

erty owners via letter, asking if they would like to be included into the district for fire protection and EMS services. See www.ocn.me/v24n1.htm#mfd.

2024 Employee Handbook

Division Chief of Community Risk Jonathan Bradley said the board is required to approve each change to the 2024 Employee Handbook. The executive staff must refer to the board to make administration amendments throughout the year, and the fire chief is seeking board approval to make any minor stylistic changes consistent with district practices, without going back to the board.

Local 4319 President Engineer Christian Schmidt said the Local 4319 was always given the opportunity to review the Employee Handbook before any changes are presented to the board.

The board unanimously approved the MFD 2024 Employee Handbook and granted the fire chief authority to make minor changes throughout the year.

Station 3 rebuild update

John Sattler, vice president of NVS Program Management, representing the district and overseeing the new Station 3 rebuild and the station remodeling projects, said the preliminary design and a program had been developed since September 2023 and a design workshop is scheduled to begin in early April with OZ Architects. See www.ocn.me/v23n9.htm#mfd. The selection of the site and the development of the purchase and sale agreement with the developer/seller is a complicated arrangement that exposes the district to some unusual risks, because normally a finished lot would be purchased and the site selected (adjacent and north of the YMCA, Jackson Creek Parkway) has yet to be subdivided and developed for public improvements.

The due diligence components total about \$40,000 to \$50,000 for the geo-technical investigation, survey plat, phase 1 environmental study, and a 10-month design adapted for the site. If another site needs to be selected, the design could still fit. The wild card will be the platting and subdivision approval process (about nine months) through the Town of Monument (TOM), but getting the clock started by executing the purchase and sale agreement and providing earnest money is key to obligate the seller to begin the process with the TOM.

The entire process is anticipated to take about 30 months, with a 12-month construction period and completion in 2027. Due to the town's six-month moratorium on planning approvals that began in January, it is unknown how long the TOM will take to approve the development. The board will be briefed if the developer runs into a roadblock or dead end and further strategies will be discussed to move the rebuild process along, Sattler said. See www.ocn.me/v24n2.htm#mfd.

The meeting adjourned at 7:29 p.m. on Feb. 28.

Fire Station 3 land purchase agreement

At the March 27 meeting, Sattler said the purchase and sale agreement for Fire Station 3 land had fallen short of being presented for approval on the action item agenda, and approval will require a special meeting. However, an agreement in principle had been reached earlier that day with legal counsel, Kovacs, himself, and the sellers. The Station 3 lot purchase price for 2.06 acres is about \$1.3 million, substantiated by a third-party appraisal completed last year for \$15 per square foot.

Future obligations for board approval will be the pro-rated construction for the shared access driveway into the subdivision, the initial traffic signal pro-rated with other occupants, and the future widening of Jackson Creek Parkway that is likely to happen after the station is built. The widening will have no impact on the usable acreage and the cost share of about \$1.5 million is expected to be about \$300,000 for the district. The total obligation is estimated to be about \$1.7 million (does not include building the station). The request for action at the special meeting will be about \$1.3 million and a \$25,000 earnest money check to the seller. The earnest money will not be returned should the district need to back out, Sattler said.

Division Chief of Administration Jamey Bumgarner said the district anticipated the costs to begin the project and budgeted \$2.4 million for the lot purchase price, infrastructure costs, and design phase for 2024.

Wescott real property inclusion

At the March 6 special meeting, the board held a public hearing pursuant to a notice published in The Gazette to consider proposed Resolution 2024-09 and a certified order approving the inclusion into the district's jurisdiction of the real property within the jurisdiction of DWFPD (except two properties that will remain until the board dissolves upon the dissolution of the district). See DWFPD article on page 14.

The DWFPD district attorney, Emily Powell of Ireland Stapleton Pryor Pascoe PC law firm, confirmed the intergovernmental agreement remains in place to allow for uninterrupted fire protection and Emergency Medical Support (EMS) services. DWFPD will exist until the merger is completed, she said. After hearing no comments from the public, the board closed the hearing.

The board approved the inclusion of real property in a roll call vote. The meeting adjourned at 3:39 p.m. on March 6.

2024 winter storm after-action review

At the MFD March 27 meeting, Executive Battalion Chief Micah Coyle said over the past five years,

three large regional snowstorms occurred around mid-March, and the district expects major snow events similar to the event March 13-15 to occur again. He thanked the district's regional partners, the Office of Emergency Management (OEM), Monument Police Department (MPD), Black Forest Fire Rescue Protection District (BFFRPD), and Palmer Lake Fire Department (PLFD). A Joint Command Center in preparation for the storm was set up at the Monument Town Hall, operating as a 911 call center to cover calls for MFD, PLFD, BFFRPD, Falcon District 5, and MPD. MPD and the TOM Public Works Department operated from the center. Crews were dispatched according to location with BFFRPD handling the east division along with Station 2 and 5, and Stations 1, 3, and 4, and PLFD handling the west.

