



Date: December 15, 2008

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County Focusing on Needs of Citizens While Budgeting Cautiously for 2009

Troubled economy spurs new strategy for spending

The Mesa County Board of Commissioners has adopted a budget for 2009 that will ensure the county government continues to focus on the needs and priorities of area residents, while spending responsibly during this time of economic uncertainty.

“Our game plan for 2009 is to invest a bit more heavily in our community’s infrastructure, while spending more conservatively on operating costs,” according to Mesa County Administrator Jon Peacock. “During tough economic times, capital improvements—such as transportation projects—are a smart investment. They keeps us on pace with the growth we’re seeing in our area, while also providing local jobs.”

The retooled fiscal strategy for next year keeps operating costs in check, in part by allowing no net increase in the number of county employees. There will be some new positions in areas where citizens have requested more services, such as traffic enforcement. However, those jobs will be offset through attrition elsewhere within the county organization.

“It’s important to us that Mesa County residents have a say in how we spend these dollars,” said Janet Rowland, Chair of the Board of Commissioners. “Citizens help us prioritize, and have been involved in the 2009 budget process from the beginning—through our citizen attitude survey, focus groups, and participation on budget results teams.”

Residents involved have placed a heavy emphasis on infrastructure and growth-related issues this year. In 2009, 32% of the county’s expenditures will be focused on creating well-planned and well-developed communities. This focus includes a project to extend 29 Road northward to connect with the Interstate 70 Business Loop by constructing a viaduct over the railroad tracks. This project, done in partnership with the City of Grand Junction, is expected to be completed in 2010.

Public safety will be an area of continued emphasis next year, with those programs receiving 26% of the county’s overall budget dollars. The Sheriff’s Office will create a new traffic enforcement unit, and the county will also expand its alternative sentencing programs in an attempt to reduce recidivism among criminal offenders, while saving taxpayers money on jail beds.

In addition, the county will continue to help its citizens live healthy and successful lives, through additional resources for the child protection division at the Department of Human Services. Furthermore the 2009 budget will increase investment in efforts to diversify the local economy and create high-quality jobs for county residents. These economic development programs will grow to nine percent of the county’s total budget. As an organization, the county government will also move forward with implementing new technologies to improve efficiency and the availability of information for residents.

By the numbers: Overall county revenues are projected to grow 2.5% from the 2008 adopted budget. The overall adopted 2009 budget is \$177,769,834—which is a 2.8% decrease from the ending 2008 budget. Detailed spreadsheets are available on our Finance Department webpage. (www.mesacounty.us/finance).

To see the entire [adopted budget presentation](#), or watch a [webcast](#) of the County Administrator and Finance Director presenting the information to the county commissioners, please visit our website: www.mesacounty.us.

“Mesa County—Creating a community of opportunities for all residents with a focus on the future.”