



State of the County

February 10, 2026

Happy 152nd birthday, Hinsdale County! Here is our 7th 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.

2025 Accomplishments

- Completed 75% of new County Operations Building funded by Congressionally Directed Spending request, Dpt of Local Affairs (DOLA) Energy Impact grant, public building electrification grant, sale of daycare center, earned income through all-hazards team, and Justice Assistance grant; hired Reynolds Ash + Associates for final design and construction manager; hired Buildings by Design for construction; worked with Alpine Archaeology for monitoring during excavation; put short-term financing in place for cash flow.
- Completed overall policy review process, including repeal of 4 outdated policies and approval of Personal Identifiable Information, Record Retention Schedule, Use of Signature Stamps, Veteran's Transportation, Vehicle Fleet, Public Records, Storage of Privately-Owned Property, Disposal of Abandoned Property, and Website policies; approved updated Organization Chart.
- Declared Upper Piedra flood disaster related to October 11-14, 2025 rain events; implemented Stage 1 fire restrictions when needed.
- Entered intergovernmental agreement (IGA) for Aquatic Nuisance Species inspections; installed gate to limit after-hours boat launches; installed ADA fishing pier (funded by Fishing is Fun! grant); approved 3rd Addendum to Lake San Cristobal Conservation Covenant; completed design and installation for Lookout site and trail (funded by Ben Brownlee Memorial Fund); installed Life Jacket Loaner Station (funded by Sea Tow Foundation); managed boat slips.
- Completed access easement for Ute Ulay access for neighboring property owner; sampled historic transformers.
- Awarded Community Life Saver award to Cory Schulte.
- Appointed Treasurer Lori Hanko in April of 2025; welcomed new deputy treasurer Heather Kuellenberg; cancelled tax sale as all taxes were collected.
- Hired Reynolds Ash + Associates for environmental and archaeological clearances for 11 toilet sites and observatory project (funded by Federal Highway Scenic Byway grant) received Gunnison County Stewardship grant.
- Amended OHV ordinance regulating fires, hours of operation and spark arrestors; completed OHV end of season report; partnered with CDOT to install digital speed signs.
- Purchased Caterpillar 150 Motor Grader.
- Completed repurposing of solar panels at Hill 71 with High Mountain Solutions (funded by DOLA grant) and connected to electric grid.
- Provided forest patrols for Alpine Loop, San Juan National Forest, Rio Grande National Forest, and Gunnison National Forest; provided law enforcement services; raised \$4,500 for Toys For Tots; purchased 2 Ford expeditions for law enforcement; updated IGA with Inmate Housing Services.
- Approved updated Standards & Guidelines with all hazards team; worked with state to resolve billing issues.
- Lodging Tax increase passed by voters to provide funding to early childhood care, Search and Rescue, and Emergency Medical Services. OHV advisory ballot question to submit Colorado Dpt of Transportation (CDOT) permit application passed.





- Completed 2024 audit; held 5 budget workshops and approved 2026 budget; allocated monies received related to national forests and payment in lieu of taxes (PILT); passed a resolution in support of public lands.
- Approved 1 boundary line adjustment; provided planning & zoning commissions recommendations to attorney who will use DOLA's template to draft update; subdivided and completed sale of Mt. Morris to private individual; certified levies and revenues; attended 5 joint meetings with Town; hosted joint meetings with Mineral County and Archuleta County.



- Conducted 20 Search and Rescue missions; secured \$40,675 in SAR grant funds; provided Wilderness First Responder (WFR), Rope Rescue 2, and Flight For Life Lift Ticket trainings for certifications; conducted in-house snowmobile training; held scenario trainings for ice wall rescue, Ute Trail rescue, and Flight For Life rapid deployment team trainings; participated in Colorado Parks and Wildlife photo shoot and video production highlighting the women of SAR – statewide distribution (billboards, online video, etc.); attended SARCON; began Leadership Journey program; provided support to annual Ice Fishing Derby; relocated SAR shed.



- Completed annual Assessor's audit and continue to follow all State guidelines for assessing properties in Hinsdale County performed site reviews for the majority of sold properties; Deputy Assessor maintained Ad Valorem Appraisal License; retained Commercial appraiser for more accurate valuation of commercial properties; kept GIS up to date monthly with title transfers and other property updates; maintain public access to search property records and GIS web map.
- Upgraded Voting System (funded by Secretary of State grant for \$11,266.64 matched with \$4,506.90); completed Clerk's Inventory Audit with Colorado Dpt of Revenue; received 9th ERTB Grant in the amount of \$22,364.25 for Recording System upgrades and maintenance; conducted the Coordinated Election on Nov. 4, 2025.



