

scheduled for Monday, April 1 and April 15. Call 719-884-8014 or see [www.townofmonument.org](http://www.townofmonument.org) for in-

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Chris Jeub can be reached at [chrisjeub@ocn.me](mailto:chrisjeub@ocn.me).

Palmer Lake Board of Trustees, March 28

## Restoration of Elephant Rock cabins proposed

By James Howald and Jackie Burhans  
The Palmer Lake Board of Trustees (PLBOT) cancelled its March 4 meeting due to snow but convened on March 28 to hear a proposal from Lindsay and Richard Willan to restore six cabins and the long house at the Elephant Rock property. Town Attorney Scott Krob told the board that the application for annexation of the Ben Lomand property had been withdrawn. The board held a public hearing on a conditional use permit for a multi-family residential development in a C1 zone, followed by a vote on a resolution to grant the permit. It heard a request from Nikki McDonald to transfer a water tap from a property on Greeley Avenue to another property she owns. The board heard reports from Town Administrator Dawn Collins and Fire Chief John Vincent.

The March 28 meeting was preceded by an executive session.

### Cabins could be asset to town, Willans claim

Lindsay and Richard Willan asked the board to reconsider its unanimous vote in 2023 to demolish six cabins and a larger structure called the "long house" at the Elephant Rock property. They proposed renovating the structures and using them as short-term residences for visitors to the spa they are planning to build at the property. They said the renovated cabins might also serve as office space, a yoga studio, an artist's studio, or an art gallery.

The Willans showed the board a site map indicating the cabins and long house are outside the floodplain. They also presented a report from Darrell Yee, a consulting engineer, verifying the roof and walls of the structures were sound. The insurance policy the Willans have obtained for their spa can be expanded to include the cabins, they said. RE/MAX Properties was interested in providing long-term property management services.

The cabins and long house in their current state are worth \$735,000, the Willans said, but after renovation would be worth \$1.85 million. Under the Willans' proposal, they would pay to renovate the structures, but the town would retain ownership. The Willans presented letters from Tri-Lakes Collaborative Counseling and from Smokebrush Foundation for the Arts indicating those organizations might finance some of the renovation work. Resident Cindy Powell said she was working on grants to finance the renovations and an "Adopt-a-Cabin" plan. Caryn Switey of the Wonders of Nature Forest School said the school was interested in providing funding if they could recoup their investment by receiving free use of a cabin until they had recovered their costs.

The Willans estimated their proposal would generate \$60,000 annual profit to the town. They projected a total benefit to the town of \$1.31 million when the increase in value after renovation is considered. Lindsay Willan estimated the renovation would take three years.

Following the Willans' presentation, Mayor Glant Havenar said she was concerned the property might become a residential development in the future. She said it might be as long as six years before the town sees any financial benefit. Richard Willan said residential development at Elephant Rock could not happen without the consent of the board. Trustee Shana Ball argued that the current board can't control future boards. Powell said the Willans' proposal would save the town the cost of asbestos abatement and landscaping that would follow demolition of the cabins.

Town Administrator Dawn Collins said the Elephant Rock property is a planned unit development, which means the town has more control over the development process.

The board returned to their discussion of the Willans' proposal later

in the meeting as a separate agenda item. Ball said she likes the ideas the Willans presented. Trustee Kevin Dreher reminded the board it has voted three times to demolish the cabins. He said the Willans' plan was not in the best interest of the town. Trustee Dennis Stern said he was optimistic but wanted to lock down the details of management.

Reid Wiecks, chair of the Parks and Trails Commission, echoed Dreher's comments. He said if the cabins and long house were demolished the property would be unique in northern El Paso County. He argued using the property as a "passive park" would raise property values and increase property tax revenue received by the town. Wiecks characterized the Willans' proposal as a seven-home residential development and argued the buildings were not historical, were likely built in the 1970s and therefore not eligible for grants to preserve historical buildings. He expressed concern that the Willans' plan might conflict with the trail that has been proposed for the property and has been partially built.

Trustee Nick Ehrhardt said he had voted to demolish the cabins because there was no alternative proposal and if the Willans' plan doesn't work out, the town could still demolish the buildings because the town would own them. He liked the fact that the town is not responsible for management.

Collins said there was no overall plan for the Elephant Rock property and mentioned that using a portion of the site for a public safety building to house the Police and Fire Departments had been discussed in the past. She called for a meeting that would include all interested departments to work out a plan for the entire property.

Havenar said Trustees Jessica Farr and Samantha Padgett were excused from the meeting and she was reluctant to decide without their input. She felt the finances were not clear, and the proposal would mean a lot of work for town staff. She lamented the fact that the Elephant Rock property had become a burden and a cause for contention.

The discussion ended with the board deciding to hold a meeting with all stakeholders, including the board, the Parks and Trails Commission, the Planning Commission, and the Police and Fire Departments to build a consensus for how to develop the property.

### Application for Ben Lomand annexation withdrawn

Attorney Scott Krob told the board that the United Congregational Church had withdrawn its application for the annexation of its Ben Lomand property. The board had suggested some changes to the annexation agreement that the church had submitted, but the church would not consider any changes to the agreement. The church's attorney sent the town a letter indicating that if the town did not accept the original annexation agreement the church would withdraw its application, Krob said. The board was polled electronically and decided not to hold a special meeting to further discuss the application. On March 14 the church formally withdrew its application, Krob said.

Havenar said the board did not agree with the annexation proposal's plans for the top of Ben Lomand mountain, the requirement that the town take responsibility for County Line Road, and the stipulation that the church would not need to manage changes through the town's Planning Commission. The original agreement was not in the best interest of the town, she said.

### "Pocket neighborhood" requires conditional use permit

A public hearing was held to consider a request from Rebecca Albright and Philip Tedeschi for a conditional use

permit that would allow them to move forward with the development of detached single-family residences and duplex units between Clarence Street and Spruce Avenue, adjacent to Ben Lomand mountain. There would be a total of nine residences, Albright said, perhaps three single-family residences and three duplexes or five single-family residences and two duplexes. The "pocket neighborhood" would consist of smaller, affordable, attainable housing located around a common open space, Albright explained. The plan calls for the residences and duplexes to use septic systems since the town does not provide sewer service to the property, but the town's municipal code does not permit multi-family residences to use septic

systems.

Albright said the property is currently zoned C1 (general business and commercial zoning), but single- and multi-family residences are a conditional use of property zoned C1. She asked the board to grant a conditional use permit and to consider changing its water tap fees to help make the residences affordable. Collins said the town's code would need to be amended to allow multi-family residences such as duplexes to use septic systems.

Krob said the resolution that would grant the conditional use permit would only take effect if the town amends by Aug. 1 its code to allow the use of septic systems for multi-family residences. The town would



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