

## BOCC (Cont. from 16)

at both the Planning Commission and BOCC hearings at that time. See [www.ocn.me/v22n9.htm#epcpc](http://www.ocn.me/v22n9.htm#epcpc) and <https://ocn.me/v22n10.htm#epbocc>.

### Black Forest minor subdivision requests

The commissioners approved two minor subdivision requests for Black Forest properties at the Aug. 1 meeting.

The first was a request to create three single-family lots on a 14-acre Black Forest property west of the intersection of Vessey Road and Black Forest Road and south of the intersection of Vessey Road and Pine Crest Drive.

The property was rezoned from RR-5 to RR-2.5 by the BOCC in June 2023. See <https://ocn.me/v23n7.htm#epbocc>.

The second was a request by SMH Consultants for two single-family lots on a 27-acre portion of a 61.55-acre property. It is located at 18885 Brown Road, adjacent to the intersection of Brown Road and Running

Horse View, to the north of Walker Road.

The subdivision, zoned RR-5, will be known as Owl Ridge. One lot will be 22 acres and the other five acres. The existing single-family residence will remain.

### Appointments to the Planning Commission

At their Aug. 15 meeting, the commissioners voted to reappoint Brandy Merriam and Bryce Schuettpelez as associate members of the Planning Commission. Their terms run until Aug. 15 2024. Associate members may serve two consecutive one-year terms but can apply to serve additional terms if they wish.

### Beacon Lite Road and Highway 105 projects

During August, the commissioners approved eight special warranty deeds, 13 temporary construction easement agreements, and two permanent easement agreements associated with the Beacon Lite Road/

County Line Road improvements project. The agreements are with various property owners for a total cost of \$274,130.

At their Aug. 1 meeting, the commissioners approved a special warranty deed and a temporary construction easement agreement associated with the Highway 105A project. The property is owned by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and comes at a cost of \$105,300.

Other decisions

- Aug. 1—the commissioners approved the issuance of three ambulance permits to Monument Fire District. The one-year permits run until July 31, 2024.
- Aug. 1—approved agreements between the county and Academy School District 20 and Lewis-Palmer School District 38 to provide school resource officers for the year to June 30, 2024.

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## El Paso County Planning Commission, Aug. 3

# Flying Horse North draft service plan recommended for approval

By Helen Walklett

At the Aug. 3 El Paso County Planning Commission meeting, the commissioners reviewed the draft service plan for the proposed Flying Horse North (FHN) Metropolitan Districts Nos. 1-5 and voted 5-3 to recommend it for approval.

A revised sketch plan was approved in November 2022 for the 910-acre area that would be covered by the plan. See <https://www.ocn.me/v22n12.htm#epbocc>.

The service plan includes a maximum debt authorization of \$450 million, a debt service mill levy of 50 mills for commercial and residential property, and an operations and maintenance mill levy of 15 mills for a total maximum combined mill levy of 65 mills. Kari Parsons, senior planner, Planning and Community Development Department, said the statutory purposes of the district would be very standard and would include street improvements, the design, construction, and maintenance of drainage, sanitation, and recreation facilities, and covenant enforcement.

Parsons said a letter of opposition had been received. It came from FHN resident Phil Shecter who spoke against the FHN revised sketch plan at the El Paso Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) land use meeting in November 2022 and raised concerns about possible impropriety during that hearing with the BOCC in February 2023. Parsons said the letter raised concerns about land use, density, the home valuations included in the financial plan prepared by DA Davidson & Co., and the sketch plan approval process. She clarified that this application would not consider the sketch plan, the land uses within it, the density nor the process by which it was approved by BOCC.

The financial plan is based on 900 single-family units with estimated values ranging from \$1.5 million to \$6.0 million per unit, a golf clubhouse, fitness center, and convention center with estimated values of \$400 to \$500 per square foot and annual sales of \$250 per square foot, and a 225-room hotel with estimated values of \$200,000 per room and an average daily room rate of \$500.

