

Northern El Paso County Coalition of Community Associations, Feb. 19

NEPCO—Helping shape county land development code

By Dave Betzler

Talk to just about any Tri-Lakes or Monument resident today, and you'll hear comments like "we're losing that small town feel," "there's way too much growth," "things are out of control." The Tri-Lakes area, like the big city neighbor to the south, is rapidly growing. A 2024 national survey identified the Colorado Springs area as one of the "top 10 best places to live" in the U.S. A recent article on successful growing communities noted there's a "tipping point" where citizens realize staying the same is not an option and simultaneously grasp that change is necessary to preserve and shape the community's future.

A change in perspective is needed. The area's population growth over the last two decades has been rapid and continuous, with a marked acceleration in the last few years. There's direct correlation between population increase and increased housing development. The population in ZIP code 80132 grew rapidly from 20,245 to 27,533 (2005-20). Wikipedia highlighted a huge 88% population increase for Monument (2010-20) and an amazing 528% increase over the last 20 years (1,971 to 10,399), with an additional 1,600 by 2023. More people equate to more families, resulting in near doubling of school-age children in the D38 School District (517 to 1,171) since 2015-16 school year.

Local officials have been concerned about growth for years. Twenty-four years ago, Monument Trustee Ed Delaney was quoted in an August 2001 OCN article: "Local growth has been phenomenal and trying to stay up with it has been a lot more difficult than in the past ... and we have a lot more to

look out for than just the town."

El Paso County has the largest land area and population of all Colorado counties. Zoning districts relate to defined geographic areas. Roughly 90% of land in the county falls into three categories: agricultural (more than 35 acres), residential rural (less than 5 acres), and agriculture (less than 5 acres). The remaining 10% consists of planned unit development, rural, residential suburban, and rural residential. Many existing residential developments fall within unincorporated portions of the county.

The county's Land Development Code (LDC) document is the "bible" for all residential and commercial development, and it is part of a hierarchy of plans: County Master Plan (2021), Water Master Plan (2019), Parks Master Plan (2022), and Major Transportation Corridor Plan (2024). A much-needed LDC working group has been established to guide the LDC update process, with completion targeted for the first half of 2026. NEPCO is participating to represent homeowner interests and engage where possible to help shape future development and maintain a high quality of life for residents in our rapidly growing area.

The primary goal is to revise and modernize the LDC to make the document more user-friendly and easier to understand. Major emphases include consolidation of zoning districts and updating the Use and Development Standards. The working group will address a myriad of issues, ranging from manufactured housing affordability and construction methods to setting the decision authority for Additional Dwelling Units to updating standards for residential development parking. County officials have repeat-

edly stressed the need for public involvement in the LDC process and have taken steps to expand public notice provisions.

The county LDC document must comply with state regulations and evolving legislative requirements. For example, the governor signed HB24-1007 that prohibits residential occupancy limits by county, city, or municipal jurisdictions. The LDC update includes replacing the definition of "family" with "household," which will allow non-family households in rental properties, to include Additional Dwelling Units.

In summary, the county's lengthy and ambitious LDC review will result in modernized standards (building design, construction, and land use) and updated and simplified development processes. In sports and in life, to participate fully, one must know the rules. NEPCO participation and engagement in the LDC update will help ensure area homeowner and resident concerns and issues are considered.

NEPCO is an established, volunteer-run nonprofit supporting over 50 area HOAs, their members and the community. Our mission tagline is succinct and direct: "community engagement, smart growth and quality of life." Information is available at www.nepco.org.

To review Land Development Code documents, story maps and interactive zoning maps, visit elpasocountyldc.com.

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Woodmoor Improvement Association, Jan. 27 and 29

Annual meeting and reorganization

By Jackie Burhans

The Woodmoor Improvement Association (WIA) board met on Jan. 27 for its annual meeting to elect new board members, review 2024 accomplishments, state 2025 goals, and recognize good neighbors. The board met on Jan. 29 to certify the election, reorganize its positions, and approve operational procedures. The regular February meeting was held on the 26th, after the deadline for Our Community News, and will be reported in next month's issue.

