

department would be able to burn any type of materials with residential neighbors behind the station within 30-50 yards." See <https://wp.ocn.me/v24n5mfd/townhall> and the MPC article on page 10.

President Mark Gunderman said technically the district could use the tower for both Class A and B burning, and he deferred comments to the fire chiefs.

Kovacs said the training tower would be installed in early fall and will burn Class A natural combustibles such as wood and Class B natural gas. Most of the training will use theatrical smoke and moveable waterproof LED light boards that simulate a fire extinguished when water is applied. The district no longer has the option to use the Colorado Springs Fire Department (CSFD) training facility for live fire or recruit training. The district is partnering with Pikes Peak State Collage (PPSC) in collaboration with its Fire Academy, and the other two options are: Black Forest Fire/Rescue Protection District, an unapproved training facility; and the Air Force Academy's Class A training facility, but the district has no control over access, especially so in light of the current situation in the Middle East, said Kovacs.

In a Class A live fire training scenario, a safety and training plan is required with a training chief, five to seven instructors/safety officers, and additional hose lines to protect the staff. Any smoke would be extinguished quickly with less smoke than a residential chimney, and training days would take place about two or three times per year. Other agencies will also be invited to use the facility at the same time as the district organizes live fire training, said Kovacs.

Huismann requested the live fire training schedule in writing.

Gunderman said the district cannot tie its hands to any type of commitment, firefighters require constant training, and the board has decided not to rely on other agencies to train staff and to allow the district to be self-sufficient, keeping staff within its boundaries.

Kovacs said the firefighters are excited for the training tower as recommended in the feasibility study performed during the merger process with DWFPD. It is hoped that crews will train regularly, with vehicle extrication and additional classrooms to run the Fire Academy, making firefighters more proficient in a simulated experience with low visibility, smoke, and heat in the training tower.

Huismann asked if the retention pond capturing water will be contaminated with burn matter after training.

Kovacs said the water will be scrubbed and filtered before entering the retention pond, and having served 30 years at a previous district, no complaints were ever received from residents. The

training center may partner with PPSC to provide some financial support in conjunction with the Fire Academy partnership, along with some fees to cover supplies from other departments using the facility.

Director Mike Smaldino said CSFD had reverted to a Class A training tower after 20 years, with the majority being Class B training to avoid excessive cleaning and laundering of the firefighter turnout gear and equipment. National Firefighter Protection Association standards are maintained, and hopefully the training center will be in use regularly for drills without fire, and mostly burns using a limited number of pallets of hay to keep the heat down. The Class A tower allows for complete training to ensure muscle memory, but not 365 days, 24 hours per day, said Smaldino.

Bumgarner said the Fire Station 1 Training Center site development plan had been approved after a public hearing, in a 3-1 vote by the MPC. A final public hearing is scheduled with the Town Council at the town chambers on April 6. If approved, site grading will begin, and the tower structure is expected to be in place by the end of September or early October. Training could commence in November.

Recruitment update

Kovacs said the executive recruitment for the fire chief position was underway by Prothman Executive Recruitment. It had received about a dozen candidates so far, with a broad swath of applicants from Colorado and across the nation. The candidate interview process begins in April to select about five finalists to be hosted in May 12-13 by the district, said Kovacs.

At the October meeting, Kovacs announced his plan to retire from the fire service at the end of 2026.

Financial update

Kovacs delivered the financial report and said the district was at 16.6 % of the total budget year to date as of Feb. 28, and he highlighted some of the following from the financial report:

- The combined overall income received year to date was about \$1 million, which was 4.12% of the projected income revenue for 2026 set at about \$24 million.
- Overall expenses were about \$3.466 million, which was 15.77% of the projected expense budget set at about \$21.984 million.
- The total checking/savings was about \$32 million, with about \$7.835 million in the Operations/General Fund. The balance includes loan proceeds of about \$18.133 million in Bank of Oklahoma financing for the Fire Station 3 rebuild.

Kovacs said the district was notified by the El Paso County Assessor's Office that the expected bulk of property tax revenue typically received in March

is slightly delayed for 2026. The 26 electronic transactions were appropriate and within budget. Of note were \$33,598 for Motorola radios, \$385,017 for a Snowcat, \$295,933 for a Water Tender, \$82,768 for two Ford Mavericks for the Community Risk Reduction Staff, and \$8,234 for Station 2 roof repairs.

The board unanimously accepted the financial report as presented.

Director Steve Phillips has accepted the position of treasurer.

Chief's recognition

Kovacs congratulated Branden for recently completing his chief fire officer designation from the Center of Public Safety Excellence.

He also announced Division Chief of Community Risk Reduction Jonathan Bradley and Branden had completed site assessor training and will be assessing other agencies in support of agencies seeking accreditation.

Mitigation

Director André Mouton thanked Bradley for the Chipping Program, and said he was seeing mitigation activity in neighborhoods that had been absent for 10 years. See snapshot on page 20.

Bradley said the Colorado Wildfire Resiliency Code was being reviewed and would be adopted July 1.

