

From the Director's Desk: What is an Oath?

What is an oath? What does it pledge? Whose idea were oaths anyhow?

So why in our system of many-layered governance with counter-balanced branches and dispersed powers do local officials swear an oath to the Constitution? The very idea of an oath was a [topic of much disagreement](#) during the framing of the Constitution, not least because colonial officials were forced to swear allegiance to the British King and to God of the established Church of England.

Many municipalities held local elections the first week of April across Northwest Colorado. The following week newly elected citizens stood, raised their right hand in front of a witness (or computer screen this year), and recited an oath, crossing an invisible threshold to become officially seated.

The Town of Eagle's oath is 57 words:

I so solemnly swear that I will support the Constitution and laws of the United States, the Constitution and laws of the State of Colorado, and the Ordinances and Codes of the Town of Eagle, and that I will faithfully perform all duties of the office of Town Trustee, upon which I am about to enter.

The pledge above follows a common template that creates a relationship between the elected and key legal documents. The Town of Fraser's oath condenses the oath to 46 words, adding "or affirm," and "all" to duties. The Town of Grand Lake's oath is nearly twice as long with 84 words. It adds 2 clauses, "that I will bear **true faith and allegiance** to the same; that I take this obligation **freely and without any mental reservations or purpose of evasion.**" Could be a story there.

Those taking an oath this month take note that an oath is not a pledge of loyalty to a person "further up" the structure. It does impart an obligation to the documents which form the "rule of law." That commitment shouldn't be skipped over when it seems inconvenient or expedient. These local oaths derive from the U.S. Constitution (Article VI, Clause 3) which states:

*The Senators and Representatives before mentioned, and the Members of the several State Legislatures, **and all executive and judicial Officers, both of the United States and of the several States**, shall be bound by Oath or*



Affirmation, to support this Constitution; but no religious Test shall ever be required as a Qualification to any Office or public Trust under the United States.

There it is. The oath trickles down through the states to local officials. The Colorado Legislature updated [guidance](#) on oaths in 2018. Oaths have evolved.

During the Civil War, Congressional oaths included "loyalty" to the Union, in other words, to the idea of a singular nation. That reference to loyalty was later dropped with the Congressional oath being updated a handful of times until 1966 when language, much like the Town of Grand Lake's oath, was added, "taking this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion..." and, pointedly, adding in at the end, "so help me God" (Congress added the God part, not Grand Lake). That version also introduced the idea of "true faith" as well as protecting against enemies. This was the time of the Cold War, spies, and McCarthyism during which time many clubs had oaths.

Some oaths today still require even more commitment than a pledge to uphold documents. Dwight Henninger, Chief of Police in Vail and Vice President of the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) emailed the IACP Law Enforcement Oath of Honor which states:

On my honor, I will never betray my badge, my integrity, my character or the public trust. I will always have the courage to hold myself and others accountable for our actions. I will always uphold the constitution, my community and the agency I serve.

There are more commitments packed in that oath. As employees acting as public servants this is even a higher bar of integrity than the oath of their elected employers. Chief Henninger said that whenever a new officer is sworn in **all officers** restate the oath again as a group. That is powerful.

So why a pledge mostly to documents? Essentially an oath is a pledge to abide by and uphold the law. This fealty to abide in "the rule of law" through various documents is a foundation of democracy and reflects what differentiates us from government based primarily upon amassing and retaining power through pledges of loyalty, manipulation, force or corrupt practices-what most of us consider "politics." An oath represents a commitment above and beyond politics and power to abide in the law, and by extension in the practiced norms of public processes.

For being few in words, there is a lot packed into commitments made through an oath. As we seem increasingly willing to accept loyalty as a test for our elected leaders, or just accept hyper-partisan politics as business-as-usual, the core tenants of an oath may be worth contemplating.

Jon Stavney

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[See NWCCOG Coronavirus Resource Guide here](#)

NWCCOG strives to not duplicate resources compiled elsewhere. For municipal

actions taken, [CML](#) has the best resource. For current public health orders, those should be sought from your county website. There are numerous resources for businesses or individuals kept up to date regularly. If you would like guidance on what is the best resource for your needs, contact Jon and I will guide you there.

THANK YOU

So many of our Members are doing tremendous front-line public service through this difficult time; if you are one of them, Thank you, you are appreciated more than ever for your public service. I've been privileged to be on daily update calls with both Eagle County and Summit County EOC, and it is assuring to listen in to collaboration going on in real-time.

Pandemic Forces Pivot for Loan Fund Client

Northwest Loan Fund Client refocuses business model and continues to grow, and grow and grow...



Photo: 41North/File

NLF client, 41North, is all about growing. Growing organic greens, growing clients, growing its capacity, growing employees. But what happens when growth comes to a hard stop and 100% of your clients are no longer buying? Well, if you are Jay Hirschfeld, co-founder of 41North and his team, you panic - but just for a moment. Then you pivot.

