

**Status of superintendent search**  
Board liaison Tiffiney Upchurch shared a presentation by McPherson and Jacobson, the firm selected to oversee the search for a new superintendent. Current Superintendent KC Somers will leave the district at the end of March. To view the presentation, please see the district website as explained above.

A survey has been distributed to staff, parents, and community members about priorities in selecting a new superintendent. As of the meeting date, 600 responses had been received. The goal is to receive at least 2,000.

Upchurch said that the board will continue to follow the current strategic plan until such time as a new superintendent is selected.

Upchurch also reported that she traveled to Washington, D.C., to meet with representatives as part of the Coalition Colorado to lobby for full funding of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Current funding is at 13% of the cost of educating students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs). The coalition was able to increase that amount to 40%.

Upchurch said the district is currently short by about \$1.5 million-\$2 million per year in funding this aspect of education.

**Fiscal stewardship discussion**  
Chief Business Officer Brett Ridgway offered a presentation (see the website as explained above) regarding fiscal stewardship by the district.

Ridgway recently testified in Denver on SB24-017 Cash Flow Moderation. Ridgway is the author of

the bill, which would allow school districts to receive their funding in a more equal amount each month. Currently, the majority of funding is received during the months when property taxes are received, and districts have to set aside money to fund payroll during the months at the end and very beginning of the calendar year. If passed, the bill will free up the \$8 million the district has been withholding.

Ridgway shared slides which explained the sources of district revenue and the timeline for creating the annual district budget, beginning in November with receipt of the governor's proposed budget and ending with passage of a complete budget for submission to the state by June 30.

When asked about the anticipated per pupil revenue for the upcoming school year, Ridgway said it is estimated to increase by 6.9%.

When asked whether the increased building activity in the district will result in a larger school population, Ridgway responded that demographics are changing. He said that birthrates are decreasing and home schooling is gaining popularity.

Whetstone said Building Advisory Committees, PCAC, and other entities are being consulted to determine their priorities for spending in the upcoming year. The group was divided into four subgroups to discuss their priorities.

In reporting back to the group, some priorities were as follows:

- Restore career and technical education (CTE) electives at middle school.
- Improve safety in parking lots and drop-off locations.
- Increase availability of CPR and other first aid training.
- Consider more staff to decrease class sizes at Bear Creek Elementary and Lewis-Palmer Elementary.
- Add cameras on buses.

- Provide air conditioning at Palmer Lake Elementary.
- Hire more counselors at the elementary level.

**Committee updates**  
The Financial Transparency Committee will go into more depth on Ridgway's presentation.

The Staff Collaboration Committee will discuss four health plans to choose from for the upcoming year. Benefits account for 31% of the district payroll.

The Calendar Task Force will start its work on Feb. 29. The original committee will be joined by more staff, parents, and students who were randomly selected and invited to join. The 2024-25 calendar is approved and posted on the district website.

The Wellness Committee celebrated February as Heart Month by promoting a program for heart wellness. The school with the largest participation will win a staff lunch.

The Special Education Advisory Committee said that nominations for the annual Aliorum Dei Award opened on Feb. 14. The award acknowledges those who make a difference in the lives of students with disabilities.

The Gifted Education Leadership Team was to meet on Feb. 14 to discuss how the district is meeting the requirements for gifted/talented identification.

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The Parent and Community Advisory Committee meets six times per year. Locations vary. The next meeting will be at 6 p.m. on April 9 at Palmer Ridge High School, 19255 Monument Hill Road in Monument. For further information, please contact [tmckee@lewispalmer.org](mailto:tmckee@lewispalmer.org). Harriet Halbig may be reached at [harriethalbig@ocn.me](mailto:harriethalbig@ocn.me).

**Note**

The D38 Board of Education met too late in the month to be included in this issue. Coverage of their Feb. 26 meeting will be included in the April 6 issue of OCN.

**MONUMENT (Cont. from 1)**

construction of a restroom facility at Monument Lake. This resolution marks a significant improvement over the current portable bathrooms, addressing a need for better amenities at the lake. Notably, the project is made financially feasible through the awarding of a grant that covers most of the \$183,000 budget.

The Town Council also unanimously approved Resolution No. 08-2024, greenlighting a contract with Star Playgrounds for the installation of new equipment at Limbach Park. With \$200,000 allocated to the Parks Department for improvements, staff identified Limbach Park as the optimal location to allocate these funds. Foreman added the importance of meeting Americans with Disabilities Act requirements, highlighting Limbach Park as a priority area for improvement.

