

will be a community event, said Kovacs. For updates see www.monumentfire.org.

Note: The district conducts a push-in ceremony whenever a new engine is placed into service. In the past, these events have occurred during a shift change. See www.ocn.me/v22n5.htm#dwfpd and page 27 in www.ocn.me/v19n7.

Kovacs said that Pierce Manufacturing is taking up to 36 months to build engines, and the district will need to place orders soon.

Powell said that some orders are now taking 44 months.

Manufacturers are aiming to speed up the process, said Kovacs.

Note: The board of directors for both districts receive the same monthly updates for the combined district. For additional information, see MFD article on page 21. The monthly activity reports can be found at www.monumentfire.org.

Board of Directors election 2023

Powell said the district conducted a Board of Directors' election in May 2022, and that was the

last election cycle to complete the state-mandated transition from even to odd years. The positions held by Directors Fleece, Garrett and Schwarz are all up for four-year tenures in May 2023. If all goes as planned with the merger, the district will not exist by 2027. If no additional candidates complete the self-nomination forms by Feb. 24, the election can be canceled. Kovacs will be the designated election official, she said. For self-nomination form instructions, visit www.monumentfire.org.

The board approved Resolution 2023-01, calling for a regular election, 3-0.

Accounting services contract

Powell requested the board approve the accounting services of The Accounting Office Inc. for \$450 per month.

The board approved the accounting service, 3-0.

Financial report

The December financial report was unavailable for the January meeting.

2022 audit engagement

Kovacs requested the board review and consider approving a letter of engagement for Erickson, Brown, and Kloster LLC to conduct the 2022 audit. DWFPD used the same auditors for the 2021 audit, and the audit will include a presentation to the board, said Kovacs.

The board approved the engagement letter, 3-0.

The board meeting adjourned at 5:26 p.m.

Meetings are usually held every other month on the fourth Wednesday of the month at Station 1, 18650 Highway 105. The next regular board meeting is scheduled for March 22 at 4:30 p.m. Meeting attendance is open to the public in person or via Zoom. For joining instructions, agendas, minutes, and updates, visit www.monumentfire.org or contact Director of Administration Jennifer Martin at 719-484-9011.

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Monument Fire District, Jan. 25

Palmer Lake declines ambulance contract; district leads county mass casualty plan

By Natalie Barszcz

At the Monument Fire District (MFD) meeting on Jan. 25, the board discussed a letter from the Palmer Lake Board of Trustees (PLBOT) declining Emergency Medical Services (EMS) from the district; heard about district staff leading a county mass casualty plan; received multiple updates; and held an executive session to discuss a meet and confer plus agreement and providing EMS service to neighbors.

Treasurer Tom Kelly was excused.

Director Jason Buckingham joined the meeting but was unable to take part in the voting due to work commitments.

Ambulance service contract declined

Fire Chief Andy Kovacs said that in 2015, Tri-Lakes Monument Fire Protection District and the Town of Palmer Lake established an intergovernmental agreement (IGA) to provide ambulance service to Palmer Lake. In that agreement, upon request from the Palmer Lake Fire Department (PLFD), the district would dispatch an ambulance for each EMS response in the town. The district in return received a fee of \$500 for each transport out of Palmer Lake. Over time the fee has increased to match the consumer price index.

Note: PLFD and the Town of Palmer Lake administrator were informed via letter in December that a price increase would take effect Jan. 1, 2023 and MFD would begin charging \$588.25 per transport. A price increase also occurred in 2021, charging the town \$544.18 for each transport.

On Jan. 24, the district received a letter from PLBOT giving 90 days' notice to terminate the IGA for service. Before receiving the letter, there had been no communication regarding the matter with the Town of Palmer Lake or the interim Fire Chief John Vincent of PLFD. Kovacs said the district values the relationship with Palmer Lake, and though we serve the residents indirectly through these various agreements, MFD remains committed to that relationship with the residents and to assisting Palmer Lake. He met with Vincent before the board meeting, and he recommended the IGA be continued. Vincent was due to meet with Palmer PLBOT on Jan. 26, and hopefully he will be able to convey the district's concern to the trustees. There is time to reach an agreement in the ensuing 90 days, Kovacs said. See *PLBOT article on page 1*.

