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Low lake water, fire mitigation discussed

McDonald said she had discussed the low lake water situation with Jeff Hulsmann, coordinator of Awake the Lake committee. She said they talked about options available to address the extreme low water-level problem. McDonald also gave thanks to the Palmer Lake Volunteer Fire Department for being responsive and ready for fire issues related to the Waldo Canyon Fire. McDonald said, "We are blessed to have these volunteers in our town."

In a follow-up to the fire mitigation meeting held on July 11, Palmer Lake citizen Judy Harrington offered to assist with writing grants for fire mitigation. A state grant was available, with a submission due date of July 20. Harrington said there was time to complete the form by the submission deadline.

McDonald said the town received a commendation from the state on a local emergency operation plan devel-

oped by Town Clerk Tara Berreth.

Ball said she was visiting businesses throughout Palmer Lake. She said, "The consensus is, it has been a difficult summer regarding sales." Part of the sales problem is being attributed to the condition of the lake. Ball said the town needs to get storage rights. She wants businesses and citizens to know that "the town has not given up on the lake."

Ball said Sylvia Amos, owner of the Palmer Lake Country Store, is considering closing the store during the winter and reopening in spring as a result of reduced sales. The business depends on sales of fishing items related to the lake and general tourism. During the closure, Amos will be considering her options including closing the business for good. Ball listed events like the Taste of Palmer Lake as draws to the community but said "these events are few and far between to draw in out-of-towners." Ball said a bike shop might be coming into town, which could assist with tourism.

In Maddox's absence, McDonald made a plea for citizens to conserve water. She stated that "120,000 gallons per day are used on average during the winter, but the town is now averaging 330,000 gallons per day and used 10 million gallons last month." McDonald said, "There needs to be diligence with water usage, and citizens should xeriscape when you can."

A number of citizens commented about the economic effects related to the low water in the lake, how no one is walking around the lake, playing volleyball, or doing other activities. Communication is needed so citizens understand what is being done and what can or cannot be done, like use drinking water from the reservoir to refill it. The council was asked to engage the Forest Service and other authorities in protecting the watershed to make the reservoir less vulnerable.

McDonald said she or Maddox would provide a letter for publication to communicate concerns about the lake with citizens. (See page 29 for Maddox's letter). McDonald said mosquito controls are being placed in the water because there have been reports of West Nile virus in mosquitoes in the Boulder area and other parts of Colorado.

Palmer Lake Art Group vacating Lucretia Vaile house

The council tabled a discussion until its next meeting regarding the Palmer Lake Art Group's (PLAG) interest in vacating its gallery and longtime meeting place, the home of the late Lucretia Vaile. In a document provided to the council, PLAG leadership stated issues in using the home, such as a lack of parking, difficulty in accessing it in the winter, and limited bathroom and kitchen space as reasons it no longer wants to use it.

Town Attorney Larry Gaddis said PLAG's request is considered a "reverter" and he believes that if PLAG leaves the house it would revert back to the town. He added that the town has no obligation financially to share the proceeds if the house is sold. If sold, the council would have to use the proceeds to benefit the town. Gaddis said he would review related documents before the next meeting.

Property annexation approved

By unanimous decision, the council approved an ordinance that will enable the town to annex property adjacent to Affordable Stor-Mor, owned by Lynn Spears and located on Highway 105 by the trailer park. Spears asked that the property be annexed into Palmer Lake so he can expand his storage facility. Gaddis said the property being annexed was in the town at one time and Spears would need to deed to the town any water rights as a condition of the annexation.

Committee reports

Trustee Hoover said town staff trimmed branches in the Village Green and performed maintenance around the town office. Hoover said he would like citizens to contact him if they have ideas regarding the parks or related recreation areas around town. Funding permitting, Hoover said he wants to repair damaged fencing around Glen

Park, perform some trail work, and repair the fence by the flower beds outside of Town Hall. He also announced that the Chautauqua will be held Aug. 3-5.

Police Trustee Bob Grado reported that there were 19 case reports in June. The town activated six police officers during the fire evacuation notice. Only one fireworks complaint was reported during the month. Overall there were 24 traffic summonses, two DUIs, 71 incidents dispatched from El Paso County, and a total of 233 calls for the month.

Town resident Edwards asked if regular patrols are occurring at the reservoir. Berreth said there is at least one patrol a shift. Fire Trustee Rich Kuehster, who lives on the road, said "there is a significant presence."

Kuehster reported that the Palmer Lake Volunteer Fire Department responded to 46 calls in the month, reaching a total of 175 calls for the year. Volunteers logged 3,716 hours for the month and have logged 16,592 hours for the year. Volunteers logged 2,775 hours toward the Waldo Canyon Fire.

Regarding the Waldo Canyon Fire, Kuehster read a lengthy summary regarding the support the Fire Department provided toward the response effort. The department was placed on standby on June 23, had the engine and tender assigned to structure protection at the Air Force Academy, performed structure protection triage sheets on Palmer Lake structures, and performed other duties until being released on July 5. Kuehster said the department thanked Berreth for providing food, water, Gatorade, and "other goodies" to assist the firefighters stationed throughout this period.

Kuehster said the Fire Department will help elderly people with mitigation around the home. He said the "town needs a citizen mitigation community so neighbors can help neighbors. Palmer Lake has a lot of fuels that need to be dealt with." McDonald said the needles and materials under the trees are the big problem. Fire watch plan grants are available for citizens to apply for and, if interested, they should contact Berreth.

McDonald said dust control requires a lot of water and as a result, some roads have not been sprayed due to the water shortage.

Town Accountant Linda Ousnamer said, "The town collected over 69 percent of projected revenue for the year." This high percentage is partially due to property tax collections. Overall, departments are 2 percent over budget and "they need to be careful given the budget situation."

Ousnamer said the auditors indicated a problem with 2010 numbers that needs to be resolved before completing the 2011 budget. The budget must be presented to the state by the end of July. The auditors intend to present the budget to the council at the August meeting.

Medical marijuana license transfer approved

By unanimous decision, the council approved a transfer of license for a medical marijuana facility pending review of the new location by Palmer Lake Police Department Chief Kieth Moreland. Susan Benz, owner of Mile High Holistics, said she has to move by July 20 because Wells Fargo Bank is taking over ownership of the building she is presently leasing. The new location is the welding shop located at 198 County Line Road. This location is industrial and zoned for a medical marijuana facility.

Gaddis said the council would need to transfer the license to the new address. Benz said she was recently licensed by the state and that many of her patrons are local.

At the conclusion of the regular meeting at 8:42 p.m., the council went into executive session. There was no public announcement following the executive session.

The next meeting will be held at 6:30 p.m. Aug. 9 in Town Hall, 42 Valley Crescent. Meetings are normally the second Thursday of the month. Information: 481-2953

David Futey can be reached at dfutey@ocn.me.

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