

## Jeffco shoots for transparent image

County attempts to earn more public trust

By Jeff Francis

September 04, 2008

Depending on the connotation, "transparent" can mean something clear and easy to see through. It has also become a buzzword for a positive management quality that is the opposite of secrecy.

Jefferson County officials are going with the second connotation in forming an upcoming Web site, Transparent Jeffco.

County Administrator Jim Moore recently explained that the impetus for the site is the desire to notify residents and voters that there are no secrets with Jefferson County government.

"I think it's a good idea for us to make information more easily accessible to citizens and open up lines of communication more," Moore said. "It's good for people to know how we're spending their money. To me, one of the best ways of engendering trust with the public is by being open and transparent."

Moore said the county hopes to have the Web site up before winter. Moore's office is currently processing public input to decide best on-site content. Currently slated features include meeting schedules, budget information, expenditure listings and employee salaries.

"We're still developing it and we're going to ask people what they want to see," Moore said. "Basically the question is, 'when you think of government transparency, what comes to mind?' At a minimum, we want to make information gathering easier for people."

Commissioner Kevin McCasky said Transparent Jeffco has been on his, and Commissioner Jim Congrove's, radar for years.

"This is finally coming together because of the advancements in technology and the reduction in cost," McCasky said. "We've brought back public comment, we've had newsletters, we've had town hall meetings. This is another step, a major step, to provide better communication between our citizens and our government."

Moore said the Web site also will feature an interactive blog in which users can leave comments and later have them answered. However, he said users cannot post anonymously; a real name is required.

Moore said the anonymity question was one he discussed with the Board of Commissioners.

"There are things we're trying to accomplish in developing a trusting relationship with the public," he said. "Anonymity does not build trust. If there's a question important enough to ask, having an element of anonymity will not build that genuine two-way communication."

### Need To Know

An example draft of the upcoming Web site is scheduled to be accessible at [www.transparentjeffco.us](http://www.transparentjeffco.us). The page is currently under construction.

---

Reporter Jeff Francis can be reached at 303-279-5541 ext. 238 or [jefff@milehighnews.com](mailto:jefff@milehighnews.com)