

# State of the County

February 10, 2023

Happy 149th birthday, Hinsdale County! Here is our 4th annual State of the County snapshot.

Respectfully, Commissioner Greg Levine, Commissioner Robert Hurd, Commissioner Kristie Borchers

**MISSION** Hinsdale County works to preserve the past while developing future opportunities.

**VALUES** Hinsdale County will promote citizen confidence through community engagement, transparency, accountability, strategic planning, collaboration, stewardship, and fiscal responsibility.

## 2022 Accomplishments

- Welcomed new judge, new assessor, new coroner, new deputy assessor, new deputy treasurer, two new Road & Bridge employees, and new full-time sheriff's deputy (in academy).
- Welcomed Governor Polis to Peninsula Park along with Great Outdoors (GOCO) and Trust For Public Land partners; peninsula improvements included implemented safety upgrades to pedestrian bridge (funded by Ben Brownlee Memorial Fund, Lake Fork Community Foundation, and Hinsdale County); removed old toilet and installed new toilet (funded by Anschutz Family Foundation, El Pomar Foundation, Lake Fork Community Foundation, Gates Family Foundation, and Ben Brownlee Memorial Fund); created access point for human-powered watercraft; boat inspection program started by National Park Service and Colorado Parks & Wildlife partners; trails planning and received Heritage and Trails Foundation funding.
- Implemented sixth Electronic Recording Technology Board (ERTB) grant to allow records to be digitized and indexed into a web-based search program in Clerk's Office. Conducted two elections including two recounts and Risk Limiting Audits (RLA); created a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) manual; utilized grant funding to upgrade election security.
- Implemented online access of tax accounts and tax payments in Treasurer's Office.
- Added part-time, year-round deputy position (currently receiving applications); hired full-time deputy position; received POST grant for academy tuition for new hire; implemented Body Worn Cameras 8 months before the state mandated deadline (funded by state of Colorado grant); fulfilled all patrol contracts with USDA Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management (BLM); added 2 people to reserve deputy roster. Sponsored annual Toys for Tots campaign; conducted Bike Safety Event at School.
- Conveyed county's WeeCare building to Hinsdale County RE-1 school district. Conveyed Senior Van to school district; received suburban for Search and Rescue (SAR) program; adopted Joint Resolution for Secure & Rural Schools (SRS) funding.
- Held Memorial Day and Veteran's Day commemorative events; installed new brass military memorial plaques, benches, concrete sidewalk, and flags at Veteran's Park; Veteran's Services officer (VSO) attended in-person training.
- Established ability to pay many County fees online; provided ongoing public information through social media, website and email correspondence; attended multiple professional trainings for administration office; managed multiple grants for project revenues; completed 2021 audit; served as fiscal agent for Silver Thread Public Health District; updated Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) for Rio Grande Cutthroat Trout, Chub and Sucker; entered Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for Big Game Corridor Management; entered IGA with both Gunnison and Archuleta counties for invasive species management; processed Quiet Title to Mt Morris mining claim; adopted Policy & Procedures for Secure Transportation Services; adopted Recreation Policy; updated Disposal of Surplus County Assets Policy; updated Agenda Policy; updated Credit Card Policy; updated Personnel Policy Handbook with recommendations from Personnel Advisory Board; adopted Special Events Policy and Permit; and implemented contract with new auditor.