**Ballot measures discussed**

Two ballot measures were discussed as possibly being added to November's ballot. Ballot Measure 1 proposes a lodging tax, with Mayor Mitch LaKind advocating for a 2-2.5% tax rate on short-term rentals, specifically targeting residential stays under 29 days as well as overnight stays at truck stops. The proposed tax revenue would be allocated exclusively to parks and trails, with LaKind emphasizing its potential as a consistent funding mechanism. While councilmembers like Steve King expressed a preference for keeping all funds within parks, others, including Sana Abbott and Jim Romanello, raised questions about diversifying funding or forming a parks commission for fund distribution.

Concurrently, Ballot Measure 2 focuses on charter changes, with Romanello proposing to lower the age limit for commissioners to 18, sparking debate among councilmembers about the potential impacts of altering the charter. While some, like Councilmember Marco Fiorito, expressed openness to additional ballot measures, others, like Councilmember Laura Kronick, voiced concerns about the piecemeal alteration of the charter, emphasizing the importance of respecting previous votes. These discussions underscored the complexities surrounding both ballot measures, highlighting the need for thorough consid-

eration and public education before they go to a vote.

**Monument resolves as non-sanctuary town**

The Town Council passed Resolution No. 11-2024, spearheaded by Mayor LaKind, declaring Monument as a "non-sanctuary" town. The resolution ignited a debate on the town's preparedness for handling migrant arrivals. Town Attorney Bob Cole emphasized the resolution's intent, positioning Monument in contrast to sanctuary cities, while Councilmember Kenneth Kimple sought clarification on the town's plan in the event of migrant arrivals. King expressed reservations about the town's capacity for accommodating migrants, citing limited resources for public housing. LaKind underscored the town's alignment with neighboring jurisdictions like Colorado Springs and El Paso County in their approach to migrant response. Ultimately, the resolution passed unanimously with a 7-0 vote, solidifying Monument's stance on the issue amid ongoing debates at the state and national levels.

**Town greenlights new wellhouses**

The council passed Resolution No. 12-2024, approving \$2.19 million for a construction project to build three new wellhouses in support of Wells 11, 12, and 13 for the Public Works Department. The resolution, presented by Director of Public Works Thomas Tharnish, sparked a lively discussion among council members regarding the project's cost and potential budgetary concerns. Tharnish addressed previous pricing issues that had since been resolved, but King remarked on the current inflationary environment. He noted that costs for projects have risen significantly, making it prudent to move forward without delay to avoid further expense escalation through rebidding. LaKind expressed apprehension about potential budget overruns, citing previous instances with the water tank project. Romanello emphasized the importance of cost containment measures to prevent excessive spending. Despite concerns, the motion ultimately passed unanimously.

**Maverik development debated**

Tensions escalated among councilmembers, notably between Romanello and Kimple, shedding light on underlying disagreements over the town's hesitation to allow Maverik Monument Junction Lot 1 Monument Junction West Filing No. 1 to continue.

During the Feb. 5 meeting, Kimple voiced objections to Ordinance No. 24-2023, which pertained to the approval of a Planned Unit Development for Maverik Monument Junction. Kimple requested its removal from the agenda, highlighting discrepancies in the ordinance's language that implied council approval where none had been given. However, despite Kimple's objections, the council proceeded with discussions, with the town staff emphasizing that the application was merely on hold, not withdrawn.

During the Feb. 20 meeting, a pivotal point of contention arose during the discussion on the Traffic Impact Study, a study called for by Kimple himself. A representative from Jacobs Engineering presented the study, largely answering questions Kimple raised via email. Kimple continued to raise concerns regarding the accuracy of traffic data presented in the study, alleging skewed numbers due to data collection outside of school times and the omission of COVID-19 impacts. Despite explanations from Jacobs Engineering, Kimple persisted in questioning the validity of the report, expressing apprehensions about the potential hazards posed by increased development on the community.

Romanello engaged in a pointed exchange with Kimple, challenging the validity of Kimple's claims and highlighting the inevitability of traffic growth given Colorado Springs' northward expansion. Romanello emphasized the importance of smart development rather than outright opposition, echoing sentiments shared by other councilmembers regarding the need for cautious, informed decision-making.

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Christina Cotton

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**CABIN CONVERSATIONS**

**Wednesdays at 6pm**  
**20450 Beacon Lite Rd.**

More info here:  


TRI-LAKES