- Completed facility improvements for Debs Schoolhouse including reducing rodent damage, general clean-up; hosted field trip for Pagosa Open School; approved lease with Visionary and Comnet for Upper Piedra tower.
- Discussed Deer Lakes management with USDA Forest Service.
- Completed the Emergency Management Performance Grant (EMPG) requirements; emergency plans including Emergency Operations, Alert and Warning and Continuity of Operations; created draft Community Animal Response Team (CART) plan with Gunnison County, Colorado State University Extension and the Colorado Department of Agriculture; completed round 2 of the Colorado Emergency Preparedness Assessment; completed the Hinsdale County/Lake City Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP); completed the draft Hinsdale County Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP), awaiting approval from the Colorado State Forest Service for plan completion.



- Provided emergency medical services for 158 patients; secured \$411,057.60 in funding from EMTS, LCFC, Endowment, WRETAC, SJS50, Friends, and CREATE; added 1 EMT and 2 drivers; trained and cleared 6 EMTs to perform IVs; Chief Paramedic completed critical care endorsement training; trained 2 team members to be Skills Instructors; organized EMT Academy through Arapahoe Community College for 2026; hosted Careflight for a team training; director attended Professional Development Academy; transitioned team to digital paging; approved new Ambulance rates; designed and ordered new ambulance; welcomed new medical director; implemented robust Quality Assurance/Quality Improvement (QA/QI) program; upgraded Med 93 with Incident Command/Medical Branch system; supported new LCAMC Community Paramedic program; set up regular patient follow-up system with Gunnison Valley Health.



- Thanked outgoing marketing consultant Wildpeak Creative and welcomed Mission2Market; created Do Lake City Right campaign; completed Visitor's Guide with Marketing Committee and Chamber of Commerce; updated IGA with alpineloop.info; continued Know Before You Go OHV education campaign.
- Received Underfunded Courthouse Security grant (\$32,000).
- Completed all repairs and final inspection on the four mile section of CR 30 around the lake completing the project; completed road maintenance on 247 total miles of County roads, including snowplowing on 110 of those miles; rebuilt three high country roads, Nellie Creek (GMUG), Round Top (BLM) and Carson Wager (GMUG); continued with graveling operations on CR 30 above Sherman towards Grizzly Gulch; successfully brought all historic county roads back into the magnesium chloride program within budget and on schedule; approved road agreements with Rio Grande and San Juan for mag chloride programs; approved Hold Harmless & Release of Liability agreement for private property owners for winter road access; approved standardized hourly equipment rates with Town.
- Approved 2 national opioid settlement agreements; proclaimed May as Mental Health Awareness month; proclaimed September as Suicide Prevention month.
- Updated the Veterans Memorial Wall; hosted weekly Veterans Meet and Greet at the museum; created outreach program through the newspaper and social media; implemented Wreaths Across America Program; successfully assisted all Veterans in their individual VA needs; hosted Memorial Day and Veteran's Day services, led flag display for Fourth of July.
- Updated rates of disposal for natural timber and slash; received National Disaster Mitigation grant \$60,000) for future chipping of debris; updated signs at Transfer Station; approved Smoke Management plan.
- Conducted Board of Equalization hearings.
- Approved 2 retail liquor licenses; approved 4 special event liquor permits; approved 9 special event permits.
- Amended floodplain drainage permit ordinance.
- Discussed exterior lighting initiatives; received updates on Lake San Cristobal fuels project, 30 Mile Resort, and 7th Judicial District Attorney's office.
- Passed resolution to expedite review policies for Affordable Housing projects; requested and received approval to reclassify Hinsdale County from rural to rural resort.
- Attended 20 hours of American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigator approved Continuing Education through the Colorado Coroner's Association (Coroner & 2 deputies); obtained coroner office space; maintained team of deputy coroners; monthly meetings; established regional coroner relationships; attended Mass Fatalities Planning and Response for Rural Communities; assembled deployment bags for aquatic death, skeletal remains, mass casualty and airborne backcountry body recovery; conducted aquatic death field exercise; attended bi-monthly Tri-County Health Network Suicide Prevention, Awareness, and Recovery Coalition meetings; Member of the Colorado Coroners Association Coroner Assist Team; Coroner began coursework for the Grief Educator Certification program to better serve the bereaved in our community; 2 Deputy Coroner's completed the certification process through the Colorado Coroner's Association as certified death investigation; joined Search and Rescue as a member of the Flight for Life helicopter based rapid deployment team to obtain certification and readiness for backcountry body recovery missions.