- Led by County Emergency Manager, participated in the Colorado Emergency Preparedness Assessment (CEPA) process; updated Evacuation Plan, Alert & Warning Notification Plan, and Continuity of Government Plan; participated in FEMA Flood Mapping process; successfully developed and oversaw OEM All-Hazards team; completed 2022 EMPG work plan; secured funding for the 2023 update of the Hazard Mitigation Plan and the Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP); assisted with transition from CodeRed to GEM Alert & Warning System; coordinated multi-agency plan and implementation for Wine & Music Festival; hosted debris mitigation incentive program; participating in Upper Gunnison Shared Stewardship Council; participated in community Wildfire 101 presentation with partners.
- Launched EMS stipend program; peer support team in action including Wellness Coupons addition; attended training for Pediatric Emergency Care Coordinator; added two new trained ambulance drivers; coordinated multi-agency functional exercise; return of seasonal volunteer paramedic; secured funding for 2 public access AEDs; Advanced Life Support & Pediatric Advanced Life Support courses; EMS team members completed ICS 100 and 200 level training and Mandatory Reporter training; EMS Director completed ICS 300 level training; Medical Director selected for State EMS Sustainability Task Force; beginning work on Primary/Initial training program; celebrated EMS team member, Amanda Hartman, who received the State EMT of the Year Award; and six EMS team members attended Colorado EMS conference in November (funded by community organizations); reviewed EMS rates.
- Responded to 37 Search and Rescue (SAR) missions; received funding from the Ben Brownlee Memorial Fund, San Juan Solstice Foundation, and state funding to create drone program, host Rope Rescue Operator course, install shed and relocate gear out of meeting room; purchase radios, pagers and other needed gear. The heated storage shed for SAR allows for increased storage space for critical gear and reduces response time by making gear more rapidly accessible to SAR members. Two SAR team members received FAA approval to implement drone program.
- Partnered with Los Valles Southwest Conservation Corps for fuels mitigation work in Red Mountain Gulch; installed new valve bank and repaired picnic tables at Wupperman Campground.
- Participated in 28 boards and commissions representing Hinsdale County (volunteers, staff, and elected officials).
- Acquired compactor and motor grader; completed additional miles of graveling and road repair on CR 30; groomed trails (winter 2021-2022); conducted work adjacent to Slumgullion Creek; addressed multiple mudslides and washouts; made substantial improvements to several County and Forest Service roads through widening, repair, and cleaning of culverts; installed OHV signs in Upper Piedra; conducted dust abatement measures in expanded areas; assisted CDOT open Highway 149 after significant mudslide events; demobilized toilet at Red Mountain Gulch; re-established south end of CR 142; oversaw Transfer Station including transfer of waste, recycling, and mulching; implemented vehicle maintenance program; completed Ute Ulay drainage project; reviewed Work for Others rates.
- Provided Forest Ambassador services with San Juan Mountains Association on Stony Pass and in the backcountry; Alpine Outdoors Association hosted 14 weeks of traffic counts; Hosted with Town of Lake City Year Two of the Pilot Project; continued Know Before You Go education campaign with partners; provided RAC funding to Know the Rules brochure for Upper Rio Grande; implemented OHV signs in Upper Piedra and in the Upper Rio Grande; partnered on High Alpine county work group for multi-county state trails grant and Economic Development Administration planning grant.
- Implemented winter tourism marketing program; participated in Alpine Loop Backcountry Byway and America's Byways Silver Thread Scenic & National Byway; attended State Conference; website and social media improvements; received two Colorado Tourism Office (CTO) grants for content and winter tourism.
- Evaluate Assessor Office practices, system and needs and development of plan; completed continuing education in Sale Confirmation, Property Classification, Mass Appraisal, Abatement processes, Title Conveyance, and Assessment Office Administration.
- Received IHOP (innovative housing opportunities program) grant. Continued progress on EPA Brownfields grant. Received planning grant for Wupperman water delivery system. Received asset inventory grant.





- Entered agreement with Lake City Continental Divide Snowmobile Club for storage and maintenance program. Donated snowgroomer trailer to Club.
- Developed and installed Debs Schoolhouse interpretive sign; minor repairs to building including interior plaster repair and paint.
- Continued planning work on County Operations Building.

### Department & Commission Goals and Strategic Actions 2023



#### ECONOMIC FOUNDATIONS

- Partner to create a vibrant, business-friendly climate that enables citizens, entrepreneurs, taxpayers, and businesses opportunity to prosper
- Promote economic development by supporting local organizations and events
- Partner with tourism-based organizations on efforts to market Lake City and Hinsdale County as a tourism destination and work to support destination management, responsible stewardship, and infrastructure needs
- Participate in alpineloop.info website with High Alpine counties
- Complete OHV education project in Upper Rio Grande
- Capitalize on opportunities for economic diversification
- Develop funding & consider lease for workforce housing project with USDA Forest Service
- Participate in multi-jurisdictional workforce housing opportunities
- Seek funding for updating the Comprehensive Plan / Community Plan and input process



