



Above: Town Administrator Dawn Collins administers the oath of office to newly hired Police Chief Glen Smith. From left are Collins and Smith. *Photo by James Howald.*

she said.

Executive sessions

The Jan. 9 meeting included an executive session to determine negotiating positions regarding the lease for the EcoSpa at the Elephant Rock property and to receive legal advice regarding a complaint against the town filed with the Colorado Attorney General and concerns that have been raised about the board's eligibility for annexation decisions.

The Jan. 23 meeting included an executive session to confer with the town attorney about the EcoSpa lease, the board's eligibility for annexation decisions and a lawsuit against the town filed by Integrity Matters.

The next regular board meeting is scheduled for Feb. 13. Meetings are held at the Town Hall. See the town's website at www.townofpalmerlake.com

to confirm times and dates of board meetings and workshops. Meetings are typically held on the second and fourth Thursdays of the month at the Town Hall. Information: 719-481-2953.

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Monument Town Council, Jan. 6 and 21

Monument enters new year with Legislative Platform, Buc-ee's opposition

By Chris Jeub

Community members urged the Monument Town Council (MTC) to oppose Palmer Lake's proposed annexation for a Buc-ee's development during heated public comments at January's meetings. Meanwhile, the council reviewed updates on the Falcon Commerce Center and approved new Planning Commission appointments, a Vision Statement for the town, and resolutions related to infrastructure improvements.

Oaths of office

At the first MTC meeting of 2025, the swearing-in of returning officials highlighted the evening. Incumbents Marco Fiorito, Kenneth Kimple, Laura Kronick, and Jim Romanello renewed their oaths of office. The council also reaffirmed Steve King as mayor pro tem, continuing his leadership alongside Mayor Mitch LaKind. The council's current governance remains unchanged, with LaKind, elected in 2022, continuing as mayor, and councilmembers Sana Abbott, King, and the re-elected members representing their respective districts and at-large positions.

Later the council gave attention to appointing members of the Planning Commission. Resolution No. 05-2025 was unanimously approved, officially naming Martin Trujillo, Daniel Ours, Ray Egly, and Donna Hatch to the commission. Additionally, the Town of Monument announced two open alternate seats on the commission, inviting community members to apply and contribute to the town's planning initiatives.

Legislative Platform

The town presented a new item called the "2025 Legislative Platform," something Mayor LaKind said was never done before. The platform outlines the town's priorities and advocacy positions for the upcoming year. It focuses on empowering local governance, protecting Monument's autonomy, and advocating for the town's interests at state and federal levels. Key priorities include transportation improvements, support for local law enforcement, maintaining municipal control over land-use decisions, and ensuring equitable access to resources.

The platform opposes unfunded mandates, burdensome regulations, and legislation that diminishes municipal authority, while promoting infrastructure upgrades, affordable housing initiatives, and cybersecurity advancements.

LaKind expressed reservations about the town becoming an internet service provider, citing examples like Fort Collins where similar ventures resulted in significant financial losses. He emphasized the impor-

ance of avoiding unnecessary risks to the town's fiscal stability. Additionally, both the mayor and Abbott raised concerns about the inclusion of artificial intelligence in town operations, pointing to its lack of regulation and the potential challenges it could pose. The plan was presented in draft form by the town staff in the Jan. 6 meeting and ratified in the Jan. 21 meeting.

Buc-ee's opposition seeks Monument support

At the Jan. 6 meeting, members of Integrity Matters, a local nonprofit, led an organized appeal urging the town to oppose Palmer Lake's proposed annexation of land at the southwest corner of I-25 and County Line Road for a Buc-ee's development. During public comment, Katherine Gayle, chief legal counsel for the group, emphasized their action against Palmer Lake, claiming that Buc-ee's would harm local businesses, disrupt Monument's small-town character, and drain critical resources like water. Citizens echoed these concerns, highlighting issues such as traffic congestion, light pollution, wildlife displacement, and potential declines in property value. Many in the packed room voiced similar fears about the annexation's long-term impact on the community.

Not everyone in attendance opposed the development, however. One remote participant reminded the council of the "unintended consequences" of rejecting past annexation opportunities for the property. Noting prior protests against residential development ultimately left the landowner with limited options, leading to the current proposal with Palmer Lake. Monument now has less control over the outcome, she claimed.

In response to the pub-

lic input, councilmembers expressed support for Integrity Matters and residents' concerns. Councilmember Kenneth Kimple proposed drafting a letter of opposition, citing 88 emails he had received against the project. Mayor Pro Tem Steve King encouraged strong community turnout at future meetings to amplify opposition, while Councilmember Laura Kronick urged residents to continue voicing their concerns.

Higby Road

At the Jan. 6 meeting, James McGrady of the Triview Metropolitan District presented a detailed plan for the Higby Road Widening Project, which aims to address congestion and improve safety from Jackson Creek Parkway to Harness Road. The project, with an estimated cost of \$12.6 million, will be executed in two phases: the first phase extending from Bowstring Road to Harness Road and the second phase from Jackson Creek Parkway to Bowstring. McGrady emphasized the need for the improvements, citing the growing traffic volumes from Lewis-Palmer High School and surrounding neighborhoods. Key elements include widening the road, constructing new roundabouts, adding sidewalks and multi-use paths, and improving ingress and egress in the event of emergencies.

McGrady highlighted the safety benefits of roundabouts, which reduce crash rates and improve traffic flow compared to traditional intersections. Additionally, the plan incorporates a multi-use path along the south side of Higby Road to support pedestrian and bicyclist access, with specific attention to student crossings near Lewis-Palmer High School. The project will include center medians, sidewalks, and bicycle lanes to

accommodate multimodal transportation.

The project's funding relies on a mix of general obligation bonds, developer contributions, and a portion of the district's mill levy and sales tax revenue. McGrady explained that the road was previously mismanaged before its annexation by the Town of Monument, which initiated efforts to modernize the infrastructure. McGrady emphasized the importance of moving forward to support the growing needs of the community and enhance road safety for all users.

Town's new Vision Statement approved

At the Jan. 6 meeting, a strategic planner presented a draft Vision Statement as part of the town's 2026-28 Strategic Plan. The Vision Statement emphasizes Monument's commitment to being a "safe, welcoming, and productive community" that empowers individu-

als and families to thrive while preserving the town's small-town charm and natural beauty. It acknowledges Monument's growth as a gateway to the Pikes Peak region and stresses a balance between responsible development and maintaining the community's unique character. The Vision Statement also outlines key commitments, including fostering transparency in governance, delivering high-quality town services, protecting natural resources, and supporting thoughtfully planned growth.

A slide comparison of the Vision Statement revisions showcased minor adjustments to language, enhancing clarity and focus. LaKind expressed support for the edits, stating they better reflected the community's values. Councilmembers Kimple, Abbott, and Kronick echoed his approval, highlighting the importance of preserving Monument's small-town appeal

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