



# The New Falcon Herald

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## Front Page

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### County water master plan approved

By [Lindsey Harrison](#)

On Dec. 18, the El Paso County Planning Commission held the second of two public hearings regarding the adoption of a water master plan for the county. Following the hearing, the commission unanimously approved the plan.

In 2017, the county hired Forsgren Associates Inc., a civil engineering company in Englewood, Colorado, to develop the plan.

At the second hearing, Mark Gebhart, deputy director of the EPC Development Services Department, recapped the process to develop the draft plan, and said it was sent to 110 different interested entities across the county for review, including the city of Fountain and Colorado Springs Utilities. Additionally, the public had a chance to provide feedback through numerous avenues, including a web-based program, he said.

As part of his presentation, Gebhart highlighted vital points from the public's input. More than 100 of about 160 respondents strongly disagreed with the idea of drilling additional wells to reach quality water sources for future development. About three people agreed with the idea, and about 23 people had no opinion, according to the data.

The commissioners reviewed the draft, and Gebhart answered their questions. After reviewing the document, the planning commission opened the floor for audience members to voice their support or opposition to the plan.

Terry Stokka, Black Forest resident and member of the Friends of the Black Forest Preservation Plan, said he believes water sufficiency should be proven at the sketch plan phase of any development plan. "We have 7,000 homes that say Sterling Ranch Metropolitan District will supply them with water," he said. "That metropolitan district does not exist; it is only on paper."

Judy Von Ahelfedt, Black Forest resident and member of the FoBFPP, said, "I continue to advocate that this document is not yet ready for final adoption ... I am hoping you will continue to edit and revise this document and maybe table it until after the new (EPC county commissioners) have been seated and there has been a chance

for more public input.”

Craig Dossey, executive director of the EPC Planning and Community Development Department, said his goal is to continue to update this and other plans and re-evaluate decisions the county has made. However, until EPC has a water master plan in place, there is nothing to continually modify and update, he said. “We have to have a starting point,” Dossey said.

Cole Emmons, senior assistant county attorney for EPC, recommended that, if the board chose to approve the resolution, they make the water master plan an amendment to the master plan for EPC. He added that the water master plan was advisory in nature only and was not a regulatory document.

The resolution does not require approval by the BOCC. A copy of the plan can be found at <https://epcdevplanreview.com>.<https://epcdevplanreview.com>.

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Commissioner Gonzalez said, "The decisions are hard, but I was very pleased to see that we are taking care of our roads budget. That's one of the things that I think for constituents is a big priority and definitely the thing I get a lot of calls on."

Commissioner Waller thanked county staff and the citizens of El Paso County, remarking that the last recession had caused tremendous cuts to county services. He said, "We wouldn't be where we are today, being able to put more money towards personnel, being able to put more money towards roads and bridges, had the voters not approved the TABOR retention in 2017 and so I think certainly the citizens of El Paso County ... should be commended for their support."

### **Gleneagle Golf Course redevelopment moves forward**

The commissioners approved the final release of two letters of credit pertaining to grading and erosion control and public improvements at the Gleneagle Golf Course infill development during December. At the Dec. 4 meeting they approved a letter of credit for \$475,394 relating to lots 23 to 44 of the development. On Dec. 18, the commissioners approved the release of a further letter of credit for \$64,638 relating to grading and erosion control and public improvements at lots 1 to 22.

At their Dec. 11 meeting, the commissioners approved an application for preliminary acceptance of certain streets within the golf course redevelopment into the county road maintenance system. The roads involved are Silver Rock Place and Spyglass Hill Place. The latter connects to Mission Hill Way.

### **Glenn's contribution recognized**

At the Dec. 20 meeting, Commissioner Waller recognized Commissioner Glenn for his service to the citizens of El Paso County ahead of his departure from office on Jan. 8. He has represented District 1 for the past eight years. Holly Williams is the District 1 county commissioner-elect and will take her seat on Jan. 8. Commissioner Littleton was also recognized for her eight years of service and also steps down on Jan. 8 with Cami Bremer taking the seat.

### **Other decisions**

- Dec. 11—The commissioners approved the final release of a check for \$2,489 for grading and erosion control at Northgate Estates Filing No. 3. This follows the completion and satisfactory inspection of the improvements at the development.
- Dec. 18—Approved the issuance of an ambulance service license to the Tri-Lakes Monument Fire Protection District. The license runs for one year from Jan. 1, 2019.
- Dec. 18—Approved the award of a construction contract and purchase order to RMC Consultants for the New Santa Fe Regional Trail flood repairs at a cost not to exceed \$289,650. The project includes repairs to 37 county park locations damaged in 2015 flooding on or adjacent to the trail, which runs between the Town of Palmer Lake and the City of Colorado Springs.

