. Without their actions, Vanderpool said, the attempt would have succeeded.

Special event permits granted

The board approved special event permits for five events:

- The Monument Academy Cross Country race to be held on Sept. 28.
- The Funky Little Theater production of the Legend of Sleepy Hollow, scheduled for a 7 p.m.

show on Friday, Oct. 13 and a 1 p.m. show on Saturday, Oct. 14 at the Palmer Lake Town Hall.

- The YMCA Creepy Crawl 5K Fun Run, to start at 9:30 a.m. on Oct. 28 at the Palmer Lake Regional Recreation Area. A separate run for kids will start at 10:30 a.m. The course will circle the lake and continue on the Santa Fe Trail. Race ceremonies will start at 8:45 a.m.
- The Rat Rods and Rust Car and Bike Show, to be held from 2 to 6 p.m. on Saturday, Oct. 28 at the Palmer Lake Regional Recreation Area. Jeremiah King, the event's organizer, described rat rods as gigantic rolling pieces of art. The event will include a costume contest for kids and trunk treats.
- Palmer Lake Outdoor Classic hockey tournament, to be held Jan. 5, 6 and 7 at the Palmer Lake Regional Recreation Area. Four high school teams will play on Saturday, Jan. 6 from 6-9 p.m. Adult hockey games will be held on Sunday, Jan. 7 from 9 a.m. until noon with a playoff game from 6-7:30 p.m. Fireworks are being considered for Saturday evening. The event is a fundraiser for Lewis-Palmer School District hockey and the nonprofit that organizes the event.

Appointments

At the Sept. 14 meeting, the board voted unanimously to appoint Garcia Wood to an alternate seat on the Parks Commission.

At the Sept. 28 meeting, the board voted unanimously to appoint Padgett to represent the town on the Community Development Advisory Board, which advises the El Paso Board of County Commissioners concerning community development and use of Community Development Block Grant funds. The board also voted to support the applications of Ball and Farr to serve on the Wildfire Resiliency Code Board.

PALMER LAKE (Cont. on 15)

But the ballot says a tax increase? Why is this so complicated? What is 6A and 6B?

To understand this we need to take a quick history lesson. Wescott Fire Protection District was officially formed in 1982. El Paso county looked quite different at that time. The City of Colorado Spring was a third the size it is today and practically ended at Fillmore Street. Wescott Fire District was formed to provide fire protection to the rural and un-incorporated areas of northern El Paso County. In fact, the first fire station was located at what is now Woodmen Rd. and I-25.

Over the last 40 years Colorado Springs has grown substantially and annexed areas of El Paso County into the city. When this happened the city assumed all tax income and became responsible to provide all the services we depend on, including fire protection. As the city built fire stations to protect the growing community, Wescott Fire was closing fire stations. As the city expanded North there was a very small section in the area of Voyager Pkwy and Old Ranch Rd. of approximately 49 homes that the city did not annex. The city continued moving north and this small section became an island surrounded by Colorado Springs. Wescott Fire is still responsible to provide fire protection to this area. However, the closest Wescott Fire station is now 9 miles away and response times can be in excess of 15-20 minutes.

After some discussion, the City of Colorado Springs agreed to provide medical and fire protection to the area. But... until the city of Colorado Springs annexes this small island these homeowners continue to pay taxes based on the county assessors un-incorporated El Paso county assessment rate. In 2017, in an effort to do the right thing a proposal was made by the Wescott Board of Directors to keep this area's Mill Levy as low as possible. So this small island currently pays 7 Mills while the rest of the district (Gleneagle, Pleasant View, 83 Corridor etc.) pay 21.9.

Last year (2022) Tri-Lakes and Wescott fire districts merged to create Monument Fire. The reason for this merger is to provide faster response times with more personnel and dedicate 3 ambulances to this growing community. By combining resources, the fire districts can now provide a better service to the community at a lower tax rate. However, this merger is not finalized yet. To do this the fire districts must equalize the Mill Levies.

What That Means: The 49 homes in the island at Voyager and Old Ranch Road will see a tax increase to equalize the other, roughly 3000 homes in the fire district. This will simultaneously drop the other 98% of the fire district's resident's tax rate by one half a mill. The new fire administration intends to lower the mill levy an additional 3 points in the following year, bringing the new tax levy down from 21.9 to 18.4 across the newly created Monument Fire Protection District. It is for these 49 homes that the ballot issue must read as a "Tax Increase" under Colorado State law. Additionally, the fire district continues to work with the city of Colorado Springs and the 49 properties in the southern enclave (island) in an effort to clean things up and have this area annexed into the city.

PAID FOR BY THE GLENEAGLE SAFETY COMMITTEE