



Thornton City Hall
9500 Civic Center Drive
Thornton, CO 80229-4326
www.cityofthornton.net

City Manager's Office
Thornton City Council
PH 303-538-7200

Message from Thornton Mayor Heidi Williams

I'm writing you to tell you about recent developments regarding a very important project for everyone who lives or works in Thornton. On February 11, 2019, the Larimer County Commissioners denied Thornton a permit to build a pipeline. This pipeline would transport high-quality water Thornton owns in Northern Colorado to our city, which would ultimately serve our residents and businesses. This water is Thornton's future water supply and bringing it here to the people living and working in Thornton has been planned for decades. Thornton City Council and Thornton staff strongly disagree with the Larimer County Commissioners' decision and we continue to be committed to getting the water we own down here for the people in Thornton. In Colorado, water rights are property rights. The citizens of Thornton own that water.

For the last several years, Thornton has been working diligently with staff members for Larimer County to learn their regulations and to get a permit to construct our pipeline. Thornton also held public forums and participated in a community engagement process facilitated by Larimer County. Thornton staff presented Larimer County with a very thorough permit application and the County's staff deemed the application complete, and credible, and that it met all of the County's criteria. Larimer County staff, who were responsible for evaluating every document submitted in the application, are on the record recommending approval by the county commissioners. We believe the commissioners should have heeded the recommendations of the experienced professionals they employ. They did not.

Of particular concern to us are suggestions by Larimer County Commissioners and project opponents that Thornton should increase the risk to our public's health and welfare by not using a pipeline and instead sending our water through Larimer County via the Cache La Poudre River. We specifically chose a pipeline because it would preserve the quality of the water we purchased. Nearly every city in the Front Range, including Fort Collins and other water suppliers up north, receives water from a distant location via pipeline. We honestly find it quite troubling that another Colorado community would seriously ask another to intentionally degrade its drinking water by sending it past three wastewater treatment facilities, which discharge into the Poudre River, past urban stormwater discharge areas in Fort Collins, and past both industrial and agricultural runoff areas. Also, it is unacceptable to risk our water supply to catastrophic events like the blackened water which drains from forest fire areas or when trucks crash into the river and spill fuel. Being forced to try and clean water from the Poudre River for public consumption would raise the cost of the project to more than a billion dollars, which is certainly unreasonable. We agree with some in Larimer County who testified at the public hearings that they would have ethical concerns with such a demand.

You need to know that some of the water Thornton now owns up in Larimer County has *never* traveled down the Poudre River though Fort Collins because it comes from the west side of the Continental Divide and the rest of our water has not gone down the river through Fort Collins since the 1890's. Thornton would NOT be affecting flows in the river by taking our water to Thornton. In fact, Thornton offered to put up to 3,000 acre feet of water in the river each year to improve flows for troubled spots on the river – a benefit that was rejected when Larimer County denied our permit.

Thornton is now waiting on a written decision from Larimer County before determining our next steps. I want you to know we still have a number of options available to us and ultimately, we have a right to our water and we will find a way to get it here.