Department & Commission Goals and Strategic Actions 2026

ECONOMIC FOUNDATIONS

- Partner to create a vibrant, business-friendly climate that enables citizens, entrepreneurs, taxpayers, and businesses opportunities 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.
- Partner with Rio Grande National Forest and San Juan County to plan improved crossing at Pole Creek.
- Continue OHV education efforts.
- Research options for land purchase with USDA Forest Service administrative site.
- 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

- Work with County Attorney on update of County Land Use Code using Department of Local Affairs (DOLA)'s recommended template, emphasizing removing obstacles toward housing.
- Add Dark Sky requirements to land use code county-wide.
- Expediate Review of Building Projects.
- Planning Commission will continue to update planning & zoning review procedures.
- Review Update of Land Use Fees.
- Work on new community plan.

Local Sites and Amenities

- Complete County Operations Building.
- Renovate Coursey Annex for housing.
- Continue work with the Ute Team to further develop the Ute Ulay into a heritage tourism destination, including removal of transformers; remove debris along walking trail, address penstock; install two interpretive signs; install vault toilet.
- Lower ADA fishing pier walkway to ground level; discuss options for boat shed; coordinate off-season boat inspection program.
- Consider future of Trails Commission; continue to provide oversight for County trails.
- Seek funding for new water delivery system at Wupperman Campground.
- Replace signage as needed in Wupperman Campground.
- Stay involved with assessment work on Slumgullion Earthflow with Lake Fork Valley Conservancy.
- Support Lake Fork Valley Conservancy's project of Philip H. Virden Dark Skies Observatory on Slumgullion Pass with Gunnison Ranger District.
- Implement wayfinding sign plan if funding secured (with Main Street, Town, Scenic Byways, and Colorado Department of Transportation).
- Consider agreement for long-term stewardship of Deer Lakes dam.
- Complete design aspect of Federal Highways Scenic Byways grant for 11 toilets/ observatory. Install toilets; identify toilet vendor; install half toilets in 2026.
- Develop project proposal for Upper Piedra multi-purpose site with partners or request land adjacent to County Shop.
- Implement Underfunded Courthouse security grant.
- Participate in the Lake San Cristobal Fuels Project Planning with Bureau of Land Management (BLM).
- Continue work to protect Debs Schoolhouse from rodent damage.



Noxious Weed Control

- Continue partnering with Archuleta and Gunnison counties for weed control.
- Continue to serve on Gunnison Weed Commission.
- Finalize a noxious weed policy for Hinsdale County.
- 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.

Identify all-agency short-term and long-term emergency communication needs.

Sheriff's Office

- Provide professional law enforcement services through responsive, caring, and dedicated service.
- Continue to provide appropriate training opportunities that will enhance the capabilities of all office personnel and allow us to better serve our community.
- Provide more effective and efficient communication with the public.
- Continue to collaborate with and improve relationships with our state and federal law enforcement agencies (USFS, BLM, CPW, CSP) to provide more comprehensive and capable law enforcement services to the county.
- Update Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) with the Town of Lake City.
- Continue to work with the Lake Fork Area Fire District to build a wildland fire response team.

Emergency Management (EM)

- Continue to support an Emergency Management Program that includes preparedness, prevention, mitigation, response and recovery.
- Refine, update, develop plans and exercises to enhance the resiliency of Hinsdale County.
- Support existing efforts for Multi-Agency Coordination (MAC).
- Support planning and incident response and recovery as requested by partner agencies.
- Continue to foster and build partnerships with San Luis Valley and West Region partners.
- Complete the 25-26 Emergency Management Performance Grant (EMPG) work plan and enhance the Hinsdale County Office of Emergency Management program.
- Attend Colorado Emergency Management Association (CEMA) Conference.
- Complete the update of the Hinsdale County Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP).
- Close out the Hazard Mitigation Plan/Community Wildfire Protection Plan update project with the Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (DHSEM) and FEMA.
- Complete Community Animal Response Team (CART) plan with Gunnison County, Colorado State University Extension and the Colorado Department of Agriculture partners.
- Continue to develop the Hinsdale County OEM All-Hazards Team.