#### HISTORIC & NATURAL RESOURCES

Promote responsible stewardship of historic and natural resources

##### *Planning and Land-Use*

- Planning Commission to continue to streamline/update planning and zoning review procedures
- Continue to seek opportunities to review and update land use regulations
- Provide incentives for innovative and affordable housing through land use regulation updates
- Update regulations related to avalanche building hazards and other disaster mitigation efforts related to building and land use



##### *Local Sites and Amenities*

- Complete Asset Inventory & Assessment on all County infrastructure
- Complete plans for Sheriff's Office/Administration building; seek funding
- Continue work with the Ute Team to further develop the Ute Ulay into a heritage tourism destination, including penstock stabilization (pending funding), install two interpretive signs, and general site clean-up
- Implement EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) Brownfields grant
- Fund and implement infrastructure proposed for Lake San Cristobal peninsula and boat launch facilities to install ADA fishing pier; complete trails system map and install trails; install additional picnic tables; create and implement sign plan; amend Conservation Easement with Great Outdoors (GOCO) acquisition language; update Conservation Covenant with acquired County lands; improve human-powered boat launch area; develop concepts for man-gate access
- Implement Colorado Youth Corps grant for assistance with Lake San Cristobal and Wupperman projects
- Complete design of new water delivery system at Wupperman Campground; find funding and construct
- Install five pre-owned toilets in Wupperman Campground; install traffic control bumpers; conduct general campground clean-up
- Review assessment work on Slumgullion Earthflow with Lake Fork Valley Conservancy.
- Continue minor restoration work at Debs Schoolhouse to include window sill repair and install bench
- Support Lake Fork Valley Conservancy's project of Philip H. Virden Dark Skies Observatory on Slumgullion Pass with Gunnison Ranger District
- Partner with Main Street, Town, Scenic Byways, and Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) for wayfinding project; implement if funds are secured





- Evaluate county-owned property for potential sale and highest/best use
- Monitor progress of Deer Lakes recreation site improvements
- Install replacement interpretive panels along America's Byways Silver Thread Scenic and Historic Byway
- Install temporary toilet at IOOF Cemetery; seek funding for permanent options
- Develop project proposal for Upper Piedra multi-purpose site with partners
- Support efforts to improve Piedra River Trailhead
- Participate in the Lake San Cristobal Fuels Project Planning with BLM

#### *Noxious Weed Control*

- Continue partnering with Archuleta and Gunnison counties for weed control
- Continue to review County Weed program for efficiency and effectiveness
- Provide information and education to landowners on noxious weeds and control



#### **PUBLIC SAFETY**

Provide a safe and secure community that protects life and property  
 Develop an all-agency volunteer roster with qualifications and associated training schedule  
 Identify all-agency short-term and long-term emergency communication needs

#### *Sheriff's Office (SO)*

- Continue to provide quality Law Enforcement services to Hinsdale County and the Town of Lake City
- Get a deputy instructor certified in Emergency Vehicle Operations, Standardized Field Sobriety Test, and re-certify other instructor certifications as needed
- Research opportunities to implement narcotic detection K-9 program
- Implement a mental wellness program for employees utilizing available resources
- Maintain full staffing levels throughout the year
- Add at least 2 new members to the Wildland Fire Response Team roster



#### *Emergency Management (EM)*

- Continue to support an EM Program that includes preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation
- Refine, update, and develop plans and exercises to enhance the resiliency of Hinsdale County
- Support existing efforts for Multi-Agency Coordination (MAC), training and exercises
- Foster and build partnerships with San Luis Valley and West Region partners
- Complete 2023 EMPG work plan and enhance the Hinsdale Office of EM program
- Continue to develop the All-Hazards Response Program that will enhance the training, response capability of the OEM, Hinsdale County Emergency Response Agencies and our SLV and West Region OEM partners
- Initiate the update of the Hinsdale County/Lake City Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP)
- Initiate the update of the Hinsdale County Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) as part of the HMP



