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# CLEAR CREEK SHARE•FF

"PUBLIC SERVICE FIRST, PUBLIC SAFETY ALWAYS"

## A LETTER FROM SHERIFF HARRIS

As we embark on a new year, I am grateful to the Clear Creek community for your support over the past year, and for your faith in me to serve as your elected sheriff. I look forward to being sworn in on January 13, 2025, and continuing our efforts to make operational improvements, strengthen community trust, and recruit and retain experienced, qualified employees. Today, I share some of the progress we have made toward these goals, as well as challenges and initiatives for the coming year.



Shortly after I became Sheriff, we identified "Public Service First, Public Safety Always" as the agency's new mission statement – it reflects our values and guides how we operate and communicate with our community. We established a new leadership team of experienced and professional staff, to ensure greater accountability and oversight across the agency, and updated all our policies to align with law enforcement best practices. We put the right people in the right roles, fortified administrative functions such as evidence and records management, and created the following critical positions:

- Two additional patrol sergeant positions that allows for 24/7 supervisory coverage.
- A policy analyst to ensure compliance with law enforcement requirements and best practices.
- A strategic communications manager to enhance transparency and increase community engagement.

In addition, we conducted a thorough review of the agency's annual budget. We were able to achieve significant savings by eliminating obsolete contracts, streamlining duplications, reducing overtime costs, and recouping expenses for services that had previously been under or uncharged.

These operational improvements also help attain our goal of rebuilding trust. Everything the Sheriff's Office has accomplished over the past year has been with the intent to rebuild your trust in us, and professionalize and modernize our services. We created a community relations function to be more transparent, accountable, and responsive, and we hired a communications manager to share information and improve public engagement. This newsletter is an example of our efforts to keep residents informed, and it complements our social media presence on Nextdoor, Facebook, Instagram, and X.



## LETTER CONTINUED

All our efforts would be for naught, however, if we are unable to hire and retain experienced, qualified employees. In 2023, the CCSO's turnover rate was 33%. For 2024, it was 29%. In patrol, 80% of our deputies have less than three years' experience. A revolving door of new and inexperienced staff is not a sustainable way to run a professional organization. Thus, recruitment and retention are another priority for me, and I am grateful to say we have come a long way in this regard too.

Clear Creek County has historically matched employees' salary at 4% for a 401A plan. Those figures are significantly lower than what other Colorado law enforcement agencies offer sworn employees (up to a 12 – 15% match). Until recently, we were unable to compete, but overwhelming voter approval (80%) of Initiative 1A allowed the Board of County Commissioners (BoCC) to consider approving the Fire and Police Pension Association (FPPA) for sworn staff. If given final approval by the BoCC, this will help professionalize our organization and build a stronger future for our community.

The commissioners' commitment to a competitive retirement benefit comes at a time when the county is facing a significant financial shortfall that has impacted the Sheriff's Office in other ways. Declining sales and property tax revenues, combined with increased personnel expenses, has required us to cut or delay some of our plans for 2025. We are not able to purchase new technology that would enhance traffic enforcement and criminal investigations, such as proactive drug enforcement that could help keep illegal drugs out of our community. We cannot fund an employee wellness program that supports law enforcement's unique mental health needs. And with the elimination of our emergency management coordinator position, we are limited in our capacity to update emergency plans, educate the community on preparedness, and strengthen multi-operational partnerships.

While these cuts are a setback, we look forward to continuing our efforts to improve in 2025. We will work with the county for a long-term solution to the budget shortfall and will explore additional revenue opportunities. We are already seeking to expand our contract with the US Marshals Service to provide additional housing for federal inmates. We are also investigating grant opportunities that may be able to fund new patrol technology, and we are considering a leasing option for fleet vehicle replacements.

Many of our initiatives for the coming year, however, have little or no monetary impact. We will develop a multi-year strategic plan to include divisional goals, objectives, and performance measures. We will create monthly and annual reports with statistical data to illustrate patrol and detention activities and inform decisions such as when and where to deploy deputies for increased patrol or traffic enforcement. And we will establish a forum for community members to meet with us and learn more about the CCSO.

This year, we look forward to putting "Public Service First, and Public Safety Always" and continuing to earn your trust through professional police work, policy compliance, financial stewardship, and information-sharing. We hope you have a happy, safe, and healthy New Year!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Matthew D. Harris".

Matthew D. Harris  
Sheriff, Clear Creek County



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