Annual meeting

President Brian Bush covered the presentation available on the WIA website at <http://bit.ly/wia-2025-annual>. Bush confirmed that a quorum was achieved via residents returning their ballots and noted that the board had saved over \$2,100 by not providing postage-paid envelopes and \$1,000 by having staff count the votes. Bush reviewed the rules of conduct for the meeting, which he summarized as "Be respectful, civil, and concise."

Bush noted that WIA comprises 3,196 homes and nine sub-homeowners associations (HOAs). When the Northbay development comes online, it will increase that number to 10. Information about upcoming developments in Woodmoor is at <https://woodmoor.org/woodmoor-developments/>. Most sub-HOAs run their own affairs and have their own dues, but residents still pay WIA dues. WIA has different relationships with different HOAs; one of them is a metro district, and WIA enforces covenants on its behalf. Some sub-associations are at the bottom of the WIA home page at <https://woodmoor.org/>. View the WIA map and boundaries at <https://woodmoor.org/wia-map-and-boundaries/>.

Bush reviewed the mission of WIA to perform covenant enforcement and architectural control, maintain and improve common areas, and provide public safety. He also noted that WIA monitors issues in surrounding areas that may affect its residents. Contrary to media reports on other HOAs, Bush emphasized that WIA does not foreclose on properties, enforce ridiculous covenants, and fail to work with residents on reasonable solutions, nor does it have rigid and unchanging rules and regulations. However, he said, the board cannot change the covenants without a 66% vote of lot owners. He noted that the board had recently altered the fence rules and increased the number of cars allowed to park on the property outside of a garage.

Noting that board positions are unpaid, he introduced the 2024 board members and WIA staff, many of whom are longtime employees. He said that Cindy Thrush and Sue Leggerio were not running for re-election to the board.

The WIA dues for 2024 have increased by \$8.50 to \$299 annually after considering the impact of inflation on salaries and the cost of improvements. The top three sources of income were dues, new construction fees, and Barn rentals. The top expenses other than payroll were common area improvements and forestry maintenance. Bush commended the WIA and WPS staff for holding expenses under budget. Bush said the reserve fund is well-funded to pay for expected replacements of vehicles, benches, windows, and flooring. In 2025, WIA will replace office windows to save energy and replace one WPS vehicle with a Toyota RAV4 hybrid.

WPS services include immediate officer response, vacation checks, crime prevention, traffic control, 24/7 patrols, and interagency support and communication. WPS can communicate directly with the El Paso County Sheriff's Office, Tri-Lakes Monument Fire Department, and both Monument and Palmer Lake Police Departments over an 800 MHz radio system. All WPS personnel wear body cameras and record all incidents. In 2024, WPS had

13,427 on-duty hours, drove 65,800 miles, completed 13,106 vacation checks, responded to 772 calls for service, and more. WPS received \$19,080 in donations for vacation checks.

Bush reminded residents that in 2023, the El Paso Board of County Commissioners had decided only to plow Priority 3 roads when snow depths reach 6 inches, which creates hazardous driving conditions; he noted that by law, WIA can't plow county roads.

The top covenant violations are barking dogs and trailers or recreational vehicles left too long in resident parking lots. There were 744 total covenant items, which resulted in 44 violations. Bush's pet peeve is residents leaving their trashcans out after pickup. He noted that there are mandatory hearings for open fire or fireworks violations, which carry a \$5,000 fine. Bush said that residents had invested around \$1.3 million collectively on fire mitigation, including fuel removal and replacing shake roofs or wood siding.

Accomplishments, goals, and awards

In 2024 WIA:

- Received and fully executed a noxious weed grant from the state of Colorado.
- Continued to work with D38 on the Safe Routes to School project.
- Held four chipping days over two weekends that were free to residents.
- Put in a small parking lot at the Meadows.
- Put up a snow fence at Toboggan Hill to keep kids out of the trees.
- Eradicated prairie dogs in the South Woodmoor Preserve.

