

MAYOR'S MESSAGE

SEPTEMBER 2023



Neighbors,

Serving in a small Town, while extremely fulfilling, can be challenging at times. I truly believe that everyone wants the best for our community and as such, passions run high. I thought this month I would take a moment to address a concern running around our neighborhoods - the proverbial elephant in the room, Elephant Rock property.

The Elephant Rock property is a former church property gifted to the Town in 2020. Located at 290 Hwy 105, it consists of 28 acres and the following structures – the main building includes a commercial kitchen, sanctuary, and several dormitory style /office rooms; the gymnasium consists of a ½ court and lounge area; the maintenance/tool shed has room for storage of maintenance equipment; the small residence is a full living space; there are 8 outbuildings - 6 of which are former cabins, a shed, and an additional structure – all of which are currently uninhabitable; and the pool house has an outdoor in-ground pool with extensive damage. Full descriptions and a timeline of updates may be found here on the town website - <https://www.townofpalmerlake.com/community/page/elephant-rock-property>.

Since October of 2020, the Board of Trustees has sought citizen input and worked diligently to make sure that the agreement to serve and benefit the community was met when this gift was accepted.

Currently, there is a petition circulating that suggests that the Board of Trustees has a desire to develop this land residentially. This is simply not true. The input from citizens throughout the process has been clear to preserve this land for future generations, and this Board intends to uphold this directive.

The Board of Trustees is entrusted with the preservation of this land and establishing a plan to do so. The Board is currently in lease negotiations with two parties – one to lease approximately 2.8 acres for an eco-spa and amphitheater, and another to lease the main building and residence for wedding/special events. There is a small portion close to Hwy 105 that is reserved for the potential of a public safety facility. Trails and parks for citizen enjoyment are of paramount importance, and the Parks Commission is at work establishing trail and bridge work to connect the community to this property for convenient citizen accessibility.

Although the entire property is covered by Town insurance, the structures do not comply with building code requirements, the area is unsafe due to damage and is not recommended for public use in the current condition. Renovation of the cabins is cost prohibitive and unmanageable in the long term, creating a potential burden on future budgets of the town.

Preserving the many treasures of Palmer Lake and our quality of life is why this Board serves the community. I assure you that no one on the Board or staff is in any conversation with developers. After three years of research, input, and direction, the future of Elephant Rock is secure and moving forward with the current plan will allow this Board to focus on many other pressing issues facing our Town.

As for me, my desire is to continue serving our Town well. I love our little slice of heaven and most importantly the people who make up our community. As neighbors, I encourage us to talk, collaborate, and listen. When questions or concerns and ideas come up, let's simply sit down and chat, attend a Board meeting, reach out to any one of your seven Trustees or town staff. I personally hold office hours Wednesdays from 2-4pm and Fridays by appointment.

Our community consists of amazing people and – together – we can move mountains.

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