

time to review the two consultant proposals, but there is no burning timeline to hire a consultant to develop a master plan, said Dowden.

The board tabled adopting policies 400.11 and 600.1 until the May meeting, allowing it additional time to review the consultant proposals and compare the policies.

#### Banking signatures

Hinton said the authorized bank signatures needed to be cleared up, and the process should be an action item after every board director election and when there is staff turnover. The bank needs to be informed of the staff and directors who leave the district, and district Administrative Officer Lisa Emry needs to be added as a point of contact with the bank, but not a signee. He requested Directors Abendschan, Tarvainen, and Chad Behnken complete a signature card with the bank.

Note: During the workshop, Hinton said the signature cards were out of date and two former board directors and the retired deputy chief were still recorded as signees at the bank.

The board unanimously approved the reaffirming of authorized signatures for the current directors to authorize and sign checks, and authorized Emry to initiate wire transfers with First National Bank of Las Animas.

Abendschan suggested a road trip to complete the signature cards.

#### Financial update

Hinton said the expenditures as of March 31 were at 24.8% and the district was under budget and should be about 25% of the annual budgeted amount. The district has about \$3.941 million in assets (of which about \$1.912 million is in the Operational Checking account for daily operations) and had received about \$442,046 in revenue. The district received the final payment of \$108,272 in wildland deployment revenue for the financial year 2023. He asked Dunn to discuss extra funds

to invest before the next meeting.

Dunn confirmed the district had no outstanding revenue expected for wildland deployment from 2023 and the district received \$30,725 in ambulance revenue.

The board unanimously accepted the financial report as presented.

#### Chief's report

Dunn presented the chief's report for March and said the following:

- The district acquired a 1999 Type 6 (brush truck) from MFD for \$2,500. The apparatus will be used by the district Mechanic Gavin Smith as a fleet maintenance truck.
- A state grant of about \$8,000 was awarded for paramedic school, and the district submitted a grant request with Pikes Peak State College for Career Advanced Colorado Grants for the recruits.
- An Assistance to Firefighters Grant for increasing the district's Self Contained Breathing Apparatus units was denied.
- The total monthly training hours was 1,569, including EMS and fire training with MFD, and night training on fireground operations.
- The district had an average volume of 71 calls for service.
- The tender was expected to be in service April 23 or 24.

Note: At the Feb. 21 meeting, the board approved the payment of a new tender truck to include a \$3,000 change fee for painting for a total of \$349,849.50. The board objected to an interest charge of \$1,600 added by Front Range Apparatus, which was not included in the original contract, and subsequently the board did not approve the interest charge. The funds are being drawn from the capital improvement fund.

#### Reserve tender sale proposal

Dowden said the board received a request to sell

the reserve tender 2883, a Type 24 freightliner, in service since 1999, purchased for \$150,000, with an odometer reading 14,351 miles.

Dunn said Smith had received an appraisal from Brindlee Mountain Fire Apparatus, Huntsville, Ala., for \$30,000 to \$40,000 in January 2023, but this February the quote was only \$20,000. Rock Bottom Propane has offered \$30,000 to purchase the freightliner without the pump, tank, and body that could be consigned for an additional \$3,000-\$5,000.

Fire/Medic Heather Heath said, "The tank leaks like a sieve."

Dunn said the reserve tender is taking up space and has sat in the barn since 2021; the apparatus is depreciating in value.

The board was not prepared to sell the apparatus until further information can be found on the drive train, a tank replacement, or possible repurposing.

#### Mutual aid correspondence

Dowden conveyed notes of thanks for providing mutual aid on March 24 to the Armdale Heights duplex fire near Dublin Boulevard, and for assisting with the Boggsville Fire March 2-4 in the City of Las Animas, Bent County. The fires received mutual aid from multiple districts.

The regular meeting adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

\*\*\*\*\*

Meetings are usually held on the third Wednesday of the month at Station 1, 11445 Teachout Road, Colorado Springs. Meetings are open to the public in person or via Zoom. The next regular meeting is scheduled for May 15 at 7 p.m. For joining instructions, updates, agendas, minutes, and reports, visit <https://bffire.org> or contact the Administrative Office at [Admin@bffire.org](mailto:Admin@bffire.org) or call 719-495-4300.

Natalie Barszcz can be reached at [nataliebarszcz@ocn.me](mailto:nataliebarszcz@ocn.me).

### Donald Wescott Fire Protection District, April 24

## Merger process nears completion

By Natalie Barszcz

At the Donald Wescott Fire Protection District (DWFPD) meeting on April 24, the board received several updates on the merger process with Tri-Lakes Monument Fire Protection District dba Monument Fire District (MFD), and re-assigned board positions. Mark Gunderman commented on his tenure as board president as he leaves Wescott to take a seat on the MFD Board of Directors.

Treasurer Duane Garrett was excused, and Secretary Charles Fleece and Director Mike Forsythe attended via Zoom.

#### Merger process update

The district's attorney, Emily Powell of Ireland Stapleton Pryor Pascoe PC law firm, attending via Zoom, gave an update on the merger process and said the following:

- The April 30 deadline to move the district properties onto the El Paso County Assessor's tax rolls had been met.
- The District Court issued the court order for the exclusion process first in order to hold the process for 30 days to ensure there were no objections to the exclusion of properties.
- The final documents were walked down by MFD counsel Maureen Juran to the El Paso County Clerk and Records Office on April 22.
- The district's properties will be assessed on the MFD tax records for the 2025 tax year.
- All that remains is to dissolve the Wescott district and move the final two properties that are owned by Directors Fleece and Forsythe into the MFD boundaries.
- A special meeting of the MFD board will be held on May 8 to begin the process for the exclusion of the two properties to be included into MFD upon dissolution of the district.
- The four electors will be the two directors and their spouses, and the process will be fast, but the court order must be made before July.
- The Sun Hills Fire Station transfer to MFD will be assisted by a property attorney.
- The Fire and Police Pension Association (FPPA) and Colorado Firefighters Heart (CFH) Trust will be transferred to MFD, the new sponsor. The pension plan affiliation agreement will state MFD agrees to work with the FPPA and the CFH Trust.