Search and Rescue (SAR)

- Formalize leadership organizational structure.
- Establish, communicate, and enforce membership requirements/expectations (leadership and rescue techs).
- Engage with "reserve" rescue techs (8) who, over the last several years, have not participated in trainings.
- Obtain mobile Starlink devices for primary SAR vehicle and OHV.
- Complete Flight For Life Rapid Deployment Team training/certification program.
- Renew certification: Flood and Swiftwater Rescue.
- Attend new training/certification: Colorado Parks and Wildlife Winter Skills Training Academy (Snowmobile).
- Explore new training/certification opportunities: Front Range Rescue Dogs, SARTOPO, Drone.
- Sign up for COSAR's online Rapid Activation Process.
- Attend SARCON (2 new persons).
- Successfully complete Leadership program – September 2026.
- Pursue available grant funds.
- Conduct equipment inventory.
- Replace aging and end of life equipment.
- Purchase new SAR vehicle.



- Increase information available on county website.
- 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.
- Increase focus on information security and cybersecurity.
- Collect data on long and short-term rentals.

Building Official and Enforcement Department



- 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 county building process.
- 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.
- Begin process to adopt updated building codes.
- Establish IGA with Fire District for enforcement of fire codes.
- Continue to provide required onsite water treatment system (OWTS) inspections per state guidelines.
- Continue to provide education and assistance to property owners in relation to radon exposure
- Continue professional training and education.
- Obtain certification in Colorado Small Water Systems.
- Continue to work with regional partners on a variety of project.
- Update schedule for building fees.



Assessor's Office

- Continue to ensure accuracy of property records, with prompt sale confirmations, site reviews, and accurate data entry.
- Continue to implement Department of Property Taxation's rules and regulations.
- Continue to be apprised of and implement state legislative changes to property tax law. This includes the impact of such legislation on both the taxpayer and the taxing entities.
- Continue to ensure fair, accurate property valuations throughout the 2025 reappraisal process.
- Provide property owners with assurance of values during the 2025 reappraisal, consider all concerns and physically view properties if warranted.
- Assessor and Deputy Assessor continuing education, including maintenance of Ad Valorem Appraisal License.
- Continuing to keep online GIS system up to date (Complete GIS Webmap publishing to the county website and maintenance of GIS system).
- To work with all county departments as needed to establish good working relationships and provide necessary assessor resources in line with the assessor function, as needed.
- Establish primary needs of the Assessor's office and develop a plan for hiring and training Assessor Office personnel to ensure a smooth transition for the 2026 election cycle.





Emergency Medical Services (EMS)

- Complete the 2026 EMT Academy and clear 6 new EMTs.
- Add 3 new drivers to the team.
- Work with LCAMC to fund continuing Community Paramedic services.
- Switch to a new billing service focused on rural EMS systems.
- Look into billing for IFTs (Interfacility Transfers).
- Continue practicing quality prehospital medicine.
- Continue to provide CPR, AED, Stop the Bleed, and First Aid certification courses for Hinsdale County.
- Continue exploring possibilities of expanding the ambulance barn.
- Send team members to quality educational programs and conferences.
- Offer 3 quality, in-house training sessions per month.
- Complete agency Policies and Procedures project.
- Actively search for grant funding opportunities.

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.
- Continue to provide positive and professional office culture.
- Continue to support County employees as necessary.
- Continue to provide support to the All Hazards Team program through the Office of Emergency Management.
- Continue to assist as needed with Construction Management and General Contractor on new County Operations Building.
- Work towards implementation of Short Term Rental permitting.
- Research options for improved County website with accessibility in accordance with Americans with Disabilities Act and Colorado State statutes.
- Continue to review budget and expenditures regularly for fiscal responsibility.
- Continue to administrate county grants.
- Review and obtain grant opportunities when applicable to supplement County budgets.
- Continue ongoing policy review process.
- Provide public information through website, email, and social media.
- Continuing to participate in position-appropriate training and professional conferences.
- Increase focus on information security and cybersecurity.
- Establish Hinsdale County Early Childhood Coalition.

County Facilities Department

- Develop facilities plan for new County Operations building, including needed landscaping and winter maintenance.
- Continue landscape maintenance of Veterans Park.
- Continue winter maintenance at Coursey Annex and Courthouse.
- Set up storage of facilities and supplies at Coursey Annex.
- Continue to work with design and construction team on new County Operations Building.
- Continue maintenance of Courthouse exterior and interior.



Building Official and Enforcement Department

- Provide high quality enforcement of adopted building codes and services for property owners, builders and contractors.
- Focus on community public health & safety while working to maintain the quality and economic viability of construction.
- 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.
- Begin process to adopt updated building codes.
- Work on update of building permit fees.
- Review and monitor state process for energy and fire code changes.
- Continue to provide required onsite water treatment system (OWTS) inspections per state guidelines.
- Continue to provide radon exposure education and assistance to property owners.
- Continue professional training and education.
- 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.
- Add Commissioner District Map to the online GIS Webmap site.
- Update DRIVES (Motor Vehicle) system (January 2026).
- To be provided with the resources for efficient, high-quality services.
- Increase storage for historic records.
- Continue input of current and historic records into the County Search System.