#### *Emergency Medical Services (EMS)*

- Continue practicing progressive prehospital medicine
- Foster a culture in Emergency Services of continual learning, leadership and respect
- Continue to advocate for illness and injury prevention in our community while providing residents and visitors with a trusted resource to utilize in times of crisis
- Foster and build partnerships with State EMS Training Center to enhance educational capabilities and opportunities locally
- Welcome a part time EMS Coordinator to augment EMS education division capacity for both continuing education and initial education
- Support a part time seasonal ALS position to augment EMS service manpower capacity, particularly during times of increased population and anticipated call volume
- Continue to support the important work of the Peer Support Team
- Increase visibility and online presence of EMS program within the community and state
- Add donated 2014 Explorer to EMS fleet







## COUNTY SERVICES

Provide resources to Elected Officials and Departments for efficient, high-quality services

### *Administration Office*

- Provide professional and helpful assistance to residents and visitors
- Continue to review and streamline processes for greater efficiency and consistency
- Increase availability of online customer services, including web payments
- Continue to review budget and expenditures regularly for fiscal responsibility
- Review and obtain grant opportunities when applicable to supplement County budgets
- Implement ongoing policy review process
- Provide public information through website, email and social media
- Increase access to services in accordance with Americans with Disabilities act, including website and online documents
- Continuing to participate in position appropriate training and professional conferences
- Participate in ongoing county project planning
- Continue to support the Office of Emergency Management All Hazards Team
- Support implementation of new Emergency Alert System
- Increase focus on information security and cybersecurity
- Collect data on long and short-term rentals



### *County Facilities and Buildings & Grounds Department*

- Continue landscape maintenance
- Continue upgrades of county storage facilities
- Courthouse exterior improvements (including painting) and interior maintenance
- Install security gate to courtroom
- Update Coursey Annex meeting room
- Administration building exterior repairs



### *Assessor's Office*

- Continue to ensure accuracy of property records
- Continue to implement Department of Property Taxation's rules and regulations
- Continue to ensure property values are fair and accurate
- Provide property owners with assurance of values during the 2023 reappraisal, consider all concerns and physically view properties if warranted
- Deputy Assessor continue training to secure Ad Valorem Appraisal License
- Update GIS system
- Implement online property record search capability



### *Building Official and Enforcement*

- Provide high quality enforcement of adopted building codes and services for property owners, builders and contractors
- Focus on community public health and safety while working to maintain the quality and economic viability of construction
- Increase education on the importance of building codes and the building process - including permits and other requirements – with a public education campaign
- Continue to work with Colorado Water Conservation Board and FEMA on update of county's flood risk mapping project
- Work with partners and public on construction within potential natural disaster areas to help prevent loss of life and property
- Continue to provide required onsite water treatment system (OWTS) inspections for Silver Thread Public Health while providing OWTS education to homeowners
- Continue to provide education & assistance to property owners in relation to radon exposure
- Continue to provide online payment accessibility for building permits
- Continue to provide online access of building documents and applications
- Continue professional training and education.
- Obtain certification in Colorado Small Water Systems
- Continue to work with regional partners on a variety of projects





#### *Clerk's Office*

- All County Offices are committed to being good Public Servants and team players by respecting the public and providing quality services with integrity and excellence. We work to be courteous and treat all equally with professionalism and efficiency.
- To be provided with the resources needed for efficient, high-quality services
- Increase storage for historic records
- Finalize the input of current and historic records into the county search system
- Continue to pursue grant funds from ERTB for Recording System upgrades/maintenance

#### *Treasurer's Office*

- Use and maintain a comprehensive accounting system within the Treasurer's office. This has been accomplished by the implementation of the Eagle Treasurer system and a more in-depth use of Incode, an evolving process in which the Treasurer's Office and the Finance Director will continue to work together.
- Implement credit card payments for traffic tickets. Options available will be online, in person or over the phone
- Attend continuing education courses to maintain certification for County Treasurer/Public Trustee through the Extended Studies Program at Colorado Mesa University
- Remain active with state and regional treasurer's groups

