

Letter: Douglas surplus should go to water systems

To the community,

It is good news, indeed, to hear that Douglas County has a \$2 million so-called surplus and now needs only to figure out how best to spend it. Shall we hire more staff? Give everyone a raise? Or fix the museum roof?

The idea of a so-called budget surplus that can be spent on new entitlements for the county is a complete non sequitur. Not only is this short sighted and illogical, but it defies pressing fiduciary obligations of our Board of Commissioners.

Given the vast overhaul proposed by the county's newly released preliminary engineering report on county-owned water utilities, can there be any real question about how to allocate this so-called surplus? What thought has been given to prioritizing the county's obligation to bring its own substandard water infrastructure up to par?

After 27 years of running our water system at the lake, we now face a staggering price tag, fast approaching \$50 million, to fix our rundown infrastructure. Our fragile and porous system is a byproduct of years of patch and fix mentality that endangers whole communities, leaving us vulnerable to complete system collapse, fire hazard, and prohibitive rate increases for the foreseeable future. And the county wants to launch a new storm water program?

The county needs to get serious about its real unmet obligations and liabilities. Some of its spending suggestions will add millions in future county budget expenditures, far beyond the present so-called surplus.

Consider this. If the Board of Commissioners chooses to

squander its \$2 million so-called surplus on new obligations and fails to address the real water crisis they own at the lake, future property tax income will decline precipitously, and the county's next conversation will be how to handle the resulting budget deficit.

Dana Tibbitts, Cave Rock