Vice President Roger Lance said a lot of questions came to mind after reading the letter. What will they do for EMS ambulance service now that Palmer Lake no longer receives AMR service out of the Donald Wescott Fire Protection District (DWFPD) Station 4, on Gleneagle Drive. It does

not make sense that they would rely on AMR ambulance from Colorado Springs when MFD is five minutes down the road, he said.

Kovacs said AMR is still the ambulance provider for Palmer Lake and they handle over 90% of their EMS calls. MFD only sends an ambulance to assist high acuity calls upon request from the PLFD. The town is billed quarterly, and they are not billed if an ambulance is canceled. They were billed about \$8,700 for 16 calls last year. There is no mutual aid agreement, because Palmer Lake cannot reciprocate, he said.

Lance said that after 90 days, MFD will provide support out of the goodness of our hearts.

Kovacs said the subject will be discussed in executive session to receive direction from the board for future service.

President John Hildebrandt (attending via Zoom) said he was disappointed the district received the letter declining ambulance service from the Town of Palmer Lake, and he said the following:

- The letter states Palmer Lake's wish to continue a prosperous relationship, but he is unsure what that means.
- MFD has received comments about double dipping, but the district also charges Monument residents for EMS service.
- The concept everyone needs to understand is the district will bill a resident plus the Town of Palmer Lake.
- MFD receives property taxes from Monument residents. Those taxes provide personnel and equipment to support services.
- MFD does not receive property taxes from Palmer Lake, so the service is billed as a pass through because they cannot provide service.
- The funds MFD receives help provide the service so they can respond, and the residents in both districts are not treated any differently.
- No one should perceive that MFD will not respond in the event of an emergency, and the district wants to remain good neighbors and provide EMS.
- The service to Palmer Lake does cost MFD money, and the situation needs to be resolved.

Kovacs said he hopes the concerns can be resolved and the IGA can be reinstated or redrafted to address any concerns. Ambulance service is valuable, accounting for 87% of MFD service calls. The billing does not exceed the expense of the service provided, and the district does not profit providing the service, he said. The set fee billed to Palmer Lake per call is still at the ex-

pense of MFD.

District takes lead in mass casualty plan

Kovacs said Battalion Chief of EMS Sean Pearson had been tasked with developing a mass casualty exercise for the district. The project grew exponentially, as all the partner agencies participated in the Regional Mass Casualty Incident Plan. The district received a \$45,000 grant for county responders to receive equipment to carry out the plan, Kovacs said. Initiatives coming out of MFD are making a difference in the county. Kudos to Pearson and EMS Coordinator Stephanie Soll for establishing the plan—it became much larger than was initially assumed, he said.

EMS update

Kovacs said:

- Two district ambulances responded to the Club-Q shooting in November to assist the Colorado Springs Fire Department and AMR. Both units were canceled during the staging of the emergency response.
- The district responded to six of the nine EMS transport requests made by AMR so far in January. In January 2022 the district received 60 requests from AMR.
- The district is working on a draft consolidated agreement for a county agency response to AMR requests.

Note: Station 4 on Gleneagle Drive continues to handle the highest EMS call volume in the combined district of DWFPD and MFD.

2022 auditor approval

Lance requested the board approve the letter of engagement for Erickson, Brown, and Kloster LLC to conduct the 2022 audit.

Director Terri Hayes asked if the cost of the audit had increased.

Kovacs said the cost had increased considerably from \$6,500 in 2022 to about \$17,100, with an additional \$1,200 for amendments, plus expenses. The quote is in line with other auditors, but less than some competitors in the area. The cost does not include the DWFPD 2022 audit, he said.

The board approved the audit engagement letter, 5-0.

Financial report

Secretary Mike Smaldino read the financial report as of Dec. 31, 2022, and said the following:

- The district's overall revenue for 2022 was about \$15.2 million, about 103% of the projected revenue budget of about \$14.7 million.
- The district's overall expenses for 2022 were about \$10.5 million, about 95.9% of the pro-