#### *Veterans' Services Office*

- Continue to utilize social media & Silver World for veteran's outreach
- Work with real estate companies to identify veterans as they move into the area
- Host quarterly meetings with veterans and spouses to maintain contact
- Attend monthly training programs with CO Dept of Military & Veterans Affairs
- Attend Colorado County Veteran Service Officer semi-annual training conferences, either virtually or in person
- Continue work on renovation of Hinsdale County Veterans Memorial Park to include a historic sign on the USS Hinsdale
- Work with the Cemetery District Board on including the graves in the Hinsdale County Cemeteries in the Wreaths Across America program

#### *Coroner's Office*

- Carry out the duties of the Coroner's Office with professionalism and compassion
- Attend 20 hours of American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigator approved Continuing Education through the Colorado Coroner's Association
- Complete the 40-hour, 25 section MedicoLegal Death Investigator Course, complete investigations and written reports for 10 fatalities, and attend 5 autopsies to attain MedicoLegal Death Investigator Certification
- Develop written policies and procedures for the office
- Develop a team of deputies for the office
- Conduct monthly team meetings
- Establish network with surrounding county coroners and identify additional resources
- Establish office space accessible to the public

#### HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

- Promote prosperous, collaborative and healthy communities
- Deliver high quality services throughout the valley
- Ensure sound infrastructure
- Continue prevention services for all
- Embrace health equity within our community
- Participate in Southwest Colorado Opioid Regional Council
- Establish MOU between Hinsdale County and Prowers County for hotline calls for child and adult protection
- Continue to measure and meet goals related to the Colorado Department of Human Services
- Monitor public assistance programs, (Medicaid, Food Assistance/SNAP), and adjust to changes within these programs
- Follow and support the universal Pre-K program as appropriate for our region





## TRANSPORTATION

### Road and Bridge Department (R&B)

- Continue to maintain and repair all county roads, culverts and bridges
- Prepare CR 30 along lake for chip and seal project and support installation
- Upgrade and or rebuild equipment in the shop as time and budget permits
- Remove decommissioned toilets at Slumgullion and Spring Creek Pass, as well as Burrow's Park
- Continue to work on all USFS Schedule A roads, culverts and drainages
- Continue to stockpile and screen gravel from multiple places around the county
- Continue our progress on regaveling CR 30 from the Ute to Capitol City and beyond
- Work on the high-country sections of CR 20 and CR 30 to repair landslide areas that damaged those roads in past years
- Continue to improve and implement a safety program/culture for R&B employees
- Keep the Transfer Station running efficiently and improve when possible
- Oversee Debris Mitigation Incentive Program (seek funding to offset costs)
- Add one new piece of equipment to the fleet: 2023 CAT Backhoe 420 XT
- Construct a new water truck for the South End crew
- Upgrade and modify the SAR Suburban for use this summer
- Address culvert issues at Rock Creek
- Research gravel options in the Cathedral area

## COMMUNICATIONS

- Update Communication Plan for Hill 71 with technical assistance
- Repurpose solar panels at Hill 71 through partnership, if possible
- Review opportunities to connect communications to the south with San Luis Valley REA
- Continue conversations with public land management agencies about the possibility of small repeaters in outlying areas for safety communication
- Begin Phase One of fiber connection to Lake City
- Pursue grant funding for County wide broadband plan
- Continue to work with Digitcom to make transmission upgrades to South End communications tower
- Engage with other providers such as Commnet for wireless/cellular service in upper Piedra
- Continue effective partnerships with Region10, DOLA and Colorado Broadband Office

Commissioner Robert Hurd, Commissioner Greg Levine, Commissioner Kristie Borchers, Treasurer/Coroner Lori Lawrence, Clerk Joan Roberts, Assessor Sherri Boyce, Sheriff Chris Kambish, Administrator Sandy Hines, Finance Director Lynn McNitt, Building Official Gabe McNeese, EMS Director Buffy Witt, Emergency Manager Phil Graham, Road & Bridge Supervisor Don Menzies, Gunnison/Hinsdale Health & Human Services Director Joni Reynolds, Veteran's Services Officer Erin Cavit



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**ONE TEAM**