For 2025 goals, WIA will:

- Seek additional grant funding for fire mitigation.
- Continue to develop trails in common areas.
- Continuing to digitize WIA files.
- Continuing Woodmoor Public Safety (WPS) patrols and assistance.

The top architectural projects were roof repairs or replacements, followed by house painting. There were 554 total projects (down from 595), of which 99.8% were approved by the Architectural Control Committee (ACC) or office staff.

Common area improvements included mitigating 350 cubic yards of dead trees and scrub oak, mowing, and removing noxious weeds. WIA performed weekly maintenance of pet waste stations, trails, and drainage in the common areas. In 2025, it intends to install the remaining benches and four pet waste stations in The Preserve.

The Good Neighbor award went to Matt Allner, Ryan Thomas, and David Steinberg for helping neighbors clear snow from driveways and streets after large storms. Winners received a \$50 Home Depot gift card.

Board reorganization

At the Jan. 29 meeting, Bush reviewed the certified election results, in which he was re-elected and board members Jason Hann and Jennifer Davis were elected. The board directors were elected to the following roles:

- Brian Bush, president, re-elected
- Peter Bille, vice president
- Pete Giusti, treasurer
- Steve Cutler, Common Areas
- Rick DePaiva, secretary and Community Outreach
- Brad Gleason, Public Safety
- Ed Miller, Architectural Control
- Jennifer Davis, Covenant Control, newly elected
- Jason Hann, Forestry, newly elected

Administrative motions

- The board appointed Bush, Bille, Giusti, and DePaiva as authorized signers on its financial accounts.
- The board voted unanimously to meet on the fourth Wednesday of each month at 7 p.m. The November and December meetings will be moved earlier due to the holidays. All meetings are held at The Barn.
- The board set its covenant hearing dates for the second Thursday of each month at 6:15 p.m. when needed.
- The board set its ACC meetings for the second and fourth Thursday of each month at 7 p.m. except for December, when there is only one meeting. The board appointed the 2025 ACC committee members.
- The board authorized the ACC administrator to approve certain miscellaneous projects, handle compliance fee refunds up to \$500, and handle routine change orders for all projects without prior ACC approval.
- The board authorized the director of Forestry to review and approve tree removal requests and Firewise lot evaluations. The board appointed Forestry committee members for 2024.

WIA and area developments

WIA is a member of the Northern El Paso County Coalition of Community Organizations (NEPCO) which tracks new developments. WIA:

- Continues to monitor the proposed development called Monument Ridge East.
- Sent a letter to Palmer Lake leaders opposing the Buc-ee's annexation request.
- Approved governing documents for the 44-unit Waterside development north of The Barn which included an easement restricting construction on land between The Barn and Lake Woodmoor.
- Amended covenants of the development just north of the YMCA where the new Monument Fire station will be located.

Bush noted that Woodmoor Water and Sanitation District agreed to buy three lots on the east side of the lake from the Waterside developer to ensure that they would not be developed.

For more information on NEPCO, see <http://www.nepco.org>; for more information on development projects in Woodmoor, see <https://woodmoor.org/woodmoor-developments/>.

Residents' questions and comments

Following the annual and reorganization meetings, residents had questions about changing covenants, their interest in keeping chicks, plans for adding more trails in The Preserve, the availability of water for Buc-ee's and Monument Ridge West, and the need for fire mitigation.

Bush noted that covenants require a vote of two-thirds of property owners and were intentionally made difficult to change. He said the request to allow chickens comes up from time to time, but for everyone who wants them, many more do not. To call a vote on covenants would cost \$6,000 to \$10,000.

Regarding trails in The Preserve, Bush said that any promises not documented in the deed could not be guaranteed. WIA has done most of what was required by the deed, but the board had to look at what is in all WIA property owners' best interests. That said, Bush invited the residents to bring their requests to the board and staff for consideration.

Regarding water availability for Monument Ridge East, Bush noted that its provider will be WWSD. It must pay supplemental water and tap fees and put in all of the infrastructure, which will then be conveyed to WWSD. Bush said Buc-ee's situ-