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## **El Paso County Planning Commission, Dec. 4 and 18: Water master plan approved**

By Helen Walklett

The El Paso County Planning Commission voted unanimously to adopt the county's new water master plan following a second public hearing at its meeting on Dec. 18. This followed a seven-hour public hearing at its Dec. 4 meeting, described by Chair Jim Egbert as an information-gathering meeting at which no action was taken.

The plan is intended to guide growth and land use decisions in the future and through that process encourage best management practices for water demand management, efficiency, and conservation. Its ultimate objective is to help ensure that all existing residents have a reliable water supply and that the water supply to all new development is considered at an earlier stage in the development process. It will become an element of the new county master plan, which is currently under development.

The public hearings at the Planning Commission followed the presentation of the draft master plan to the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) in November (see [www.ocn.me/v18n12.htm#epbocc](http://www.ocn.me/v18n12.htm#epbocc)).

### **The hearings**

Introducing the plan at the Dec. 4 meeting, Craig Dossey, executive director of the El Paso County Planning and Community Development Department, explained that the water plan is the first step in a two-step process, the second being the development and adoption of the overall land use master plan.

Dossey told the commissioners that the issue of water and growth in the county continually comes up in discussions with county commissioners and county administrators. He said that one of the questions often raised about growth is "where's the water going to come from?" and commented, "We can't expect resources to last forever if we don't change what we are doing." He continued, "Without understanding where we are with water supplies and understanding where we are and where we should go with regard to water supplies, I don't think we can intelligently plan for land uses in the future."

Dossey urged the commissioners to keep in mind that they were considering a planning document rather than regulation during the hearing, emphasizing that the water master plan contains goals and policies that are intended to guide decisions by the BOCC and Planning Commission in the future and that these must be able to be applied to the broad spectrum of land use applications.

Mark Gebhart, deputy director, Planning and Community Development Department, who managed the project, gave an overview of the steps taken in preparing the draft plan. He outlined the role of the steering committee, the public participation program, which had included an open house, and a water providers' survey. He stated that a draft was put out for public comment ahead of the presentation to the BOCC in November.

Will Koger of the county's consultants Forsgren Associates provided a detailed overview of his firm's work on the project and detailed the public feedback received. The afternoon session saw the county staff talk the commissioners through the goals and policies of the plan. The commissioners examined the information and suggested potential modifications. Comments by Commissioner Kevin Curry saw the wording of the county's position on any future discussion of the 300-year rule substantially modified. He said the original wording implied a strong preference to change the rule when he felt there were good reasons for it and that, while changes might be appropriate in certain, narrow circumstances, he wanted to see the discussion cut back and the tone more balanced.

At the second hearing on Dec. 18, Gebhardt provided the commissioners with additional information and clarification arising from the first hearing. They then worked again through the policies and goals to ensure that all modifications were included to their satisfaction.

There were two opportunities for public comments during the Dec. 4 hearing. Judy von Ahlefeldt, a longtime resident of the Black Forest who also spoke at the BOCC presentation, said that she had given the draft careful review and, while acknowledging all the work that had gone into it, said, "I don't feel it to be a master plan ... I think it's a great start but I don't think it's the finished product." She continued, "I think there are some problems with the process in terms of involving the public and getting the word out. I think there needs to be much more public participation."

Responding, Commissioner Joan Lucia-Treese said, "You cannot compel the public to respond. It's not their [the majority of the population's] burning personal issue. As long as they can turn on their tap and the water comes out, that's all they care about."

Von Ahlefeldt spoke again at the Dec. 18 hearing, questioning the thoroughness of the public review period and urging the commissioners to hold off on the plan's adoption until the new county commissioners take their seats and to allow for further discussion. Terry Stokka, chairman of the Black Forest land use committee, also addressed the commissioners stating that he didn't think it was right to permit higher densities just because renewable water is available. He urged them not to change the 300-year rule in the future and also spoke to the plan's goal of protecting private property rights, arguing that drilling deep wells close to property lines violates the rights of the neighboring property owner.

The Planning Commission voted 6-0 to adopt the plan. Curry stated that he had had some reservations after the first hearing but that these had been addressed by the subsequent amendments. The document with amendments shown, a final version of it, and all public comments can be viewed here:

<https://epcdevplanreview.com/Public/ProjectDetails/110995>. Under state statute the Planning Commission is the final approval authority for the plan. There will be no BOCC hearing.

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## **Lewis-Palmer School District 38 District Accountability Advisory Committee, Nov. 27: Committee discusses election results, urges new vote in 2019**

By Harriet Halbig

The District Accountability Advisory Committee (DAAC) of Lewis-Palmer D-38 discussed possible actions following the recent election, including a call for a new bond election in November 2019, and received in-depth information on the workings of the Gifted Education Leadership Team and the Assessments Department at its Nov. 27 meeting at Palmer Lake Elementary School.

The committee's discussion of a response to the November election defeat of the bond and mill levy override (MLO) issues began with Board of Education Liaison Tiffney Upchurch's report. The bond was intended to fund the