Attorney Russ Dykstra, partner, Spencer Fane, representing the applicants, said the residential development of about 844 acres would be located in

districts 2-4 with the commercial development being located in 1 and 5. He said full buildout was anticipated at the end of 2030. The purpose of the districts would be to provide for construction, installation, financing, ownership, and maintenance of public improvements. They would accommodate the need for phasing of development and allow for a coordinated approach to infrastructure financing. He said there were significant costs for development in the area and public improvement costs are estimated at \$39.35 million

Ahead of public comment Tom Bailey, chair, asked those who wanted to speak to limit their comments to the criteria. He said, "as Ms. Seago [Lori Seago, senior assistant county attorney] pointed out earlier, other questions about the approval of the sketch plan, the possible changes, anything else, the process that was used to get us where we are today, those are interesting but irrelevant. We can't necessarily consider those things as we're looking at these criteria for approval of this particular special district."

Four members of the public spoke in opposition. No one spoke in support. One citizen said, "This type of debt and inflated housing is unsustainable."

Terry Stokka, representing the Friends of Black Forest and the Black Forest Land Use Committee (BFLUC), commented, "While we understand a metro district is a logical thing to do for this, we're not objecting to the metro district itself. We're opposed to some elements of that plan because we believe that the costs are above reasonable. He continued, "We recommend that the service plan be returned to the applicant for some updates and some more realism."

Amy Phillips, former chair, BFLUC, questioned whether the requirement that there be a demonstrated need for the services was being met. She said, "The existing residents do not need a hotel and do not want a hotel."

Dykstra spoke again to clarify that the tax burden would only fall on new residents, saying, "This will not be on any existing residents out in Flying Horse North. This is just new residents." He also clarified that the district would not be paying for the golf course or clubhouse which would be paid for with private funds. These facilities would be paying toward the debt service, however, and Dykstra pointed out

this would lower the tax burden for residents. It is not yet known whether the convention center will be a public or private facility. Existing FHN residents will have access to all the public facilities.

Commissioner Becky Fuller said she didn't think the assumptions made sense. She asked what the absorption rate is for new or resale \$1.5 million homes in the county and was told about 75 per year.

Bailey said, "For me the assumptions made in the financial plan are reasonable. They're not exact."

Fuller said, "So when I'm looking at this, I do believe the first three criteria have been met. When we're getting to item four where the financial ability to discharge the proposed indebtedness on a reasonable basis, we're looking at 900 homes being absorbed in six years, which is about 150 a year over a million and a half in a market where we've seen 75 per year. I think that the underlying assumptions, they're just not reasonable to me. For me, I think that it probably should be a different amount that they're asking for."

The vote to recommend for approval was 5-3. Commissioners Tim Trowbridge, Fuller, and Eric Moraes were the nay votes. Trowbridge said he agreed with Fuller and did not believe criteria 3 and 4 were met. Moraes commented, "I think a lot of the assumptions are a bridge too far to put faith in it at this point."

Commissioner Christopher Whitney commented, "This is the second or third time since I've been here that I've felt like I need to vote aye because of what the statute and regulations require and, notwithstanding the fact that, on a moral basis, I'm not happy with it." Describing the criteria as having been met "highly shakily with bullet form," he added, "As the chair noted and as the testimony provided or the comments provided, we're talking about a structure or a framework. We're not talking about a plan that is written in blood and [which] everybody has to follow going forward so, for purposes of a structure or a framework, I'm okay with it but I expect it to change umpteen-nine times between now and when we finally finish."

At the BOCC meeting on Aug. 29, the commissioners were expected to schedule the application to be heard at their Sept. 28 meeting. [HelenWalklett@ocn.me](mailto:HelenWalklett@ocn.me)

## August Weather Wrap

By Bill Kappel

August was generally uneventful around the Palmer Divide, especially compared to the last few months where we had extremely active weather. Temperatures were slightly warmer than normal, and precipitation was slightly lower than normal.

The first half of the month saw the typical quiet morning, afternoon clouds, and scattered thunderstorms and rain shower pattern. This is the normal pattern, but something we hadn't seen consistently so far this summer, because the typical North American Monsoon system has not been fully formed this year. This has been the result of various weather patterns across the United States that have been slow to change.

