

Tri-Lakes Monument Fire Protection District, March 27

# New fire chief to be sworn in May 13

By Bernard L. Minetti

The Tri-Lakes Monument Fire Protection District (TLMFPD) Board of Directors declared that May 13 would be the official swearing in date for Fire Chief Chris Truty. An additional public swearing in will be held at the May 22 TLMFPD monthly board meeting.

The completed employment negotiations between Truty and the district contained an agreement for a salary of \$90,000 a year. The agreement included a review of the chief's performance after a six-month period of employment. Following that, an annual review will be completed each year within 45 days of the anniversary date of effective employment. Truty also will receive all benefits that

are available to full-time district employees.

Truty would receive employment termination benefits equal to six months' salary either in a lump sum or on a monthly basis if his employment is terminated within five years and not for specifically noted causes cited in the agreement. Payment is solely at the district's discretion.

The board unanimously approved the employment agreement.

There was considerable discussion on a report by Battalion Chief Mike Dooley concerning the possible purchase of a vehicle for the fire chief. Six vehicle types were presented by Dooley for the board's consideration. A motion to purchase a new Interceptor Vehicle from Spradley Barr Ford for \$31,549 was unanimously passed. Delivery was expected in six to eight weeks.

The board also unanimously approved a motion that Request for Proposals (RFPs) for medical insurance coverage and accountant services be issued for submission by vendors. The RFPs would provide bids for these services to the district.

The annual audit of the district's 2012 financial statements was completed and prepared by the firm of RubinBrown, which concluded the audit was "clean." This means there were no significant deficiencies. There were several recommendations concerning "internal control." One was that management should perform annual reviews of all employees. The last review occurred in 2006.

The firm also suggested that all promotions should be documented in the employee file and signed off by the employee and the district chief, and that the district should consider a payroll audit system.

Some of the other discrepancies the auditor noted were:

- No one on the district staff can prepare financial statements using standard Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP).
- The district's consultant accountant used a full accrual method rather than GAAP methods.
- The district's end-of-year operating cash account reconciliation totals did not agree with the district's general ledger totals.
- There were errors in the depreciation of some district fixed assets.

The auditors concluded that the district's total net assets were about \$1.82 million. This number was the result of subtracting total liabilities of \$6.3 million from the total assets of \$8.1 million.

Battalion Chief Greg Lovato provided an update on the rewrite of the district personnel manual. This document had been classified as not releasable for public viewing. Following the rewrite by Lovato, the document, following acceptance by the district, will become official and viewable by the public.

### Equipment for new chief purchased

In his report to the board, Interim Fire Chief Bryan Jack reported that the fire staff was purchasing a cell phone, a laptop computer, uniforms, personal protective equipment, and the chief's vehicle for the new chief.

Jack noted that the initial budgeted amount that was set aside for the chief's "procurement" process was \$6,675, which didn't include the cost of the new vehicle. He advised the board that to this point, \$5,778 had been spent. He added that the only outstanding invoice was for the background investigation. He concluded that the expenses should be on budget for the process.

Jack advised the board that Lt. Mike Keough, district training officer, had attended a meeting of the North Group Training Officers on March 27. The meeting was called to provide a process for improved communication, cooperation, and coordination between North Group agencies.

Jack reported that the District Training division had conducted several wildland fire courses in February. It was noted that attendees consisted of TLMFPD staff and outside agency personnel.

A new training structure will be constructed in late April at Station 3. This will be utilized for search and rescue training, ventilation exercises, forcible entry training, ladder use, technical rescue, and confined space operations. District fire personnel will construct this training aid.

Jack said nine district personnel had participated in an agricultural burn with Colorado Springs Utilities near the Ray Nixon power plant. He added that other participants included the Colorado Springs Fire Department,

Broadmoor Fire Department, and Green Mountain Falls.

Total district training hours by employees were logged at 1,056 for February.

Jack reported that Lt. Franz Hankins had spent time researching at various El Paso County offices for records concerning Fire Station 1 property. Information is needed on platting, zoning, and original well agreements with the intent of eventually placing a well on the site. He added that an engineering firm is drafting the design of the new field at Station 2. Design completion is anticipated by April 6. Once the cost of the project is known, further action in the bidding for the field will begin.

In his equipment report, Jack noted that all fire apparatus was "up and running, with no major issues."

### Emergency actions

In his emergency actions report, Jack stated that the district A-shift crews had successfully rescued a dog that had fallen through the ice at Monument Lake on March 17. The event occurred 20 feet from the shore. Battalion 3 responded and made the save.

He also reported that B-shift personnel had received a call to assist at a 15-car accident on I-25. Battalion 1 responded. Personnel successfully extricated a trapped motorist and transported the person to a medical agency. B-shift personnel responded to 13 emergency incidents on March 9.

On March 24, Battalion 2 responded with other agencies to a structure fire in eastern district 2. Crews found heavy fire engulfing the garage and the two vehicles in the driveway. The crews worked to maintain a minimum involvement of the structure. This was done under adverse conditions. There was no on-site hydrant water available and equipment had to be linked together to utilize all the water available, and the area was snow-packed and icy with narrow roads and driveways. It was considered a structure with a "heavy fire load." The cause was under investigation. District crews were on-scene for 14 hours.

Jack continued by advising that structure plan reviews for new construction had been very heavy. Twenty-one permits had been serviced by the fire marshal's office.

Jack concluded his report by stating that emergency calls for 2013 are now 75 ahead of last year at the same time. The district is averaging 5.5 calls per day. So far this year, the district has responded to 477 calls this year versus 402 for 2012.

Office Manager Jennifer Martin reported to the board that a new crew person had been added to the fire training and education staff. A "Sparky, the Fire Dog" costume has been purchased for \$1,585 through the generosity of the Monument Hill Foundation, VFIS of Colorado, and the American Legion. The Sparky costume is utilized to teach children about fire safety.

She said Sparky could be seen on April 27, from 1 to 4 p.m., at the YMCA Health Fair for Kids, on May 11, from 9 to 11 a.m., at the HAP Safety Fair at the Lewis-Palmer School District Learning Center, and at the Donald Wescott Fire Protection District Safety Fair at Wescott Station 1 from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. on June 1. Contact "Fire Training Kennel Manager" Jennifer Martin at 719-484-0911 for details.

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The next meeting will be held at 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, April 24, in the Administration Center at 166 Second St. in Monument. For further information regarding this meeting, contact Martin at 719-484-0911.

Bernard Minetti may be contacted at [bernardminetti@ocn.me](mailto:bernardminetti@ocn.me).

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**Right:** Monument Police Chief and Tri-Lakes Monument Fire Protection District President Jacob Shirk welcomes "Sparky, the Fire Dog" to district headquarters. Sparky is the newest addition to the fire safety training system for the district. For more information about Sparky and his fire safety educational opportunities, contact the district fire administration at 719-484-0911. Photo by Bernard Minetti.