4th Annual Youth Camp

Branden announced the Fourth Annual Youth Camp was scheduled for May 28-30, and said the camp will allow up to 15 students ages 16-19 or recent high school graduates to participate. Past participants have had hiring success with South Metro Fire Rescue, Denver.

The chief's reports and the 2025 Annual Report can be viewed at www.monumentfire.org.

Executive session

The board moved into an executive session at about 6 p.m. to discuss the possible provision of services outside of the service area boundaries.

Director of Administration Jennifer Martin confirmed to this reporter that when the board returned to the regular meeting, no decisions were made and the meeting promptly adjourned.

Meetings are usually held on the fourth Wednesday of every month. The next regular meeting is scheduled for April 22 at 4:30 p.m. at Station 1, 18650 Highway 105. For Microsoft Teams virtual joining instructions, agendas, minutes, and updates, visit www.monumentfire.org or contact Director of Administration Jennifer Martin at 719-484-9011.

Natalie Barszcz can be reached at nataliebarszcz@ocn.me

Shiloh Pines Wildfire Preparedness Meeting, Mar. 7

Healthy trees are vital to wildfire fuel reduction

By Lisa Hatfield

Forester Dave Root taught Shiloh Pines residents how to have a healthy forest and do fuels reduction to lessen wildfire risk, saying, "When you do one, you get the other!" Because of a century of fire suppression, we have a very unnatural, overly dense forest. For example, Palmer Lake in 1880 had hardly any trees at all, but now it's surrounded by thick stands of unhealthy trees. Root said wildfires are a natural occurrence, but the combination of a century of fuel built up in the woods with no small fires allowed to clear it out, and homes built in the middle of the trees, creates the severe problem we have today.

He said you need to actively "manage" your forest. Identify the most vigorous trees that receive enough sunlight and water to be strong and resist disease and insects. Then remove all the unhealthy, scraggly, lopsided trees, resulting in an open forest made of vigorous trees.

The best prevention against mountain pine beetle (MPB) attacks is to have a healthy, historically accurate forest full of strong trees. They will resist the beetle attacks with big "pitchout" tubes. However, if your trees are overcrowded, starved for sunlight, thirsty, or infected with other



Above: Forester Dave Root, left, with Shiloh Pines resident Mike Ballard. Firewise Chair Gayle Humm (not pictured) invited Root to visit her community so Shiloh Pines residents could hear his advice and ask questions on March 7. Photo by Lisa Hatfield.

parasites like dwarf mistletoe, you will see MPB's multiple popcorn-shaped resin masses all over the trunk, and the blue stain fungus carried by the MPB can kill the tree. Meanwhile, the beetles can spread to neighboring trees.

The only effective MPB treatments are tree removal, mechanical, or solar treatments. If you have infected trees, read here first how to treat



Above: W. H. Jackson's ca. 1880 photo of Palmer Lake documents how open the landscape was then, when healthy forests experienced frequent, low-intensity fires. Photo from Wikimedia Commons.

them properly without spreading the problem further. See <https://csfs.colostate.edu/forest-management/common-forest-insects-diseases/mountain-pine-beetle/>. Contact the Colorado State Forest Service with questions about your forest health or wildfire risk on your property.

Lisa Hatfield can be reached at LisaHatfield@ocn.me.

Woodmoor Water and Sanitation District, March 9

Board deals with 100,000-gallon water loss

By James Howald

The Woodmoor Water and Sanitation District (WWSD) board heard a request from Woodmoor Village LLC, also known as the Mines Shopping Center (MSC), to provide supplemental water and to annul a charge of \$8,481 for exceeding its allowed water service. The board also considered an agreement with the Monument Fire

District (MFD) to purchase its building on Woodmoor Drive, which is to be replaced by a new fire station on Jackson Creek Parkway, and a second agreement with MFD to provide supplemental water service to the new station.

The board vacated a flowage easement at the proposed North Bay at Woodmoor development and amended its lease with Apollo's Peak Solar LLC. The board agreed to allow Monument Junction Metropolitan District (MJMD) to defer payment on its supplemental water service agreement. The board heard financial and operational reports, and the meeting ended with an executive session.

Supplemental water approved; charge for lost water discounted

Greg Nagel, owner of MSC, located just north of Lake Woodmoor Drive, asked to purchase an ad-

ditional half-acre-foot of supplemental water for \$17,250 per year, and asked the district to waive an invoice for \$8,481 that resulted from the center exceeding its current supplemental water allotment. Supplemental water is charged at a much higher rate than the standard allotment of one-half acre-foot of water per acre of land. Director Tom Roddham recused himself from the discussion because his business is a tenant of the shopping center.

Nagel told the board that the excessive water use resulted from an equipment failure at the Goat Pitch Brewery, a new tenant that replaced Pikes Peak Brewing. One hundred thousand gallons of water were lost when a float failed, he said. The resulting invoice was equal to 30% of the shopping center's annual water bill, which Nagel argued was too high.

Board President Brian Bush asked District

Handyman Services

Pronghorn Prairie Construction

Standards, not shortcuts. Neighbors, not numbers.



Roofing. Siding. Doors & Trim. Windows.
Renovations. Ventilation. Painting.
Licensed & Insured.

Patrick- 719-465-2988

<https://www.pronghornprairie.com>