The pattern began to reflect more normal conditions later in July and into August. Of course, there was a major disruption early in the month with the remnants of Tropical Storm Hilary bringing record rainfall to many areas of Southern California, Arizona, and Nevada. Then right on its heels was Tropical Storm Harold, which moved into south Texas, up the Rio Grande basin and into the Four Corners. This added lots of moisture to the region and produced significant rainfall in western Colorado and the mountains. This was welcome in those areas, as they have been extremely dry all summer and

desperately needed the rainfall.

During the first two weeks of the month, most of us received 1-2 inches of rainfall, but no single day had any severe weather, just brief rain showers. Drier conditions took hold for the second half of the month and along with that, warmer conditions. Highs were consistently in the 80s from the 15th through the 24th. Temperatures peaked in the upper 80s on the 18th and 19th.

The first cold front of the season dropped temperatures by 20 degrees on the 25th and, when combined with low clouds and rain showers, definitely brought a feel of fall to the area. Temperatures stayed cool the next day before jumping back to the low 80s on the 27th. The end of the month saw a seesaw in temperatures with a few scattered showers mixed in as high temperatures varied between the low 70s and the mid-80s.

### A look ahead

September is a transition month for the region, with the last tastes of summer mixed in with our first morning freezes. Leaves begin to change by the end of the month as well and in some years a little snow can happen. The overall weather pattern is generally one of tranquility, with our chances for thunderstorms dwindling and blizzard conditions not quite ready for prime time. We are often greeted with sunny, pleasant afternoons, with

highs from the mid-70s early in the month to the mid-60s later in the month. Our first sub-freezing low temperatures usually occur during the third week of the month, so prepare those tender plants.

### August 2023 Weather Statistics

Average High	79.0° (-1.5)
100-year return frequency value	max 83.9° min 72.9°
Average Low	51.7° (+1.3)
100-year return frequency value	max 55.2° min 46.8°
Monthly Precipitation	1.30"
	(-1.60", 56% below normal)
100-year return frequency value	max 6.07" min 0.94"
Monthly Snowfall	0.0"
Highest Temperature	88° on the 16th, 18th, 19th
Lowest Temperature	46° on the 7th
Season to Date Snow	0.0"
	(the snow season is from July 1 to June 30)
Season to Date Precip.	21.51"
	(+3.45", 20% above normal)
	(Jan 1 to Dec 31)

Heating Degree Days 47 (-15)  
Cooling Degree Days 56 (+12)  
Bill Kappel is a meteorologist and Tri-Lakes resident. He can be reached at [billkappel@ocn.me](mailto:billkappel@ocn.me).

## Letters to Our Community

Guidelines for letters are on page 23.

Disclaimer: The information and opinions expressed in Letters to Our Community are the responsibility of the letter writers and should not be interpreted as the views of OCN even if the letter writer is an OCN volunteer. The letters are arranged in alphabetical order based on the last name of the author.

### "Disgusted" by MA's gender rules

After reading the article regarding Monument Academy's gender issues, I must say I am disgusted and appalled at the way this issue is being handled.

In the very beginning the simple solution would have been to have a boy, girl, and a third for those identifying differently. MA appears to single these students out, making it much harder for them, and at the same

time encouraging other students and staff to bully and discriminate.

Did anyone making these decisions stop to think that if a parent needs to be notified that it could devastating to the youth i.e.: being disowned or feeling unwanted or worse yet suicide, it happens every day. School should be a safe place, when sometimes home is not. I don't see MA being that place.

Having a board member from another district spread conspiracy theories isn't helpful; neither is legal counsel comparing himself to Moses or the Apostle Paul.

If MA wants to be totally non-secular, then perhaps it should become private and give up those federal dollars and property tax money.

For those of you that think being gay or transgender is a choice, I suggest you educate yourselves and your

child for most definitely it is not!

Claudia Swenson

Mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother

### Preservation of historical Palmer Lake

Ever since the area that became the small town of Palmer Lake was discovered by pioneers in their westward expansion, Palmer Lake has been a part of Colorado history. The Chautauqua movement held a significant presence here for many years. The Salvation Army ran a summer camp here in Palmer Lake for many years, highlighted in both local and Denver newspapers. The property owners fell upon hard times. After multiple ownership changes, the land and the buildings were gifted to the Town of Palmer Lake and the building town and citizens. Now designated as the Elephant Rock Property