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"Transparent Jeffco" will improve access to data through Web

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GOLDEN — Better access to Jefferson County information and documents is expected to be available next week through the magic of the Internet.

Called "Transparent Jeffco," the online effort will allow residents to ask questions, give officials a way to directly address community concerns, and even give taxpayers a look at the checks the county writes each week.

"This will be a much more effective way to reach residents," said county spokeswoman Kathryn Heider, who has been developing the project with County Administrator Jim Moore.

The idea, Moore said, is to make Jefferson County government more transparent and accountable.

A "soft launch" of the feature is planned on the county's website, www.co.jefferson.co.us.

Items that can be gleaned initially include the budget, a blog and a public meetings calendar.

Heider test-drove a feature on Tuesday: Web video-streaming software that will allow the county to air meetings.

"We've been wistfully watching as the cities cablecast their meetings," Heider said. "We've never had the ability to do that on cable because it wasn't feasible since the county is so spread out" and they would have had to charge a fee.

Technology has changed enough, Heider said, to allow showing meeting video on demand. Videos would be available the day after a meeting and could be aired live if the need arises.

Start-up costs — including software, hardware, training and upgrading lighting, the electrical system and cameras — would cost \$86,842.

"It would cost slightly less to buy first-class postage stamps for each household in the county," Heider said. The county would pay a monthly fee of about \$2,000 for the service.

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