By Lisa Hatfield and Kate Pangelinan

The City of Colorado Springs annexed Flying Horse Ranch on Oct. 14, 2003 without opposition by Donald Wescott Fire Protection District’s (DWFPD) and had also annexed the land making up the southern half of DWFPD’s current property-tax-paying service area many years ago. Now the district is working on a new 2017 budget that looks ahead to drastically reduced tax revenue in 2018 and beyond as those properties are de-included from DWFPD in two phases over the next two years.

By November 2017, district property owners will likely be asked to vote on a mill levy ballot measure to determine what level of service will be offered to the northern remainder of the district in the long term. Note: The southern half will be served by the new Colorado Springs Fire Department Station 22 on Voyager Parkway.

Note: Colorado Springs has been annexing territory from DWFPD since before 2003. See www.ocn.me/v3n10.htm#dwfpd

“Orderly exclusion” options discussed in executive session

On Sept. 20, the board went into executive session at 7:37 p.m. for “Determining positions relative to matters that may be subject to negotiations; developing strategy for negotiations; and instructing negotiations.” It was related to current negotiations with Colorado Springs concerning the “orderly exclusion” of the southern half of Wescott’s service area that lies within Colorado Springs.

The meeting came back into open session and adjourned around 11 p.m. Executive Administrator Stacey Popovich told OCN that no announcements were made after the executive session and that the board planned to schedule another executive session soon to finish the discussion.

Preparing to sign the IGA excluding property from district service area

On Sept. 27, the directors continued the executive session. When they returned to open session at about 7:15 p.m., they voted unanimously to approve Resolution 16-9, saying that the IGA would indeed sign the intergovernmental agreement (IGA) with the City of Colorado Springs when that document is finalized by the attorneys.

Chairman Greg Gent said the IGA would cover the exclusion of certain property from the DWFPD service area and the filing of petitions for exclusion of such property.

Educating voters on decisions for the future

Residents attending the Oct. 18 meeting asked for clarification on where the district posts its public meeting notices. Popovich said they are posted on the district website, on the news board in front of station on Gleneagle Drive, and submitted to the newspaper.

Then directors and staff answered questions from Gleneagle Civic Association representative William Lowes (a past president of DWFPD) and Gleneagle North Homeowners Association President Bill Fillion on what Resolution 16-9 meant for the future of the district.

Burns said that the Colorado Springs City Council approved the IGA unanimous on Oct. 11. The next step was for a judge to approve it. The IGA would cover the exclusion of DWFPD between Intercost Parkway and Northgate Boulevard. The overall effect will be to reduce the size of DWFPD by half of its current 22 square miles and reduce its total revenue by 66 percent. The timeline:

• In 2017 DWFPD will still receive 100 percent of previously projected revenue that was generated in 2016 by property taxes.
• Jan. 1, 2017: exclusion of Phase One Property, from Intercost Parkway north to the proposed location of the Powers Boulevard extension with I-25 (north of The Classical Academy).
• In 2018, DWFPD will receive property tax revenue generated in 2017, which will amount to half of recent “normal” revenue.
• Jan. 1, 2018: exclusion of Phase Two Property, extending the rest of the way up to Northgate Boulevard.

First draft of 2017 budget

The Sept. 20 DWFPD Board of Directors meeting included a first glimpse of the 2017 budget. Chief Vinny Burns indicated that the district was endeavoring to save money compared to the budget for 2016, including notable projected cuts from the Total Firefighting Operations and Administration line items.

During public comments on Sept 20, a civilian asked about how the de-annexation negotiations between the fire district and the city’s lawyers progressed, but Burns said there was nothing new to report. See www.ocn.me/v16n6.htm#dwfpd0517 and www.ocn.me/v16n7.htm#dwfpd-0621.

By Lisa Hatfield and Kate Pangelinan

The next Tri-Lakes Fire Protection District, Oct. 26

Budget, hiring discussed

By Lisa Hatfield

On Oct. 26, as they had done at their Sept. 28 meeting, the directors of the Tri-Lakes Fire Protection District (TLFPD) discussed the 2017 budget and how to improve the district’s hiring process to avoid this year’s challenges and resolve vacancies.

Fire Chief Chris Truty has proposed a 6 percent pay raise to move TLFPD closer to the average wage for comparable districts. The directors also tossed around some ideas for long-term plans regarding a permanent location for the TLFPD administrative offices, which are now in a leased space outside of the district, and possibly combining them with a new fire station.

The next TLFPD meeting will include a public bud-