

how they prioritized what needed to be done. They agreed that engines need new motors, wells need to be drilled, vehicles need to be purchased, and the leaking roof keeps getting “kicked down the road.”

**Financial report**

Accountant Frances Esty presented the financial report as of Aug. 31, saying the district is 0.31 percent under budget. Ambulance revenues were down slightly compared to this time last year, which Truty noted may be due to reduced construction and related accidents on I-25 near Monument.

Total district cash assets as of Aug. 31 were \$3.1 million.

**Palmer Lake EMS assessment fee approved**

Earlier this year, Truty requested that the town of Palmer Lake either begin a process of moving toward inclusion into TLMFPD or begin contributing to the expenses associated with providing ambulance service to them via an Emergency Medical Service assessment fee. See related article at [www.ocn.me/v14n9.htm#tlfmfpd0827](http://www.ocn.me/v14n9.htm#tlfmfpd0827).

In August, the TLMFPD board decided that as long as the town of Palmer Lake was making progress toward inclusion, the EMS assessment fee would be waived. In September the town of Palmer Lake did not get an advisory ballot question on this topic onto the November ballot. The town sent out a survey to its residents instead, but Truty recommended on Sept. 24 that the board vote about levying the assessment.

He estimated that the EMS assessment fee could be anywhere from \$75,000 to \$350,000 a year, depending on what formula is used.

Palmer Lake Fire Trustee Rich Kuehster and Mayor Nikki McDonald spoke to the TLMFPD board asking for some way to reduce the EMS assessment fee to Palmer Lake.

Kuehster said the current 2015 total budget is \$100,000 for the Palmer Lake Volunteer Fire Department, \$47,000 of which is restricted funds (from a half-cent sales tax in Palmer Lake) to pay for staffing the station on weekdays when the volunteers cannot be there. He said that Palmer Lake’s volunteer firefighters also come to Monument as part of an automatic mutual aid agreement.

Kuehster expressed concern about how to “sell inclusion to voters” if the TLMFPD levies the EMS assessment fee, because there might be “backlash.”

McDonald said, “For us it would be better if you billed the town (only) when you didn’t get reimbursed, and we’ll pay as we go.”

Current residents of TLMFPD pay taxes to help maintain availability of ambulance service in their own district whether they use this service or not. If a TLMFPD resident actually has to call an ambulance for help, the resident or his insurance company must pay additional fees for the actual service. Secretary Smaldino said, “If I cut a deal with (Palmer Lake), then how do I have that same conversation with people in our district who pay tax whether or not they use it? It’s a global tax.”

The board voted unanimously to begin collecting an annual EMS assessment fee of \$75,000 from Palmer Lake beginning in January. Truty and McDonald will decide on the details about whether the fee will be paid in monthly installments, quarterly, or annually. It is up to Palmer Lake to find the money within its own limited budget or collect it as an additional fee or tax. The TLMFPD board could vote at any time to reduce, increase, or stop the EMS fee depending on what happens with inclusion into TLMFPD.

**Search begins for administrative space to lease**

Truty said the district has received three bids between \$25,000 and \$100,000 to complete a detailed space needs analysis for future possible building needs based on potential growth and projected needs for fire stations and administration space.

Vice President Roger Lance and Secretary Smaldino asked if the expense for the space needs analysis could be avoided by just asking for input from within the district. Truty said the district needs “a detailed study far beyond what any of us

can do on our own,” and that the study could be delayed until results of possible merger discussions with Wescott or Larkspur are known.

The current Fire Administration Center at 166 Second St. is owned by the town of Monument, which will begin charging \$10,800 per year to TLMFPD in 2015 and has asked TLMFPD to move out within three years and sooner if possible. Truty asked the board for direction on whether they wanted to lease, buy, or build a new administration home in the next four to six years, since this decision affected how long TLMFPD administration would remain in its current location.

The consensus of the board was that the long-term plan should be to buy or build an administration building.

The board consensus was that the district administration should move as soon as possible into a different leased space, since most require a three-year minimum lease. By “starting the three-year clock” now, it would allow the district to move out as soon as the new permanent building would be available.

**Chief’s report**

Truty’s comments included:

- Merger steps still going forward with the Larkspur and Donald Wescott fire districts.

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**COMMUNITY COMING TOGETHER** **2014 Free Thanksgiving Dinner**

Again, in 2014, Rosie’s Diner is teaming with Tri-Lakes Health Advocacy Partnership (HAP) to offer a free Thanksgiving Dinner to those in the community who may not have family to share this special day with, or might be unable to prepare their own meal.

Last year’s event was a great success thanks to the generosity of many local businesses. Plans and preparations for the 2014 event have started.

**If your business or group would like to contribute to this year’s event,** please contact Madeline VanDenHoek, Town of Monument Community Liaison, at 719 884-8013. Financial contributions are sought to offset the cost of publicity, materials and food. Those donating \$100 or more by October 15 will be recognized in publicity, by display of their name or logo. Donations should be made to Tri-Lakes Health Advocacy Partnership, a 501(C)(3) non-profit; receipts for the donation will be provided.

Please help make this year’s Community Coming Together Thanksgiving Dinner another big success.


