

PALMER LAKE (Cont. from 13)

Land use issues

At the Sept. 14 meeting, the board voted unanimously in favor of Ordinance 20-2023, which disconnects a parcel of land belonging to Jim and Laura Fitzgerald from the town of Palmer Lake. The disconnection was the final step in a process begun in August to resolve tax issues created when the Fitzgeralds and Jim and Pam Parco exchanged land in 2014, intending to improve access to their respective properties. The land swap resulted in the Fitzgeralds and the Parcos receiving tax bills from both the town of Palmer Lake and from El Paso County. The annexation and rezoning voted on in August along with the disconnection will result in the Fitzgeralds and Parcos each receiving just one tax bill.

At the Sept. 28 meeting, the board held a public hearing on an application by Annette Ruiz for a conditional use permit allowing the Ruiz family to build a home on a lot on Vale Street that is currently zoned C1, for commercial use. There were no comments from the public and the hearing was closed. The board voted unanimously in favor of Resolution 68-2023, which gives the Ruiz family permission to build their home.

A second public hearing was held on Sept. 28 to consider a revised application to vacate the town's right of way on El Moro Avenue by Cindy Powell and Marilyn Redwine. Collins explained that the board had heard this request before, but some of the details

of the previous request were not in order and the new owner of an adjacent property wanted to be involved in the process. There were no comments from the public, and the board voted unanimously in favor of Ordinance 21-2023, vacating the right of way.

The board also voted to approve Resolution 67-2023, which authorizes Havenar to sign a professional service agreement with the Community Matters Institute to rewrite the town's land use code. Collins explained that the state Department of Local Affairs has provided \$25,000 to help pay for the rewrite, with the town also contributing \$25,000. Only Farr voted against the resolution.

New accounting service

The board voted in favor of Resolution 66-2023, which authorizes Havenar to sign a professional services agreement with Kelly Books LLC to provide accounting services to the town. Collins explained the agreement is a monthly contract and the role of Kelly Books will change once the town hires an accounting clerk.

Executive sessions

The executive session following the Sept. 14 meeting was convened to discuss the lease for the Elephant Rock property, the release of confidential discussion in executive sessions and the town administrator's evaluation and contract review. No action was taken following the executive session.

On Sept. 28, the executive session preceded the regular meeting, also to address the Elephant Rock property lease and the town administrator's evaluation. The same executive session was reconvened

following the regular meeting. When the second part of the executive session adjourned, the board tabled consideration of the town administrator's contract.

The next board meetings are scheduled for Oct. 12 and 26. See the town's website at www.townofpalmerlake.com to confirm times and dates of board meetings and workshops. Meetings are typically held on the second and fourth Thursdays of the month at the Town Hall. Information: 719-481-2953.

James Howald can be reached at jameshowald@ocn.me.

Jackie Burhans can be reached at jackieburhans@ocn.me.

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D38 Parent and Community Advisory Committee, Sept. 12
Committee sets priorities for coming year, appoints new co-chair

By Harriet Halbig

The D38 Parent and Community Advisory Committee (formerly the District Accountability Advisory Committee) set priorities for the upcoming school year at its Sept. 12 meeting.

Assistant Superintendent Amber Whetstine reported that the district was once again accredited with distinction for the previous school year. She said Lewis-Palmer High School and Palmer Ridge High School were downgraded from a performance plan to an improvement plan due to insufficient participation in the PSAT and SAT tests last spring. The state of Colorado offers parents the opportunity to request that students opt out of the testing, but the federal standard requires 95% participation. Monument Academy was also downgraded for the same reason.

Superintendent KC Somers commented that Colorado is one of 10 to 15 states with mandatory testing. He encouraged high school Building Advisory Committees (BAC) discuss the issue of participation. He said that people often think that taking the tests is not necessary if a student does not intend to go to college. About 60% of colleges require the SAT, he said.

Committee Co-chair Holly Rollins said the Palmer Ridge High School BAC discussed the issue at length and said that many requirements changed during the COVID epidemic. Each family must decide and follow the given rules. A student not taking the test may be able to enter the university of their choice but not the specific college within the university.

Strategic plan discussion

The district's strategic plan consists of six priorities: safe and healthy schools, academic excellence, valuing our people, operations and facilities, fiscal stewardship, and relationships and communication.

Somers said that a dashboard is being added to the district website (lewispalmer.org) which will track activity relating to each priority.

Rollins said that she wishes that the committee stress its responsibility to act in an advisory capacity to the board.

Whetstine implemented this idea by creating a large sheet of paper for each priority and having members indicate what questions they have regarding each and what they would wish to address during

the coming year. Results of this exercise will be available at a future meeting.

Board of Education update

Board liaison Tiffney Upchurch reported that Theresa Phillips and Matthew Clawson will be leaving the board after the November election. They will be recognized at the Nov. 27 board meeting.

Beginning in October, Lewis-Palmer High School and Palmer Ridge High School will each have a representative on the board.

Regarding the November election, four seats on the board will be on the ballot. Three seats are unopposed and the fourth has two candidates.

Upchurch reminded members of the candidate forum on Sept. 28 at Palmer Ridge High School. For information on the election, please see lewispalmer.org/election.

Committee updates

Several committees had yet to meet in the new year.

Chief Business Officer Brett Ridgway reported on the Financial Transparency Committee (formerly the Financial Advisory Committee). This committee is required by state statute and will consist of nine members: five from the Parent and Community Advisory Committee and four from other sources. Public members must have an administrative sponsor. Meetings will be held in public. Responsibilities of the committee include following the annual cycle of events related to the budget, recommending how to spend district resources, and recommending ways to maintain transparency by communicating district business to the community.

Committee membership will be announced at an upcoming board meeting.

Whetstine reported on the Calendar Committee. She said that the priority of the committee at this time is to construct a potential calendar if the district were to convert to four-day weeks. This calendar will be presented to the staff and they would be asked if they would stay with the district if it were implemented.

Whetstine also said that there is an active task force discussing the issue of consent. The task force is led by community members and will discuss issues such as boundaries. The group will present recommendations at the October meeting of the board.

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