Powell commended both boards and the staff and said it had been such a pleasure working with Fire Chief Andy Kovacs, and his professionalism and grit is truly admirable, said Powell.

#### Board positions re-assigned

Powell said that in accordance with the Special District Act, every board must elect a president and a treasurer.

Forsythe nominated Fleece as board president, and Forsythe by default assumed the treasurer/secretary position.

Powell made a motion to accept the nomi-

nations, and board unanimously approved the positions.

Note: Gunderman and Garrett will be sworn in as MFD board directors at the May 22 meeting.

#### Outgoing president remarks

Gunderman said he became a Wescott board director in May 2018, and it had been an honor to serve on the board for the past six years. He fell into the role of board president in January 2020, but it was a team effort, and he thanked former Secretary Larry Schwarz who left the district at the end of 2023, and incumbent directors Garrett, Fleece and Forsythe for their support and directorship. He also thanked Kovacs and the executive staff for making the journey as easy as possible, noting change often brings anxiety. Transitioning the firefighters over to MFD at the beginning of the merger process ensured the firefighters felt a part of the process from day one.

The MFD board directors were open to suggestion and made the process collaborative. He initially thought the road would be bumpy and thanked Powell for helping both districts navigate through the nuanced process. It was fortunate that both districts had the right firefighters and board directors at the right time, and he looks forward to serving on the Monument board. He thanked Fleece and Forsythe for remaining behind to assist Powell in the final months of the merger process.

Fleece said it had been a privilege to work with Gunderman, holding down the fort, and with Powell and Kovacs, everything is always lined up, simply a good team seeing the community grow in the right direction.

#### Chief's report

Kovacs said the following:

- Engine 502 and brush truck 542 assisted Fort Carson with a wildfire in March.
- The combined district staff completed 783 training hours.
- The new wildland Type 3 engine will go into service in the next two weeks after crews have received driver and apparatus orientation.
- The engine will be in service locally and be available for wildland deployments.
- The remodel design for Station 2 (Rollercoaster Road) is underway.
- The Station 4 (Gleneagle Drive) remodel was delayed a week due to permitting issues, but the project is back on track for completion this fall.
- Nine firefighter recruits are expected to graduate on May 3.

Forsythe said the addition of nine firefighters was good news.

For more information, see the MFD article on page 15, or visit [www.monumentfire.org](http://www.monumentfire.org) to read the entire chief's report.

The meeting adjourned at 5:03 p.m.

\*\*\*\*\*

Meetings are typically held on the fourth

Wednesday at Station 1, 18650 Highway 105. A short special meeting will be held on June 12 at 4:30 p.m., and the regular meeting will be held on June 26 at 4:30 p.m., preceded by a Volunteer Pension Board of Trustees meeting at 4 p.m. There are no May meetings. For Zoom meeting instructions, agendas, minutes, and updates, visit [www.monumentfire.org](http://www.monumentfire.org) or contact Director of Administration Jennifer Martin at 719-484-9011.

Natalie Barszcz can be reached at [nataliebarszcz@ocn.me](mailto:nataliebarszcz@ocn.me).

### Claudia Swenson (Emmons)

1948-2024

She was born June 3, 1948, and left us much too soon on April 2, 2024. In the 75 years we were gifted to have her, she lived and loved enough for many lifetimes, but still had more to give. From modeling when she was younger to



being a nurse and magistrate judge later on, there wasn't a job she couldn't handle. Her career highlights should also absolutely include being a foster parent. Over the years, she cared for many children that needed a place to be safe and loved. Life wasn't always easy for Claudia, but she never let that get in the way of her joy and openness to love.

Claudia moved to Monument in 1999. There she met Kevin Swenson, who was Monument's first police officer. She worked in the Larkspur and Monument city halls for several years and is remembered by many as the Hotdog Cart Lady and Mrs. Claus at Christmas. In 2019, she met Lonnie Parker (by whom she is survived). He was the love of her life and she had never been so happy.

Claudia was preceded in death by her mother, Thelma Louis Nease; her father, Issac Emmons; and her eldest daughter, Michelle Joan Flaherty. Her other children are Chantal Marie Woodyard, David Charles Emmons, Brandy Kay-Anne Moberg, Olivia Aaron Maier, Kathryn Lea Kowal, and Lindy Louise Griffith. She is also survived by many grandchildren, great grandchildren, other family, and an endless number of friends. If you met Claudia, she was your friend for life. Regarding life, Claudia loved every form of it: plants, insects, birds, and animals. She kept bees, chickens, and alpacas at her little "ranch"

She was an incredible woman and will be dearly missed.

There will be a celebration of her great life on June 1<sup>st</sup> at 12 pm at 463 Washington Street in Monument and take part in a "Second Line" style parade down to the park. At the park, we will have music and food and many toasts to the amazing woman that Claudia was. If you would like to join us, please do! Claudia always said the more the merrier.

If you would like to contribute something in her honor, please go to <https://gofund.me/916830da> or scan the QR code.