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.
- Continue to train deputy treasurer in office processes, some of which we are learning together.

Veteran's Office

- Establish a professional office space in new County Administration building.
- Continue to work with Veterans and their families to honor our Veterans.
- Maintain three annual Veterans services (4th of July, Veteran's Day, Memorial Day) and integrate new members.
- Submit proposal for USS Hinsdale historic sign to be added to Veterans Park.
- Maintain annual VA training programs and education opportunities to provide updates and necessary assistance to county Veterans.

Coroner's Office

- Carry out the duties of the Coroner's Office with professionalism and compassion.
- Complete coursework for the Grief Educator Certification program to better serve the bereaved in our community.
- Coroner and Deputies to attend 20 hours of American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigator approved Continuing Education through the Colorado Coroner's Association to maintain certification.
- Maintain regional and state coroner relationships.
- Maintain a team of deputies for the office.
- Attend Tri-County Health Network Suicide Prevention, Awareness, & Recovery Coalition meetings.



Hinsdale County

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Commissioner Robert Hurd

Commissioner Greg Levine

Commissioner Kristie Borchers

Treasurer Lori Hanko

Clerk Joan Roberts

Assessor Sherri Boyce

Sheriff Denim Starnes

Coroner Lori Lawrence

Administrator Sandy Hines

Finance Director Lynn McNitt

Building Official Gabe McNeese

EMS Director Katherine Heidt

Emergency Manager Phil Graham

Road & Bridge Supervisor Don

Menzies

Gunnison/Hinsdale Health &

Human Services Director Joni

Reynolds

Veteran's Services Officer Mike

Harrington

- Maintain readiness as a member of the Colorado Coroners Association Coroner Assist Team.
- Attend monthly training as a member of the Search and Rescue Flight for Life helicopter based rapid deployment team to maintain certification & readiness for backcountry body recovery missions.

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

- Promote prosperous, collaborative, and healthy communities. Support families, children, seniors, and all community members so they can prosper and thrive.
- Deliver high-quality services throughout Hinsdale County.
- Ensure sound infrastructure.
- Continue prevention services for all.
- Embrace health equity within our community and support health care access and resources for community members.
- Participate in the Southwest Colorado Opioid Regional Council.
- Update MOU with Prowers County for hotline calls coverage after business hours for child and adult protection. Continue staffing 24/7 on-call position to assure access to Child & Adult protective services.
- Continue to measure and meet goals related to the Colorado Department of Human Services C-STAT goals from CDHS are key goals to ensure the community is receiving timely and quality services.
- Monitor public assistance programs, (Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP), Medicaid, Food Assistance/SNAP), and adjust to changes within these programs (C-STAT measures are used to monitor the programs and adjust to changes).
- Continue to lead the local work for the universal Pre-K program as appropriate for our region. The Early Childhood Council for Hinsdale and Gunnison Counties will work on the opportunities to improve the enrollment process (online) for families.

TRANSPORTATION

Road and Bridge Department (R&B)

- Continue to maintain and repair all county roads, culverts and bridges.
- Upgrade and or rebuild equipment in the shop as time and budget permits.
- Continue to work on all USFS Schedule A roads, culverts and drainages.
- Continue to stockpile and screen gravel from multiple places around the county.
- Work on the high-country sections of both CR 20 and 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 as efficiently and improve as possible.
- Oversee Debris Mitigation Hazard program, implementing mixture of burning and chipping.
- Attempt to control cost on the county mag chloride program, improve coverage on needed roads.
- Work with San Juan County on the "Dave" Memorial on the top of Cinnamon Pass.
- Purchase and stockpile gravel in the South End for much needed regraveling on County Road sections.
- Work on finding a gravel source within the county for county roads.

COMMUNICATIONS

- Update the Communications Plan for Hill 71 with technical assistance.
- Create a Countywide broadband plan.
- Research grant funding for Countywide broadband plan.
- Continue effective partnerships with Region10, DOLA and Colorado Broadband Office.
- Continue to work with Gunnison County on extending cell coverage north on Hwy 149 to Gunnison, specifically constructing a cell tower on Rose Ridge.
- Support efforts to utilize Starlink options where needed to improve communication.