BIG EVENTS, BIG IDEAS, BIG YEAR!

This past year will be remembered as a big year for Weld County. A mill levy reduction in January, a Transportation Summit in June, the launch of the Weld County Bright Futures Grant Program in September and the official opening of the Weld County Parkway in November were just a few of the highlights from 2015. While diverse in nature at first glance, all of these projects have one thing in common: they are the result of an involved and passionate Board of County Commissioners working diligently to improve and enhance life in Weld County.

Forty years ago, our residents wanted to ensure they have the type of county government that would be close to and accountable to the people and their needs so they approved the Home Rule Charter. One of only two Colorado counties to become home rule, the decision has proven to be wise as the county is economically sound and able to move forward with projects that will better the lives of Weld County residents. This past year was a shining example of how the policies and changes put in place by the charter in 1975 have succeeded in building a strong county today.

As we head into 2016, we begin work on the county’s largest infrastructure project in its history: the Weld County Road 49 Corridor. While it is relatively unheard of for a county government to take on a project of this size, the vision of those who voted in the Charter four decades ago has allowed for the county to take on this project without incurring debt or imposing taxes. We think the original Charter committee would be proud, and we certainly hope Weld County residents are proud of their county government as well.

Sincerely,

The Weld County Board of Commissioners: Barbara Kirkmeyer, Mike Freeman, Sean Conway, Julie Cazad and Steve Moreno

WELD COUNTY CELEBRATES 40TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE CHARTER

On September 9, 2015, Weld County celebrated the 40th anniversary of the passing of the Weld County Home Rule Charter. Approved on September 9, 1975, by a 4,112 to 3,114 vote, Weld County became the first county in Colorado to adopt a Home Rule Charter. Currently, the only other county in Colorado to adopt a Home Rule Charter is Pitkin County.

To honor the occasion, a display of Charter history was on view in the Administration Building for the 2015 Town and County Dinner. Past commissioners and charter members were invited to the dinner to help celebrate a milestone in Weld County government.
ADDITIONAL MILL LEVY REDUCTION BENEFITS TAXPAYERS

For 21 years, property owners have enjoyed a mill levy reduction on their Weld County property taxes. The past year saw not only a continuation of that tradition but also a further reduction resulting in even more taxpayer savings for residents who own property in Weld County.

Under the State Constitution, Weld County Government is authorized to impose a maximum mill levy of 22.038. For the past 21 years, however, the county has not imposed that maximum amount which has resulted in county residents saving hundreds of millions of dollars over the past two decades. In 2015, the mill levy was reduced from 16.804 to 15.800.

BY COMPARISON:
In 2014:

Adams 26.815
Arapahoe 17.130
Boulder 25.120
Denver 33.119
Jefferson 24.346
Larimer 22.52
Weld 16.804 (15.800 in 2015)

(2015 numbers will be available by the end of December)

COMMISSIONERS HOST TRANSPORTATION SUMMIT

On June 15, the Weld County Board of Commissioners hosted a half-day Transportation Summit to discuss transportation and infrastructure issues facing Northern Colorado. Approximately 400 people, including 40 elected officials from the local, state and federal level, joined together in the Exhibition Building at Island Grove Regional Park in Greeley.

The event was open to the public and featured panel discussions with Firestone Mayor Paul Sorensen, Greeley Mayor Tom Norton, Windsor Mayor John Vasquez, Eaton Mayor Scott Moser, Loveland City Councilmember Joan Schaffer, Fort Collins Mayor Pro-Tem Gerry Horak, and Platteville Mayor Bonnie Dunston. The event also featured a presentation by political strategist Steve Gordon on alternative funding ideas for transportation projects, a speech by State Representative Brian DelGrosso, Colorado
BRIGHT IDEA LEADS TO BRIGHT FUTURES

The Weld County Commissioners officially launched a workforce development program designed to benefit county residents, local businesses and the county workforce. With the passing on Senate Bill 15-82, which put in place the necessary authority to allow the use of county property tax incentive payments of credits for a county workforce development fund, the Weld County Bright Futures Grant Program was formed.

