



OFFICE OF THE COUNTY MANAGER

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2000 REVISED AND 2001 LARIMER COUNTY BUDGET

The 2000 revised and 2001 adopted Larimer County budget were both prepared in compliance with state statute, generally accepted budgeting principles, funding agency requirements, and the budget priorities and directions of the Board of County Commissioners.

The budget is described in more detail in the budget message from the county Budget Officer, but there are a few highlights I would like to highlight.

The voter approved De-Brucing of the county budget has had a great impact on the County's ability to respond to citizen's needs and to provide services. After almost a decade of revenues falling behind growth and inflationary pressures, the County is beginning to have the resources to meet the demands placed us. The adopted budget focus continues to be on adaptation to community growth and to long term sustainability of county functions and services, specifically:

- Overcoming many years of disinvestment in infrastructure
- Changing into an urban community
- Maintaining a long-term business focus
- Adapting to the information age
- Identifying the correct mix and level of services

Significant progress was made in 2000, and the 2001 adopted budget continues to make inroads into service deficits in many areas. County departments requested just over \$5.7 Million in service proposals for program increases and enhancements. The adopted budget includes funding for \$2.4 million of these requests.

As part of the adopted 2001 budget, we have funded the following items that are basic investments into infrastructure or services.

- Maintain salaries for county employees at the 50th percentile of similar positions along the Front Range.
- Invested \$1.9 Million dollars into road and bridge
- Adequate funding for maintenance and operations of the new Justice Center, jail expansion and Sheriff's Headquarters.
- Investment of \$1 Million into the Capital Expenditure Fund.
- Additional funding for the County Assessor for the 2001 property reassessment.

Beyond basic maintenance of level of service, I would like to point out a few areas where we have made progress in addressing deficiencies.

- Investment of \$337,500 into the Technology Capital plan to address technology needs in all departments
- Adding a Construction Inspector in the Engineering department. The Board continues to deal with substandard development infrastructure issues. Many of these deficits should have been identified at the time of construction, but due to lack of adequate staff, the county did not inspect the installation. This position should help to remedy this situation for the future.
- Addition of two patrol deputies to the Sheriff's department.
- Provide funding for enhancement of retirement benefits for sworn law enforcement officers.

Of all the above improvements, the last one, enhancement of retirement benefits, has garnered the most attention. Concerns were raised about a specific group of employees receiving "special" benefits. The Board's policy on employee compensation is based on a market view of human capital. We must compete for employees with other private and public employers. This competition has intensified over the last couple of years. Because of the nature of the job, it is the norm in the law enforcement field for employers to offer enhancement retirement benefits for law enforcement officers. Often these individuals retire at an earlier age than other employees. The decision to recommend enhanced retirement benefits for sworn officers is solely based on market comparisons. In keeping with the Board's philosophy of market driven compensation decisions, providing this benefit beyond sworn officers is not supported by the market.

There are still many areas that need further attention in the future:

- Funding for road and bridge infrastructure is still inadequate.
- There remains a need for 17-20 additional patrol officers in the Sheriff's department to reach a staffing level similar to other Front Range counties (adjusted for population) and support staff for those deputies.
- While the current voter approved building projects has addressed facilities needs in the short term, there is not systematic plan or funding for meeting long term facility needs.
- Major investment needs exist in the short term for replacing the current emergency radio system with either enhanced VHF or 800 MHz systems, replacement of the Sheriff's records management/ Jail Management (RMS/JMS) system, and improvements and expansion of document imaging systems throughout the county.

In summary, we believe the budget as adopted complies with county policy and the policy direction given by the Board of County Commissioners.

Sincerely,



Frank T. Lancaster
Co. Manager