Jay and his partner Todd Chapman created a most amazing aquaponics greenhouse in Hayden where the freshest greens and micro greens are grown in a totally enclosed system that allow for organic greens to be farm-to-table delivered to the best restaurants in the Yampa Valley - all year round. They were thriving and the residents in and around Steamboat Springs enjoyed their products whenever they dined out. According to Hirschfeld they were "...sold out all the time." But that all changed - practically overnight. Within the blink of an eye, all restaurants shut their doors. No one was buying fresh produce, and 41North- like many other businesses in the country - came to a grinding halt.

The partners, having built their business model on serving restaurant clients only, were momentarily stymied - worried they would have to lay off employees, close the business and hunker down. Then the shareholders got together and created a plan.

They pivoted to a new business model - that of selling subscription farm shares to local Yampa Valley residents. Jay, who has a digital marketing background, created a website selling shares to folks who wanted farm-fresh produce, delivered to their doorstep, twice a week - even in the winter. Using the power of social media, and a few strategically placed posts by a power influencer, they sold 100% of the shares they could handle at the time, and now have a waiting list of people eager to be included.

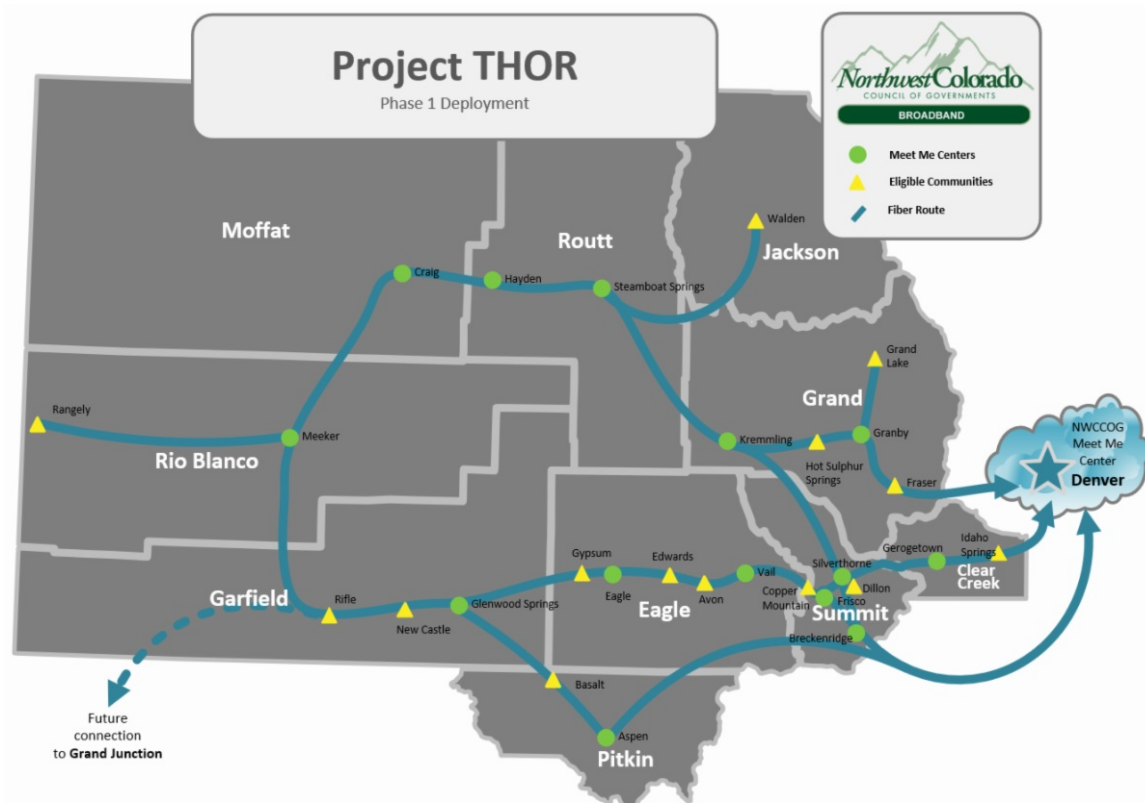
According to Jay, they have needed to hire additional employees to plant the facility to maximum capacity. They've ramped up the tools necessary to determine the highest value crops, and they are contemplating expanding their services.

Jay remarked in a recent interview, "We're really excited with our new model. It allows us to continue to give back to the community with bigger, better, fresher produce; we're hiring people, we've got a great team, and we're doing what we love to do. Growing food, growing our team, and growing our community."

The NLF is proud to have played a role with an expansion loan to 41North, and we are delighted they continue to grow and hire new employees - especially in these challenging times. If you'd like more information about the Northwest Load Fund, contact [Anita Cameron here](#) or check out the [website here](#).