The kick-off event on September 1st was attended by residents, educators, business leaders and elected officials from across the county as well as State Senators Vicki Marble and Mary Hodge and State Representatives Dominick Moreno and Polly Lawrence who carried Senate Bill 15-92 through the 2015 legislative session. Lobbyist James Cole, who helped the commissioners initiate the legislative change, was also present.

The Weld County Bright Futures Grant Program is a “first-in” educational financial assistance program for high school graduates, GED recipients and honorably discharged veterans. The program is funded by donations from taxpayers receiving a property tax credit in addition to State and Federal tax deductions when contributing to the county workforce development fund. Unique to the Weld County program, the donation to the fund is voluntary – it isn’t a tax and the program is not taking away funding from existing county programs.

A Bright Futures Day on December 1st, provided a platform for a donation drive allowing the county to further promote the program and educate residents on the benefits the program brings to both an individual and county-wide level. More than 100,000 people were reached through the social media campaign, and Commissioners as well as Bright Futures’ Advisory Board members participated in media interviews to talk about the unique program.

WELD COUNTRY ROAD 49 PARKWAY PROJECT COMPLETE

The Weld County Board of Commissioners opened the Weld County Parkway on November 10, during a ribbon cutting ceremony on the Cache la Poudre River Bridge. Exactly thirteen months after the Parkway groundbreaking ceremony, Weld County elected officials, project team members from the Department of Public Works, Flatiron Constructors and Atkins were joined by the Platte Valley Fire Protection District, the Weld County Sherriff’s Office Honor Guard and Weld County residents to celebrate the grand opening of the road. Also in attendance were the Department of Local Affairs (DOLA) Executive Director Irv Halter and the DOLA Regional Manager for North Central Counties Don Sandoval. Weld County received a $3.1 million grant from DOLA for this project.

To start the celebration, the Weld County Sheriff’s Office Honor Guard posted the colors and held a moment of silence in honor of Veterans Day. After the commissioners thanked project team members and provided a short project recap, they each cut through a board on a barricade (made from scrap materials) to signify the opening of the road. Once the ceremony was complete, attendees drove north over the Cache la Poudre River Bridge to WCR 60.5 to see Weld County’s first owned and maintained stop light.

To date, the new 3.5-mile, four-lane roadway with two new bridges is the largest transportation project completed by Weld County.
**WELD COUNTY PROPERTY PORTAL GETS A NEW LOOK**

In April, the Weld County Board of Commissioners and the Information Technology (IT) Department launched an updated version of the county's online property mapping system to ensure the most up-to-date and accurate information is available to all Weld County residents. Numerous improvements were made including:

- An easier way to search for parcels
- Check property sales
- Export information to Excel and PDF files
- Search for property taxes
- Check city limits
- Research school districts and commissioner districts
- Zoning and permit information
- Users can utilize styling tools to draw and type on the map

The Weld County property information map pulls together public information from various sources, including the Weld County Assessor's Office, Planning Department, Public Works Department and Colorado Oil and Gas Conservation Commission (COGCC). It is the Board's hope that the portal will become a resource which empowers residents to search for county information.

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**WELD COUNTY COMMISSIONERS TOUR INTERSTATE 76**

Three Weld County Commissioners joined the I-76 Economic Development “Imagination Tour” on May 28, 2015, to help promote the Weld County municipalities of Hudson, Keenesburg and Lochbuie. Commissioner Chair Barbara Kirkmeyer, Commissioner Sean Conway and Commissioner Julie Cozad joined local elected officials and municipal staff from those three communities to promote business and residential development to approximately 100 Realtors, land developers and business owners.

The tour, which began just south of the county line at the Prairie Center shopping center in Brighton, lasted approximately four hours as attendees took two chartered buses that drove from Brighton to Lochbuie, Hudson and Keenesburg before stopping for lunch at the Wild Animal Sanctuary. The tour highlighted each municipality and its amenities and allowed attendees to learn about the numerous lots available for development.

According to Upstate Colorado, which helped sponsor the tour, the I-76 Economic Development Initiative “...is a collaborative effort between representatives of the towns of Hudson, Keenesburg and Lochbuie; local educational institutions, utilities and private sector businesses. Its goal is to construct a strategic plan for economic development that is consistent with the opportunities, assets and resources available to this region of Colorado.”