The Red Cross set up a shelter at St. Peter Catholic Church for stranded motorists. Thankfully citizens heeded the storm warnings and stayed home, reducing the number of incidents to the rescue of four stranded motorists, one ambulance transport and a traffic accident. The district's new plow was beneficial for emergency operations, but there were a few areas typically retaining large drifts and the plow became stuck in north Woodmoor, and off County Line Road and east of Highway 83 when called in to assist crews responding to medical calls. New drivers are being trained to operate the 1967 Snowcat, but an oil leak was noticed after training and repairs are being made, he said.

Bumgarner said the district just missed out on purchasing a 1990s replacement Snowcat with a trailer caboose from a rebuild center in La Junta last month. It had a good price point and sold quickly for about \$125,000.

Coyle said many truck drivers were exiting at Baptist Road to find a spot to camp at the gas station rest stops, and the area quickly became inundated with an overflow of commercial vehicles. For several hours MPD helped redirect many commercial vehicles that had become stuck and needed to turn around. That helped while signs were put in place instructing commercial vehicles not to exit at Baptist Road. A district employee liaising at the OEM heard about plans to close I-25 and fortunately via Zoom call, statements to CDOT helped keep the corridor open. An I-25 closure typically increases the possibility of tricky rescues as motorists seek alternative plowed routes, Coyle said.

Bumgarner said about 24 to 30 inches of snow fell with drifting in various locations, and Crystal Park above Manitou Springs received 51 inches. The district may need to discuss an additional plow attachment for an existing vehicle in the future.

Fire Station 6 land purchase

Bumgarner said the QuikTrip Corp. had offered the district two options to purchase 2 acres for about \$1.165 million for a future Station 6, or a little over four acres on the lot for about \$2.330 million. The district budgeted \$500,000 for the land purchase in 2024 with the anticipation that \$500,000 could also be taken from the Impact Fee Fund. If the 4-acre option is chosen, some funds could be taken from the Station 2 remodel project, or a loan could be taken out for the remainder of about \$1.333 million plus interest and be paid off in 2025. The land is west of the QuikTrip gas station and restaurant off Terrazzo Drive and Baptist Road. The square footage price offered is below the market price, he said.

Director Roger Lance asked if the district could sell the 2 acres in the future if the district did not need all four after building Station 6.

Bumgarner said the district would have the option to sell the remaining acreage after building on the lot.

Treasurer Tom Kelly said he would prefer to retain the funds for the Station 3 project and only purchase the 2 acres needed for the standard-size fire station.

Bumgarner confirmed that all the road infrastructure, water, and utilities are in place.

Director Randall Estes asked Bumgarner why the district sees a need to purchase more land than is needed.

Bumgarner said the district needs 2 acres to build a station, but he does not know down the road what all the district's needs will be in 10 years, and how much growth could occur. It would not be a bad idea for future investment purposes, he said.

Lance said it would be preferable to have the option of additional acreage to use if needed for expansion or retain at a bargain price for future investment, knowing that land will be in short supply even though a future sale might be unknown.

Estes said he has mixed feelings about purchasing additional acreage looking for an increase in value over time, and it raises red flags to borrow money if the district cannot write a check and pay cash for the land.

Kelly said he would rather keep interest and expenses down, knowing the district is building a \$15 million station and plans to build a training center. He said the district should use funds to ensure Station 3 gets what it needs and focus on getting two things right rather than jeopardizing the district by going into further debt.

Hildebrandt said thinking long-term he agreed with Lance's position and said almost all land is spoken for and having options is desirable as opposed to having options pushed upon the district because of inaction. He is sensitive to the finances and not borrowing, but knowing projects can be moved around, he favors purchasing 4 acres, with the likelihood that 2 acres would be snatched up

quickly if the district has financial problems in the future, and probably for a profit.

Kelly said it is taxpayer dollars, and he is not comfortable with all the moving parts and projects the district has going on, and solid cost estimates on the projects have not yet been determined. He would need further estimates for all the projects before deciding.

Bumgarner said the chief suggested the district could borrow \$1.1 million (plus interest) for one year and pay off the loan next year. The Station 2 model will not commence until late 2024, and it is budgeted for \$2.3 million. The district could divert those funds because the project will not get close to the allocated amount this year.

Kelly said the district will still have to finance a "heck of a chunk" out of the \$15 million needed for Station 3. The district could get into a bind if financing is 8% on the loan for Station 3.

Tharnish agreed the 4-acre purchase was likely the best path but agreed it would be a reach financially. It is not a losing proposition, and there is some risk involved, but so far land is trending upward in value and the district could sell the additional 2 acres.

Estes said it is unknown how the market will fare with current interest rates, and commercial land is not moving quickly. He had heard commercial contractors were pulling out and the district could get stuck with a dead piece of property. He declined to decide either way on the acreage, but said it was an incredible piece of property.

Tharnish suggested the district request a first right of refusal on the additional 2 acres.

Lance said the district does not know the real commercial value of the property offered at a reduced cost by QuikTrip, and the owners could increase the price.

Estes said the first right to refusal price would be negotiated upfront when purchasing the first 2 acres.

Bumgarner said the district has been working on the right to purchase the land for about a year, and it is unknown what the accreditation process will point out, but at some point a station will be needed in the southwest corner of the district, and a station would not be built on the site for five years.

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