Project THOR Broadband Access Project Achieves Full Operability

Regional Fiber Network provides secure, broadband access to critical community anchors, wireless providers and ISPs across ten Colorado counties



April 7, 2020

Silverthorne, CO - The Northwest Colorado Council of Governments (NWCCOG), in conjunction with our partners announce the completion of Critical

Infrastructure along I-70 and in each of our 14 participating communities bringing accessible, affordable, reliable broadband to rural communities across NW Colorado. Project THOR is a middle-mile network establishing carrier-class connectivity between 14 communities across Northwest Colorado and the NWCCOG Point of Presence in Denver.

The collaborative group of host local governments acting through NWCCOG as network owner have hired Mammoth Networks to serve as network operator. Project THOR will connect over 400 miles of existing public and commercial fiber to provide service to our under-served communities which in turn will enable local hosts the ability to serve local educational and healthcare institutions, public safety and internet service providers (ISPs) with reliable, resilient, cost competitive services. This is especially important as COVID-19 increases the broadband needs of hospitals, healthcare providers, schools, local governments, public safety and businesses.

The network is designed as a series of geographically diverse fiber loops using world class network equipment from Ciena providing unique advantages for mountain communities. Project THOR is able to automatically re-route traffic when a single fiber cut or other service outages occur, preventing the hours-long service interruptions which have become commonplace. Project THOR is the

result of years of cooperative planning among local governments, a health district, a Non-Profit, and two Regional Electric Co-ops in conjunction with the Colorado state agencies enables local communities to provide a hub of affordable internet to meet local deployment needs. Local funding for the cooperative venture has been generously matched by two grants through Colorado Department of Local Affairs (DOLA) of \$1,000,000 for network infrastructure and \$270,000 to fund the first three years of fiber leased from CDOT.



Through our local Meet Me Centers (where connections come together in a local community) , Project THOR empowers the local community by bringing affordable, reliable middle mile access that will connect community organizations and be attractive to private entities to deliver competitive broadband services to community residents and businesses.

Key Facts about Project THOR:

- Over 400 miles of existing publicly and privately owned fiber along with newly constructed fiber to link communities to existing fiber infrastructure
- All Project THOR infrastructure is open access meaning that NWCCOG makes the network available to all providers
- DOLA provided \$1.25 million dollars in funding fully matched by local contributions Project THOR allows open access transport for providers and ISPs to increase competition, availability, and lower broadband service prices in our rural communities
- Project THOR is unique in NWCCOG arranging for existing broadband

providers to deliver internet bandwidth to Meet Me Centers at a regional discounted rate because usage is aggregated across all Project THOR participating communities

State public partnerships include: Colorado Department of Local Affairs (DOLA), Governor's Office of Information Technology Broadband Program Office, CDOT Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) & Network Service

Project THOR is live in all host communities. The host communities who will be connected to the NWCCOG Meet Me Center in Denver include: Clear Creek County at Georgetown; Summit County at Silverthorne, Frisco and Breckenridge; Vail; Eagle; Glenwood Springs; Aspen; Rio Blanco County at Meeker; Yampa Valley Electric Association at Craig and Hayden; Northwest Colorado Broadband, a non-profit in Steamboat Springs; as well as Middle Park Health at Kremmling and Granby. Testing and tuning the network by Mammoth Networks will continue to optimize the network through 2020 as we add users and capabilities to the Project THOR network.

Entities interested in exploring opportunities for local connections in these host communities should contact Regional Broadband coordinator, Nate Walowitz [here](#), or their local Meet Me Center host.

We are grateful for:

In response to a call for "good news" stories, we got several that we will be showcasing in the coming days and weeks. This story was submitted by **Ryan Mahoney**, Town Manager of Basalt:

"A huge vote of gratitude goes out to **Pam Schilling**, our Town Clerk, who had to navigate the stay-at-home order and associated closure of our Town Hall to pull off a flawless election process. Ours was particularly challenging in that we had to employ Instant Runoff Voting for the first time in our history. We had three mayoral candidates, which triggered the need for using this method. To complicate things more, we had to hand count the mayoral ballots while doing a machine count for the council candidates. All told, we had 12 election judges the day of the election. Leading up to the election, judges began to drop off for fear of becoming infected with COVID-19. In the end Pam was able to get all the judges trained via Zoom and rolled out a social distancing plan for the day of the election. Super proud of Pam and her professional demeanor throughout the process."

NWCCOG offices are closed to the public and most staff are working remotely so please contact them by phone or email. AAAA is in full-tilt mode adapting to meet the needs of Older Americans across the region. Energy Program Employees are on paid leave, thanks to the Colorado Energy Office. There is no date yet for resuming field inspections. The Elevator Inspection Program has suspended field inspections and are

catching up on a back-log of remote work. More than half of our programs and nearly 50 employees regularly work remotely. For more detailed and current status, please call your usual contact at NWCCOG.

*If you know someone who would enjoy our newsletter,
please forward them to this link.*

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Next NWCCOG COUNCIL MEETING

Thursday, May 24, 2020

Full Council Meeting

Teleconference Call: Number to be distributed

Time: 10:00 a.m.- 11:30 a.m.

Northwest Colorado Council of Governments

www.nwccog.org

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