

Donald Wescott Fire Protection District, Aug. 21

Wescott board looks inward after joint operation talks end

By Jim Kendrick

The Donald Wescott Fire Protection District board discussed the 2011, 2012, and 2013 budgets and the monthly run report at its Aug. 21 meeting.

Director Joyce Hartung's absence was excused. Director Harland Baker was also absent. The meeting started at 7:26 p.m. when a quorum of three directors was achieved.

Now that Donald Wescott has broken off talks with the Tri-Lakes Monument Fire Protection District regarding joint operations and the Wescott firefighters have stated that they will set up their own union local, board meetings are much shorter. The Wescott firefighters are withdrawing from the Tri-Lakes fire district's International Association of Fire Fighters Union Local 4319.

Wescott's discussions with Tri-Lakes ceased following the turmoil of Tri-Lakes Chief Rob Denboske's actions being investigated by an outside agency, Denboske being fired by the Tri-Lakes board after its directors read a secret report that was not released to the public despite the Colorado Open Records Act, and board President Charlie Pocock resigning after a recall petition was initiated against him by Si and Dorothy Sibell. Their recall petition against Tri-Lakes Treasurer John Hildebrandt was withdrawn at the request of Denboske.

2012 budget adjusted

The conclusion of the construction of the Shamrock Ranch Station 2 at Highway 83 and Stagecoach Road has

greatly simplified financial reporting. However, Administrative Assistant Cheryl Marshall and Chief Vinny Burns noted that the district's auditor, Tom Sistare of accounting firm Hoelting and Co., suggested that the district list the amounts of some portions of its cash reserves for capital projects in different budget lines for the general fund, resulting in a slight increase to the district's initial general fund balance for the start of 2012.

The board unanimously accepted Sistare's recommendations. Marshall and Burns will draft an amended budget for board approval at a budget restatement hearing during the next regular board meeting on Sept. 18. They will also present the first draft of the 2013 district budget that reflects these changes at that meeting. Burns said the county's projections for 2013 tax revenues show little if any change.

The district's annual loan payment of \$131,876 for new apparatus was made in July. This large payment caused total expenditures through July to amount to 63 percent of the total budgeted for the year. Implementing new station alerting software for Stations 1 and 2 will cost about \$14,000.

A water leak in the district's sprinkler system resulted in the water budget amounting to 75 percent for the year through July. Unused funds will be transferred to the water line to cover the extra expense.

Assistant Chief Scott Ridings noted that there were 197 runs in July, an increase of 14.5 percent from the 172 runs last July. Total runs for the first seven months were up 21.4 percent, largely due to Wescott responding to dispatch calls in Jackson Creek for Tri-Lakes this year as part of the first steps in forming a fire authority between Wescott and Tri-Lakes.

The location of Station 1 on Gleneagle Drive by Baptist Road allows Wescott apparatus to arrive more rapidly for most Jackson Creek calls than apparatus from any of the three Tri-Lakes fire stations. For serious medical emergencies, Wescott's advanced life support American Medical Response ambulance can initiate transport to a hospital faster than Tri-Lakes' ambulance can. Wescott is also responding now to dispatches on I-25, which is also outside of the Wescott service area.

The Wescott board and staff say they remain committed to providing the best service possible to everyone in the region even though Tri-Lakes has not reimbursed Wescott for responding to Tri-Lakes' Jackson Creek dispatches. Wescott taxpayers are paying for all the additional operational costs and maintenance for Wescott apparatus resulting from the higher run rate this year. This amounts to a subsidy to Tri-Lakes now that formation of a fire authority is no longer being considered by either district due to the controversy of Tri-Lakes Chief Rob Denboske being fired, Tri-Lakes board members complaining about Wescott firefighter union member interference, and the resignation of Tri-Lakes board President Charlie

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