

El Paso County Town Hall Meeting, May 2

Sheriff attacks new state gun laws

By Lisa Hatfield

El Paso County Sheriff Terry Maketa criticized two new state gun laws and discussed other current issues affecting law enforcement at a town hall meeting co-hosted with District 1 county Commissioner Darryl Glenn at Lewis-Palmer High school on May 2. Many of the 100 residents present asked questions, mostly about gun-related legislation.

Glenn encouraged residents to attend his second-quarter town hall meeting 10 a.m. Saturday, June 15, at the Lewis-Palmer High School auditorium. It will include information on Pikes Peak Regional Transportation Authority projects, other road projects including Doewood Drive and the I-25 widening, and an update on the economic impact of federal funding sequestration in the region. He said I-25 commuters can sign up for notifications about construction activity at <http://www.coloradodot.info/projects/southi25expansion>.

Legislation and law enforcement

Maketa spoke mainly about current bills that are written in ways that make them “impossible for officers to enforce in real-life situations.” He also cited second and 14th amendment concerns. He said, “Unless these bills have a narrow focus to target criminals, and not target law-abiding people, we sheriffs are not going to support them.”

On May 17, the Independence Institute filed a federal civil rights lawsuit against the state on behalf of 54 of the 62 Colorado sheriffs, as well as 21 other plaintiffs, with the goal of overturning two laws scheduled to take effect July 1:

- The universal background check bill (HB13-1229), signed into law March 20, will require background checks for gun transfers. Maketa said the current version of the bill would not actually keep guns out of hands of criminals, but would “criminalize law-abiding citizens” if, for example, a gun is transferred between spouses or friends. Instead, it ought to limit background checks to “permitted sales to unknown persons,” he said.
- The high capacity magazine bill (HB13-1224), also signed into law March 20, will prohibit large-capacity ammunition magazines to be sold after July 1 and is intended to prevent mass shootings. But the challenge for law enforcement is that it’s impossible tell by looking at a magazine when it was sold and therefore if it is legal or illegal, Maketa said.

Baptist Road Rural Transportation Authority, May 10

West Baptist Road planning progresses, but funding issue remains

By Jim Kendrick

On May 10, Engineering Manager Jennifer Irvine of the El Paso County Public Services Department updated the Baptist Road Rural Transportation Authority (BRRTA) on the current status of county plans, 30 percent complete, for widening Baptist Road on the west side of I-25 and building a bridge over the railroad tracks. However, Pikes Peak Rural Transportation Authority funding remained about \$3.3 million short of the \$7.5 million needed to complete the project.

BRRTA’s attorney Jim Hunsaker reported that a business owner within BRRTA had settled just before being taken to trial in front of an administrative law judge by the state attorney general for failure to remit BRRTA sales taxes to the state Department of Revenue. The business owner agreed to pay all back taxes owed to BRRTA, plus interest.

Hunsaker said both the Attorney General’s Office and Department of Revenue were “extremely happy” with how responsive he and BRRTA District Manager Denise Denslow of CliftonLarsonAllen LLP had been in preparing them to go to trial, even though neither office was very familiar with how rural transportation authorities work.

The other main agenda items were approval of the 2012 draft audit and staff financial updates.

BRRTA’s current primary activities are:

- Monitoring the county’s planning for the upgrades to

Sheriff’s comments on gun rights and freedom

Maketa philosophized about legislative issues:

- “We need to refine laws so they target the people they are intended to target.”
- A conservative estimate of the cost of companies leaving Colorado in response to the current gun legislation is \$27 million to \$47 million a year, including secondary contractors.
- “The burden should not be on the citizen to justify why they need something.... It’s a property rights issue.”
- This legislative session is an attempt to empower law enforcement to enter a private home and confiscate weapons without a conviction.... We have to draw a line.”
- The domestic violence bill (SB13-197) “targets a broader audience instead of those with history or tendency to violence” and would allow officers to enter homes without a search warrant.
- “Criminals should have a stiffer penalty if they steal a gun in a burglary. Let’s send a clear message to criminals.”
- Maketa would support a bill allowing local school district decision-making on the “concealed carry” of firearms in schools. If schools could advertise that some of their staff “might” be armed, it would deter criminals.

Crime, fire, and marijuana

The sheriff had these additional comments:

- Don’t make it easy for criminals to steal property. Always lock car and house doors to prevent crimes of opportunity.
- More sheriff patrol units will be on the road soon because of the El Paso Public Safety Tax 1A approved by voters in 2012.
- Fire mitigation work will be done at Fox Run and Black Forest regional parks with the help of AmeriCorps volunteers.
- “Ready, Set, Go!” materials on planning for possible evacuations were distributed. See <http://rsg.epcsheriff.com> for more information.
- Amendment 64 to the Colorado constitution allowing for the regulation of recreational marijuana permits local governments to regulate or prohibit such facilities, and the Board of County Commissioners

has voted not to allow retail recreational marijuana establishments in unincorporated areas after the law takes effect.

- The Legislature needs to set the parameters for marijuana regulations on revenue, DUI limits, etc., but so far “all questions have gone unanswered.”

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